

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

April 2021

Dear Friends: When I re-read the newsletter of one year ago, April 2020, it was clear that we were facing the future with a mixture of trepidation and anxiety for the safety and well-being of our readers. We entered what proved to be the first lockdown of the 12 months that followed. We reported one death, that of Marjorie Evans. We were optimistic about maintaining contact with each other when the meeting house was closed. We worried about Friends in care homes, Friends who could not access the internet, how we would cope with working from home, home-schooling, being shielded. Articles encouraged us to enrich our spiritual lives through self-isolation and to support each other and the community.

In this edition we report the funeral on Wilf Hayler who died on 21 February, our Meeting's only loss to Covid-19. We have weathered, each in our own way and as part of our Quaker group, all the ups and downs of the last 12 months. We are out of lockdown, This month we can meet each other again outdoors, next month indoors, and we can worship together in our meeting room at last. Liz's poem describes our common experience, from then to now. **Gillian Turner and David Parlett**

I wish each of us Easter eyes, able to perceive in death, life; in guilt, forgiveness; in wounds, glory; in the human, God; in God, the human; and in the I, the you'. **Bishop Hemmerle of Aachen**



The gift of a daily walk

*On our daily walk last spring
We pass a man pushing his new baby in her pram
Cautiously crossing to the other pavement
We keep our distance.
Our daily walk in the autumn
baby is now balanced on father's hip.
Bright and watching the world around her.
We nod and smile at our neighbours as we pass.
This spring they are walking
Ever so slow, tiny toddler steps holding tight to father's
hand.
We do not pass,
but stop to chat with our new friends.* **Liz Collins**

Goodbye, Friend

Wilf Hayler's funeral took place on 25 March at Tribes Shoreham Chapel, Shoreham-by-Sea.

Despite the heavy traffic and delays caused by roadworks along the A27, I managed to arrive five minutes early at the undertakers Tribes Shoreham Chapel. I was welcomed warmly by Wilf's family.

Wilf's cousin Shirley started the Meeting for Worship by explaining the proceedings to those unfamiliar with Quaker ways, also mentioning that, like Wilf, she had been brought up as a Quaker. Shirley continued, reading out the obituary prepared by Croydon Friends, adding in her own contribution. There were seven of us in physical attendance, four of whom spoke during the Meeting. Coloured photographs of Wilf with his family were projected onto a screen at the front of the chapel throughout the Meeting. I read out a statement from Jane Low, describing how Wilf

had contributed to the life of Polegate Local Meeting. Next, Shirley read the words of *Dear Lord and Father of mankind*, his favourite hymn, as we were unable to sing it. Jonathan's wife Sarah played a recording of Wilf reciting a poem written by his father, Mark Hayler. The Meeting for Worship ended with a prayer, and then a lively piece of jazz music was played. At the end of the Meeting, I was able to talk to the family and look at an album of black and white photographs of a young Wilf and his family that Wilf had given to Shirley when he moved to Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes. It was interesting to note how little Wilf's face had changed over the years, as he was easily recognisable in the photographs.

It was clear that Wilf had been dearly loved by his family. I felt that it was definitely a celebration of his life and that Spirit was with us. I left the Meeting for Worship feeling uplifted and at peace, glad that I had been able to take part in saying good bye to Wilf.

Wendy Taylor, Polegate Meeting

Wilf had a great deal of contact with the family. He spent every Christmas with us until he went to Bernhard Baron. He quite often came for Easter, always on his birthday in May and then for a week or more in August. After the pandemic Shirley and Jonathan were able to Skype him every week. Keeping in touch with us all was an important part of his life.

Shirley Hare



Photo from Wilf's cousin Jonathan Hare

Reading the tributes to dear Wilf Hayler (in our March Newsletter), took me back to the last time I saw him. He and his faithful friend Anthea spent a weekend with me. The reason for Wilf's visit was that his horse was racing in Huntingdon.

Mavis recollects

My son drove the four of us to Huntingdon Race course. Wilf's horse did not win, of course. After the race Wilf took us to the Owner's Enclosure where he introduced us to the horses, their owners, the stable-hands and the jockeys. He knew the racing history of all

of them. His enthusiasm was irrepressible. It was then that I understood why this Quaker was part-owner of a race horse. He was like a boy scout at his first jamboree. It was a joy to behold. The whole weekend was full of fun and laughter. A wonderful memory of a dear man.

Mavis Parker

News of Friends

We send especial love to Friends who have been unable, for one reason or another, to join meeting for worship on Zoom, and are waiting impatiently to return to indoor worship in person. Mary Clarke is safe and well in her care home, but is having problems with her hearing aid, which makes it difficult for her to keep in touch.

Joyce Trotman has mastered Zoom, and it has been wonderful to see her again.

Brian Skeet is having increasing difficulties in walking unaided around his local park. He keeps in contact by phone and Friends are able to visit him outdoors.

When can we restart 'live' meeting for worship?

There is guidance on the BYM website for Area Meeting Trustees and local meetings. www.quaker.org.uk/coronavirus discusses the issues involved, with emphasis on risk and the safety of those who are Extremely Clinically Vulnerable.

Lockdown Thoughts

As we come towards the end of the lockdown restrictions, I wonder how we have changed. Are we the same people as the ones who entered lockdown a year ago? Some of us had plans to learn new things (languages, cooking new recipes; Tai Chi) or catching up with doing the things we wish we had time for before lockdown (decluttering, reading the unread books on our bookshelves). I didn't do half the things I had planned to do - I still have many unread books, I gave up on Tai Chi, and my French is still pretty non-existent. However, I know I must have changed in some way. As Haruki Murakami observes:

When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about.

Yet for many of us, lockdown wasn't really a storm, but an inconvenience. Adjusting to an inconvenience can still change us in that we need to adapt and be open to new ways of doing things - Zoom Meetings for Worship! However, for some lockdown was a very difficult time and it did seem like a storm. I know of people who were lonely during this past year, or who had family/friends dying and experienced the sadness of not being able to attend funerals to say goodbye.

During the difficult times faith kept some people going. Faith that the 'bad' times would end and that eventually things would get back to normal. Can a particular time be 'bad'? It is just a neutral event and how we view it, as good or bad, is up to us. 'True happiness is inner happiness. We need to establish an inner state of life that is not swayed by external conditions.' (Daisaku Ikeda).

A positive from the last year has been the connection via technology - WhatsApp, Zoom, etc.

Communities have sometimes become more caring, checking on those who live alone or who are in poor physical condition. Our Zoom meetings have allowed more Friends to participate and perhaps this is where we are really living the *Advices & Queries*, 18: 'How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.'

Pam Sellman

Spring-cleaning in Lockdown

At first, one year ago I had an amazing plan to, finally, 'sort stuff out in my home. Got too much.' An ideal solution I thought at the time.

First time, quite a good result in the kitchen. Cupboards and drawers all sorted, some rearranged and badly out of date herbs and spices discarded. Felt good with cleaner kitchen, even keen on baking again.

Second and third times with lockdown were proving more difficult. Making decisions, where? Which room? How to start? Where could I store charity bags?

It all grew into monster. I had great difficulty in getting started. It was overwhelming, a miserable time. Other parts of my life were demanding. I just did not know where to start.

Blessing on my daughter. Her friend, who is unable work as a hairdresser, loves sorting and cleaning. What could be better? I welcomed Carolyn into my home.

It has been a big tonic for me. I look at things differently now. Wardrobes were emptied, dusted. Everything out. Four separate areas made: Keep. Maybe. Charity. Bin.

We laughed, and worked. 'Why did I buy that?' 'Now, that looks really tired'. 'Somebody will love that'. 'Why that colour?' 'Must keep that'.. and so on.

Carolyn was able to store the filled charity bags in her almost empty garage, will take them away and deliver them when able to.

I didn't find any hidden treasures, but learnt so much about re-organising, choosing colours, making space around furniture etc.

My hallway feels bigger thanks to moving pieces of furniture, the grandmother clock stands in a better place. Next thing will be to get the chimes working. Hey ho.

Another bonus for me - even the bathroom got a look, now transformed into a cleaner tidier place, the big shelves at the end of the bath have gone, leaving the picture on the far side looking impressive, and the room feels bigger. Talc, soaps, hair products all sorted; old stuff away to the bin. plastics and card carefully recycled, towels sorted by colour and neatly folded. A real pleasure now to visit the bathroom.

My mood is lighter and am beginning to love my home again. **Margie Ashley**

Spring cleaning abandoned

The mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters. Then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pale of whitewash, till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung his brush down on the floor, said 'Bother!' and 'Oh blow!' and also 'Hang spring cleaning!' and bolted out of the house, without even waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel, which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged, and then he scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

'This is fine' he said to himself. 'This is better than whitewashing'. The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow and after the seclusion of the cellage he had lived in so long, the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing, almost like a shout. Jumping off all his four legs at once in the joy of living and the delight of spring without his cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the farther side.

Kenneth Grahame: The Wind in the Willows

Part of a meditation for Palm Sunday

A man named Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was coming in from the fields, and they pressed him into service to carry the cross...The centurion who stood guard over him, on seeing the manner of his death, declared: 'Clearly, this man was the Son of God!' Mark 14, 1 – 15, 47.

Reflecting on Simon of Cyrene prods me to ask if I am a reluctant or grumbling participant in the crosses of those around me or whether I walk with them caringly and compassionately. Do I walk with them giving of my time and attention stintingly and grudgingly, feeling sorry for myself at being trapped into doing something unpleasant? Am I afraid of what others may think of me if I fail to give a helping hand? What strikes me about Simon is that he walked with Jesus, and ended up giving the Romans the satisfaction of executing their victim. Those of us with a passion for justice step out to demonstrate in the public eye because of unjust laws, because we believe that black lives matter, that firearms must be banned or that asylum seekers deserve to be welcomed. Yet we know that we may not live to see the change for which we advocate. In the long run, our efforts, like Simon's, may come to absolutely nothing. What matters, however, is that our personal integrity demands that we embrace the Cross of Jesus whenever it comes into our lives and into the lives of our sisters and brothers.

While we reflect on what happened to the centurion, there is an invitation to us, as we walk down from that hill of Calvary, to ask ourselves what we might do for the broken world of which we are a part. God's hope is surely that we will live differently because of what Jesus has done for us? Might that mean being a little more sensitive to those around us, making ourselves available to help them to carry their crosses, reaching out in forgiveness and tolerance to those who have hurt us, speaking the truth with courage, compassion, integrity and love? There is a rich abundance of material for reflection in the passion narratives of all four Gospels. But we all need to give ourselves time and space to do the reflecting.

From Holy Week and Easter with the Ionian Community

Festivals

Religious festivals, like buses, do seem to come all at once. As I write, Holi (Hinduism), Mid-Sha'ban (Islam), Passover (Judaism), Holy Week (Christianity), and Hola Mohalla (Sikhism) are all ongoing. This means that themes of hope and new beginnings will be celebrated all over the world this week: Holi is the Hindu festival of love, colours and Spring, and more broadly celebrates the triumph of good over evil; Passover marks the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; Holy Week, culminating in Easter, celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And at the same time, another festival is happening all around us: nature itself is starting to wake up and bloom – including, joyfully, in Croydon's green spaces.

On this last point, I sometimes hear it said that Easter is really just the Christianisation of older pagan celebrations. The same is said even more often about Christmas – and sometimes used to argue that people are unwittingly celebrating something other than what they think they are celebrating. If you google 'Easter pagan festival' one of the first results is a *Guardian* article from 2013, asking 'If Easter isn't really about Jesus, then what is it about?' and concluding that 'All the fun things about Easter are pagan.' Well, I'm not sure about that – whatever you think about Christianity, Christians would certainly say that modern-day Easter was about Jesus! But more than this, perhaps the more fundamental Good News is being overlooked here. After all, might it not be the case that these festivals (whether Christian or Hindu, pagan or Jewish) are, in fact, all pointing to something really true about the world, illustrated so beautifully by nature too?

By coincidence, I've just finished reading the American theologian Randy Woodley's wonderful book, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*. Woodley is a Native American Christian, and his book draws parallels between the Biblical idea of shalom and the 'Harmony Way' which he finds in all indigenous American religions. Given their similarities, he suggests that the author of these two ordering principles must be the same. As Jeremiah 31.33 says, 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

We see the fundamental pattern of Easter – new life triumphing over death – everywhere at this time of year. Maybe someone is trying to tell us something?

Maddy Pennington

A Great Wakening Light

After reading the Minute of Record of the life of our Friend Wilf Hayler in last month's newsletter, I was put in mind of an occasion at the Meeting House when he gave an impressive recitation of the much-loved old poem 'Abou Ben Adhem'. It was written by Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), a colourful character, born in Southgate, North London, to a devout Quaker mother and Philadelphia lawyer father who had been forced to come to England owing to their loyalist sympathies during the American War of Independence. Hunt was not particularly known for his poetry but was, nevertheless, an energetic figure in the Romantic movement. He was more a critic, essayist and friend to such literary giants as William Hazlitt, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats whose work he sometimes encouraged. They formed a group which met at Hunt's house in Hampstead which was known as The Cockney School. He provided help to Shelley during his not inconsiderable family problems.

The poem is written with great charm as a short fable featuring a spiritual experience in the life of the semi-historical Sufi Saint, Ibrahim Bin Adham (anglicised to Abou Ben Adhem), who is visited by an angel carrying out the task of writing into a golden book the names of 'those who love the Lord.' The poem suggests that we can most meaningfully love God by loving and caring for our fellow human beings, rather than putting emphasis on pious appearance:

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,

*'What writest thou?'—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'*

*The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.*

Ben Adhem seemed to ensure that he lived in love as a first principle but following his example is not always easy. The breadth of the love we are asked to give may guide us; Jesus gave us a new commandment to love in this way: 'That ye love one another; as I have loved you'. (John 13).

One powerful form of showing love is compassion, and to understand this may be key in helping in the development of loving intention and an understanding attitude. June Ellis speaks of the masks which we wear at times and the tendency to believe that others are sure and confident and do not grapple with the same conflicts: 'We are all wounded; we all feel inadequate and ashamed; we all struggle...this is part of the human condition; it draws us together'. (*Qfx*: 21.14)

Pema Chodron, Buddhist nun, author, and teacher, reminds us that compassion is not an exchange between 'healer and the wounded' but a relationship between equals: 'Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognise our shared humanity'.

A few years back, at the time of the Paris bombings, by design (or by very happy coincidence), Tamwar Masood, played brilliantly by young actor Himesh Patel, a Muslim character in BBC's 'Eastenders', paraphrased verse 4:36 of the Quran to explain to his girlfriend what he saw as the essence of his religion: 'Do good to relatives, orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, to the companion at your side and to the traveller.' He went on to explain gently: 'That, to me is what Islam is about. Be kind to people, family and strangers alike, and love them'.

Soap operas are not normally the place to go for spiritual guidance, comfort or subtlety but on this occasion, the scriptwriters couldn't have been more nuanced or timely.

'The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times', Pema Chodron (Harper Collins) **Barbara Earl**

The Genesis of a Book

I had always suspected that the letters that my parents wrote to each other during the troubled years of the war, would not only illumine a story of which I knew only part, but reveal more about two remarkable people, which I could only guess at. Both these facts were proved true in all respects, but I also discovered my father's remarkable writing talent, which could bring everywhere he visited instantly to life; and shining through every page of my mother's letters is her love of my father and of the family.

I began this project some six years ago, never imagining that I would still be working on it many years later. But as I soon discovered, it proved a much more difficult undertaking than I had originally anticipated. However, it quickly became obvious to me, even on a preliminary glance through these letters, that my father's letters provided an incomparable historical archive of a relatively untapped insider's view of the Unit, but together with my mother's letters to him, formed a unique picture of how the war tore apart a newly married couple.

The difficulty was in trying to splice the two sets of letters together to make a coherent whole. The vagaries of war time postal services, could well mean that letters often took several months to arrive, leaving my mother ignorant not only of my father's whereabouts, but whether he was sick - several times - depressed - much of the time - or, just about coping. Additionally, my father's frequent movements, meant that even when a letter did eventually arrive, he might not get it till he returned to base days or even weeks later. Further, although they numbered their letters so that each would know if any were lost, my father would happily head a letter 'Sunday',

followed by 'continued next day', making precise dating an additional struggle. All this meant that for most of the time they were writing into the blue, not knowing when a letter would arrive, and very often replying to the letter before last. So I have had to guess at dating from internal evidence – once this was the eclipse of the moon – and juggle with the best sequential order, making a speculative arrangement that hopefully made a story.

On top of this is my father's often scrawly writing, best described as characterful when he was taking care, spidery when tired, and bordering on the illegible when depressed. Like many of his generation he would also frequently refer to colleagues by their initials from PSC (Paul Cadbury) to HGA (Horace Alexander), familiar to my mother, but only a few to me, leaving one floundering in hours of patient research. The Unit was also rich in men of identical first names, so that identifying which Peter or John is being referred to can be yet another challenge.

Perhaps the most important task I had in writing the book was to set it in its historical context, so that readers would be able to determine how the Unit's activities dovetailed into the chequerboard of the war's progress. For this I have been indebted to Tegla Davies' 1947 first draft of the Unit's history, in his book *The Friends Ambulance Unit*, and to his son Mark for his permission to quote from it. In fact, the help I have received from all the descendants of the Unit members who were colleagues of my father, has been truly remarkable. Sometimes it has also been very moving, as in the case of the children of Harold and Mary Loukes, who looked after my father when he fell ill in India, and who had no knowledge of this part of their parents' life; or of being able to show Stephen Tanner the eulogy that my father had written of his father Tom, so tragically killed in the North Atlantic.

Such co-operation has come from both near and far: from South African Quakers, who had been so welcoming to my father and his FAU colleagues en route to Cairo; from the small band of remaining Lebanese Friends who had welcomed the FAU to Brummana; from the Haverford College of Quaker Collections in Pennsylvania, who furnished me with pictures of Jack Cadbury and Tessa Rowntree as she was, who had met each other and married whilst working at the FAU HQ in London; as well as from the many members of English Quaker families.

Of course no Quaker research would be possible without the inestimable help of all at Friends House Library, but especially Melissa Atkinson for chasing up the many photographs from their archives, that have so helped to illustrate this book, which I just about completed before Coronavirus shut the library down. I am also greatly indebted to the many friends, relatives and members of the public who helped me trace the post-war lives of those members of the FAU mentioned in the book.

My father started a memoir in his customary self-effacing style, which began as follows: 'In the course of the war, I was fortunate enough to travel rather widely and I have ventured to think that extracts from my letters to Joan might be of interest.' I have tried my best to complete his work as he envisaged it and in addition to add my mother's replies in as well, forming a fuller picture of the way the war unfolded for one family.

Antony Barlow

Contact Antony artspublicity@hotmail.com for the reduced cost to Friends of £15 +3.50 p&p.

Pan London Governance

Our fourth-Sunday discussion held on 28 March considered the Pan London Governance Proposal by which Area Quaker Meetings in London would combine into one for administrative purposes, which would reduce the number of Friends needed to service them and generally to improve our combined resources. This topic will be considered further at area Meeting in May. We were broadly favourable to the proposal but had a number of queries on which we will be seeking further input.

1. Financial: How would pan-London finances be arranged? Early days yet, but bullet points 2 and 3 of the proposal address this issue. (1. Preparation of consolidated accounts Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet Qfp4.10.l & m; 2. Overall financial health of the charity, and determination of how funds are delegated to AMs.) The Steering Group is aware that more needs to be done on this topic.
3. Good communications would be essential to ensure that Pan London Trustees take full account of local meeting needs and queries in order to prevent a potential us-them situation

developing. At least one of our local meetings already has experience of what can go wrong if this danger is not foreseen and addressed.

4. Would Pan London governance include permanent or paid staff to ensure that someone would always be available to answer queries raised by local area meetings, for example in respect of contracts of employment? This is still up for discussion but probably there would be a paid member of staff to service trustees. BYM also has template documents for (e.g.) contracts.

5. Trustees already shoulder a great deal of legal responsibility. Might this become problematical if, for example, local or area meetings organised quasi-political protests or rallies such as those of Extinction Rebellion? Much would depend on trustees' degree of risk aversion. Discernment would be key to such questions. (It might be possible to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) that limits the liability of trustees.)

DP

Collecting in April

4 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 11 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs,
18 Quaker Concern for Animals, 25 Quaker UN Office, Geneva

The deadline for the May edition is 25 April 2021

**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to
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Old Irish Blessing



may god give you / for every storm, a rainbow, / for
every tear, a smile, / for every care, a promise, / and a
blessing in each trial. / for every problem that life sends,
a faithful friend to share. / for every sigh, a sweet song,
and an answer for each prayer.