

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

December 2015

Dear Friends,

In this, our final newsletter of the year, David Parlett (assistant editor) and I would like to thank all those who sent in articles on such a wide variety of topics, poems, accounts of conferences or events attended, and, latterly, the crossword submitted by a 'Grumpy old Quaker'. Whoever could that be? Our newsletter reflects the lives of those connected with Croydon Quaker Meeting, and depends on your contributions, so keep them coming in!

Thank you all for reading it – without you there wouldn't be much point in compiling it.

So, we wish you all, writers and readers alike, a happy Christmas and a peaceful 2016.

Gillian Turner, editor

Christmas Greetings To you from us

Seasons Greetings – wishing you many blessings on the path ahead. to you all from **Cecily Taylor**,
Wishing everybody at Croydon Meeting and those connected to us a very Happy and Peaceful
Christmas. With Love from **Anthea, Mary, Nirvana and Ben Underwood**

Love and best wishes to you all in Croydon Meeting for a happy Christmas and New Year from
Mary Clarke

To wish everyone at Croydon Meeting a very Happy Christmas time and hope that they are able to
spend time with family and friends and relax and refresh themselves for next year. **Yvonne
Kassim**

Warm season's greetings to all Croydon Friends, in Croydon or far afield, and best wishes for
every blessing in the New Year, from **Rhiannon Rees**

Plenty love to everyone at Croydon Meeting, from **Joyce Trotman**,

Gillian and Godfrey Turner send love and best wishes to all at Croydon Meeting.

Greetings from us to you

Jade Flahive Gilbert, playing gamelon on the beach in Indonesia.

David Rees and **Kate Orchard** in Scotland. **Corinne Loos** in Cardiff.

Dave Perry in Colchester. **Mavis Parker** in Huntingdon

Helen and Mark Shorey in Guernsey, Myra married, and Olwyn at St Andrews University.

Gemma Tighe in London, **Clair** at university in the States

Emily Collins a tenant in our Quaker flat. **Sophie Collins** at Maastricht University.

Kathy Alton in Folkestone, **Matt** at Cambridge. **Philip Barron** at Polegate.

Auld Lang Syne

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Scotland! It does seem a long time since I last attended Meeting for Worship in Croydon. Losing the password which enabled me to access the Members' Area on the South London Area Meeting website made me feel totally out of touch, but that contact has now been restored.

Drawing to the close of our first full calendar year in Scotland, we now feel firmly settled in our new home. My journey to Meeting (on the first and third Sunday of every month) is several times longer than it used to be and cannot be undertaken in late autumn and winter without getting a small amount of South Lanarkshire mud on the shoes. August this year had five Sundays and I issued an invitation, through Malcolm Crosby, the Clerk, for members and attenders to come to Meeting on the fifth Sunday in our flat in Auchloch Garden Village. We have a large living room easily able to seat between fifteen and twenty (with a few chairs borrowed from the Atrium, our house common room). It was appreciated so much that we are going to do the same on the fifth Sunday in January 2016.

On the third Sunday in September, a Friend took me in his car to hear Ben Pink Dandelion speak in Dundee. His talk was based on his 2014 Swarthmore Lecture *Open for transformation*. It was well attended and led to some interesting questions and some lively discussion.

Last month, I was part of a small reunion of Scottish members of our Wisdom Schools held in June last year and again this year. We met in a small conference centre just outside Perth. With a journey of two hours each way, I was not able to spend the whole day with them, but we shared some quality time and real spiritual depth.

I thought that my cycling days were over, but in September I was tempted by an advertisement to buy a "semi-recumbent" tricycle with power assistance. It has two front wheels and one rear in which the electric motor is mounted, together with a very useful number of derailleur gears. We are not having cycling weather at present so I have not been out onto the highway yet. Auchlochan covers over fifty-two acres so I have fun doing an occasional circuit of the estate.

Isabelle joins me in sending very best wishes for a very happy Christmas and a peaceful 2016.

David Rees

Midnight Reindeers

It always seems sad to me that some music is only appropriate around December 25th, but at least it is kept fresh, and brought out every year. A Christmas hymn that I associate especially with my childhood at Croydon Meeting is 'O little town of Bethlehem' which we sang to the lovely tune 'Christmas Carol' by Walford Davies, which sadly hasn't survived very well, the traditional (twiddling) 'Forest Green' having taken its place. A particular favourite of mine, because of its plea for peace in the world is 'It came upon a midnight clear', also sung to a traditional tune 'Noel', with the verse...

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long,
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not the love-song which they bring,
O hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing.*

Sir Arthur Sullivan was offered the melody for adaptation and enlarged it adding the music for the last two lines. The words were written by Edmund Sears in 1849, an American Unitarian, who claimed to be descended from one of the Pilgrim Fathers. Another hymn on the same theme, more often sung in the US, is Longfellow's 'I heard the bells on Christmas day', which became better known in this country in 1958 when Harry Belafonte's version remained in the charts for six weeks.

*...And in despair, I bowed my head," There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men."
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep," God is not dead, nor doth He sleep,
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, goodwill to men*

The new tune was written by John Marks, who specialised in writing Christmas songs, following the success of 'Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer' in 1950-53. He wrote at least twenty-five Christmas songs including 'Rockin' around the Christmas tree'(1958) and 'A Holly, Jolly Christmas'(1962). Indeed he wrote hardly anything else. Of course, the season is the time when choral music comes into its own, and we enjoy again the works of Bach, and others. I discovered early Berlioz's 'Childhood of Christ' with the lovely 'Shepherds' Farewell', as my school choir had it in their repertoire; I think that must have led to my enjoyment of French music of this period. And to come up to date, the modern carols of John Rutter, who recently celebrated his 70th birthday, are now part of the season. Sometimes the simplest words and music are the most effective; Christina Rossetti wrote, in 1885, the following, which MUST be sung to 'Yuletide' by Sidney Hann -

*Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Stars and angels gave the sign...
... Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.*

Wilf Hayler

Ashura and Noah's Pudding

We welcomed visitors from the Turkish Muslim community at our meeting for worship on 22 November, the Fourth Sunday which is traditionally followed by a talk and shared lunch. The reading from *Advices and Queries* was No.6: *Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship.*

Ministry expanded on that theme, and included the well-known words of William Penn: *The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion QFP 19.28*

Our visitors joined us for refreshments, and stayed chatting while everyone else moved back to the meeting room for David Parlett's discussion on spoken ministry.

We then had our lunch together – soup, bread, cheese and hummus- after which our visitors told us about the festival of Ashura.

When the waters of the Great Flood began to recede, Prophet Noah and his family are said to have gathered up all of the food remaining on the Ark and made a delicious pudding out of it. Ashura is the name given to it, or Noah's Pudding. In remembrance and thanksgiving, people of the Turkish Muslim tradition have made it a custom to make this pudding and to share it with neighbours and friends, This offers a way to reaffirm unity and the essential relationship of humans to one another, regardless of personal faith, background and culture.

To much anticipation, an older couple arrived with a tray of individual pots of pudding, which were distributed and eaten with great relish. The couple had made the puddings themselves, beginning the night before by steeping the dried peas and beans and chopping the dried fruit.. These were then cooked separately the next morning, mixed together, put into the dishes and decorated with pomegranate seeds and walnuts.

We said goodbye to our visitors with many thanks and offers to take our Quaker Tottenham Cake (which Cathy Spence bakes for us every First Sunday) to their next celebration. – **G.T**

Divers Liveries

In *A History of God*, Karen Armstrong writes about the story told by Rumi, the 13th century Sufi poet, of Moses and the Shepherd to illustrate the respect we must show to other people's conception of the divine.

One day, Moses overhears a shepherd talking to God in what he takes to be a familiar manner. Moses was horrified. Who on earth did the shepherd think that he was talking to? Moses rebuked the hapless shepherd who went off feeling very sad. But God rebuked Moses: He did not want "orthodox words but burning love and humility. There were no correct ways of talking about God":

*What seems wrong to you is right for him
 What is poison to one is honey to someone else.
 Purity and impurity, sloth and diligence in worship,
 These mean nothing to Me.
 I am apart from all that.
 Ways of worshipping are not to be ranked as better
 Or worse than one another.
 Hindus do Hindu things.
 The Dravidian Muslims in India do what they do.
 It's all praise, and it's all right.
 It's not Me that's glorified in acts of worship.
 It's the worshippers! I don't hear the words
 they say. I look inside at the humility.
 That broken-open loneliness is the Reality,
 Not the language! Forget phraseology.
 I want burning, burning.
 Be Friends
 With your burning. Burn up your thinking
 and your forms of expression!*

Quoted in *The Longing, Teaching Stories and Selected Letters of Rumi*,
 trans and ed. Coleman Banks and John Moyne).

My visit to Quaker Life Representative Council

I set off from home early to get to Euston by half past twelve. As I am disabled everything takes longer than for able bodied people, which once I was too. How I remember those days with joy - but they are seeming very far away now. Getting to New Street Birmingham station, although changed, is still lovely as then I am almost at Woodbrooke, where I feel quite at home. On this occasion it is full to breaking point and many are housed outside to sleep just joining for meals and the course.

It is so lovely to meet old friends, some expected and others that one had not seen for ages and catching up with all their past news. The programme starts in the early evening as it is only for a weekend and time is so limited and so much is crowded in to so little time. Every moment is occupied before breakfast with yoga, singing, going for a run, group juggle and Indian head massage. Also the Quaker Centre book shop is well represented in the reception area. This time, although tempted, I resolved to travel light and took only the one book we were given in the folder, an interesting book for children called *The Worship Kit* by John Lampen, a young person's guide to Quaker worship. I shall add to our library as it is a most useful little book.

We were split into eight home groups with ten in a group. This is a lovely way to get to know people well. Group six must be my lucky number as Jocelyn Bell Burnell was in it as well as eight other interesting people. Two of the questions were: What is your relationship with Quakers? And What do you get out of Meeting? Reminding me so much about our Spiritual Review.

I would like to remind people about Quaker Life. It is there to help meetings and individuals with their problems. They are always so interested in what our meetings are doing differently and could hardly believe that we had breakfast before meeting every Sunday. One a month seemed possible to them but ours hardly possible at all.

With the help of the Friends in Residence every need is met and one could only wish it was longer. My other regret was I was only appointed for the last meeting in the triennium so missing the first five, and these rep councils are always so memorable I feel a little cheated. However I do hope Sarah Webster enjoys her six visits as our next Area Meeting Representative for Quaker Life Representative Council .

Anthea Underwood

As others see us

1. On 11 November, during *Free Thinking Festival: In conversation with Richard Dawkins* [on Radio 3], listeners discovered that the scientist seems to have a hierarchy of Christian denominations. Thirty-four minutes into the programme, which is still available on BBC iPlayer, one questioner spoke of his spiritual experience and said that he was now a Quaker. He said: 'I believe there's an element of the unknown and the unknowable and the mystery which, to me, is part of the heart of the spiritual journey for many of us.' In his response Richard Dawkins remarked: 'You're a Quaker and that's probably the best of all the versions of Christianity.' (From *The Friend*, 4 December.)

2. The latest issue of *Sofia*, the magazine of the Sea of Faith Network, contains an interview with theologian and philosopher Don Cupitt, conducted by John Shuck. Asked "Is there any future possibility for an evolution of the church or is the philosophy of creative faith a more individualistic philosophy?", Don replies: "According to the New Testament after the church comes the Kingdom of God and the radicals at the time of the Reformation did, some of them, attempt to go beyond the church to a Society of Friends or the kingdom form of Christianity that would no longer mediate between this world and the next, but would be purely ethical and this-worldly. So that, of the existing Christian denominations, the Quakers, particularly the English Quakers, are the closest to my views. In my view there will be religious societies such as the Sea of Faith, which still exists as a world-wide organisation. Those are examples of a free religious society. Notice that the Quakers have virtually no disciplinary apparatus and Sea of Faith, of course, has none. Sea of Faith is simply a free society of people in which you can air any opinion, nobody has special authority. I always say when I am at a Sea of Faith meeting: 'I am not the boss, this is not a fan club. Don't follow me, follow yourself, find out what you think and say that.' I want a church in which people can find themselves and express themselves, not a church which is a bunch of sheep all grazing and watched over by a shepherd."

[There is a link to this on the Sea of Faith Network at <http://www.sofn.org.uk/>]

D.P

Events calendar

*Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.
Please join us for muesli, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15*

- Wednesday 2 December: Quaking and Spoken Ministry.** Testing discernment to break the silence: what is Spirit-led and what is not? Fourth in Kindlers' series at Friends House, led by Thomas Swaine of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting YM. 6:30 for 7pm.
- Wednesday 9th: Loving my Soul into Being.** Glimpses of transformation - the heart of the matter in living the Life. Last in Kindlers' series at Friends House, led by Thomas Swaine of
- Sunday 13th: Meeting for worship for business** from 12:15; all welcome. We don't usually hold one in December but this is necessitated by problems with nominations.
- Monday 14th: A Quaker approach to activism** 19:00 to 20:30, Friends House Euston. Details in our online calendar.
- Sunday 20th: Christmas Sharing of Words and Music** In the meeting room, 2:15 to about 3:30, followed by tea and mince pies.
- Friday 25th: Meeting for Worship** 10:30 am "as led" until some time after 11am.
- Friday January 8th:** Quaker MP Ruth Cadbury (Lab, Brentford & Isleworth) speaks at Living Adventurously Group, Sutton meeting house, 7.30 – 9.30pm
- Sunday 10th: Meeting for worship for business**, 12:15; also Area Committee Mtg, Sutton 2pm.
- Sunday 17th: Croydon Friends New Year Social**

November Collections

Figures in parentheses are for donations by standing order

- 1 Croydon Nightwatch – £12
- 8 Quaker work at home and abroad - £23.05 (Yearly Meeting £87)
- 15 South London Area Meeting - £46 (AM £69)
- 22 Croydon Local meeting - £48.3 (LM £214)
- 29 Freedom from torture - £129.60

December: 6 Quaker work at home and abroad, **14** Croydon Churches Floating Shelter, **20** Area Meeting, **27** Friends Family Group.

The deadline for the January edition is Sunday 27 December 2015

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

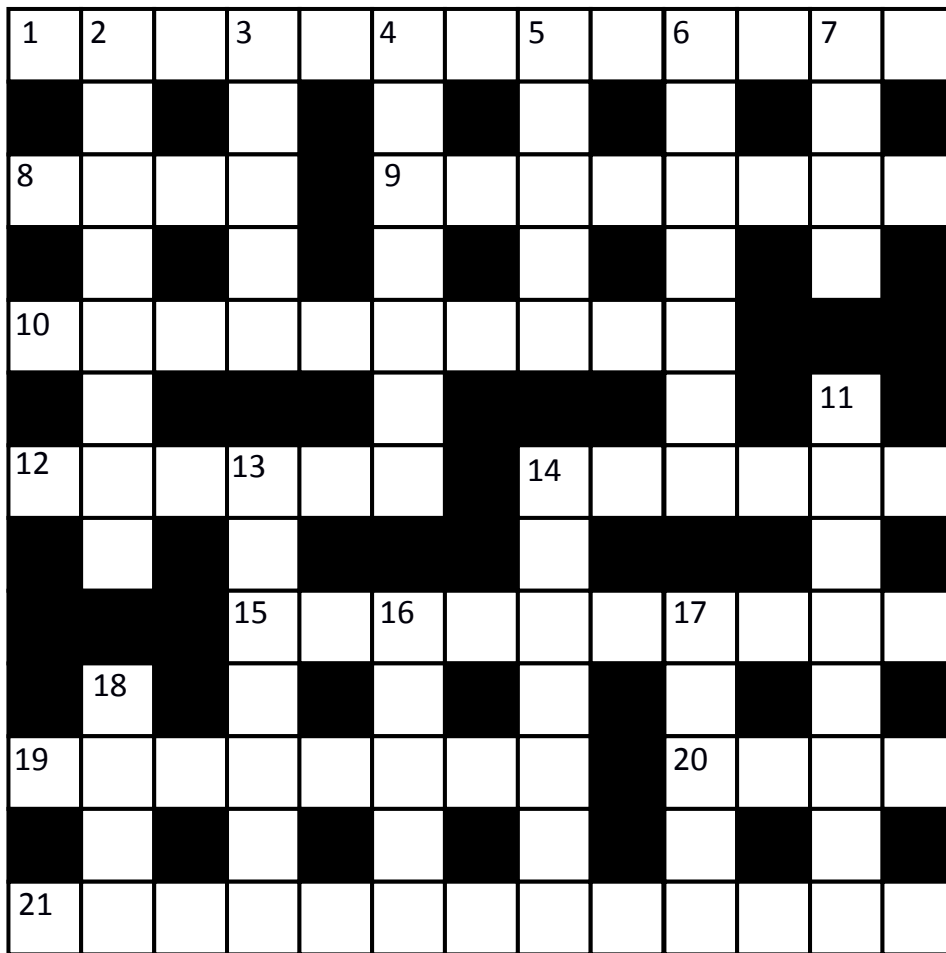
Bright Star

*The story of a birth so long ago
speaks to our hearts – a baby on the hay;
but is it more than fable that we tell?
Love came as still it comes, bright as a star,
to guide us on our way.
For simple-hearted folk it was not far;
inspired by angels soon they found their way,
though learned ones had distances to go
love came to lead them on - a brilliant star
to guide them on their way.
And to the stable of our lives love comes,
among the earthly things of every day,
it nestles in the manger of our hearts;
love comes to nourish us, and like the star
will guide us on our way.*

Cecily Taylor

Tune: Juliet Krouwel Quaker Song Book – Sing in the spirit

Friendly Crossword #3 by Grumpy Old Quaker



Across

- 1. Quaker William was the first (13)
- 7. Employer (4)
- 9. Pub game (8)
- 10. Forebear (10)
- 12. It's priceless! (5)
- 14. Beastly consort (6)
- 15. Licence to print (10)
- 19. Appointed archbishop in 1583 (8)
- 20. Saucy overhead? (4)
- 21. Philadelphia, for example (7,7)
- 7. Mary's mother (apocryphally) (4)
- 11. Language spoken just north of the ancient Romans (8)
- 13. It causes confusion – of property, tongues, etc (7)
- 14. Display temper (7)
- 16. Council outhouse? (5)
- 17. A gigantic order to pull up (5)
- 18. Friendly pronoun (4)

Down

- 2. Home to Hamlet (8)
- 3. Old Norwegian (5)
- 4. Baseball team (American, obviously) (7)
- 5. Where to meet (5)
- 6. The smell of mothballs (7)

