

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

December 2016

Dear Friends,

As always, in this our final newsletter of the year, we would like to thank all of you who sent in articles on such a wide variety of topics, poems, accounts of conferences or events attended.

We are particularly grateful to Wilf Hayler, who gave us, month by month, extracts from his father's diary of 1916, the year of the Battle of the Somme and the Conscriptio Act. We also thank Barbara Earl who faithfully wrote each month an article that reminded us of our Quaker spiritual lives.

We look back on this year as one of change, of development and of loss, as we feel at the end of every year, and we wish you all, writers and readers alike, a happy Christmas and a peaceful 2017.

Gillian Turner, editor; David Parlett, assistant editor

The Christmas Life

Bring me a tree, a young Norwegian spruce,
Bring hyacinths that rooted in the cold.
Bring winter jasmine as its buds unfold –
Bring in the Christmas life into this house.

Bring red and green and gold, bring things that shine,
Bring candlesticks and music, food and wine.
Bring in your memories of Christmas past
Bring in your tears for all that you have lost.

Bring in the shepherd boy, the ox and ass,
Bring in the stillness of an icy night,
Bring in a birth, of hope and love and light,
Bring in the Christmas life into this house.

Wendy Cope

Christmas Greetings To you from us

Seasons Greetings – wishing you light and love upon the way ahead. **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**

Rhiannon Rees sends all Friends loving greetings and best wishes for peace, good health and happiness at Christmas and in the New Year.

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

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

News of Friends to whom we sent loving greetings

Jade Flahive Gilbert, playing gamelon at the Boker World Music Festival in Indonesia, including her own composition. We hope to have Jade back amongst us next year.

Kate Orchard in Scotland.

Corinne Loos has settled in Cardiff, enjoying the countryside and many interesting activities.

Dave Perry has bought his new house, just outside Colchester.

Mavis Parker is living in Huntingdon.

Helen and Mark Shorey are in Guernsey. Helen is now clerk of Guernsey meeting, **Myra** is married and living in Jersey, and **Olwyn** is at Kings College, London University.

Gemma Tighe is a member of Bethnal Green meeting in East London and **Clair Tighe** is completing her third year at Leeds University.

Emily Collins is, with her partner Gareth, a tenant in our Quaker flat and manages a hostel for homeless girls. **Sophie Collins** has completed her Masters degree after an adventurous year, which she told is about in our November Fourth Sunday talk.

Matt Alton is completing his second year at Anglia Ruskin.

Three of our older Friends are happily settled in residential homes: **Philip Barron** in the Bernard Barron Homes in Polegate, **Reg Briscoe** in the Sunset Homes in Purley, **Mary Clarke** in the Burrell Mead Residential Home, West Wickham.

More News of Friends

David Parlett has been appointed Visiting Professor of Game Design at the University of Suffolk and will shortly be visiting the Ipswich campus (not for the first time) to give a talk on Joseph Strutt, author of *Games and Pastimes of the People of England* (1801). He is also to be awarded the Dau de Barcelona (dau is Catalan for dice) by the City of Barcelona Institute of Culture for “services to the advancement of games as culture” and will be there for the presentation later in the month. David has had three new games published this year and three more are due out in 2017. (*Congratulations from us all, David.*)

Auld Lang Syne

Dear Friends,

Isabelle and I are coming to the end of our third year in Lanarkshire and are thankful for being so well settled and for continuing to make new friendships among the residents of Auchlochan. The latest Auch-lochan quiz took place last week and was very well attended. Our team of six ended up with a score of 51 out of a possible 80, making us pretty average.

Isabelle has become an occasional attender at Lanark Quaker Meeting because she has made friends with an elderly (female) border collie named Pollaidh (pronounced Polly) who belongs to Meg Beresford, our Elder/Overseer. Pollaidh is named for Pollaidh Stac, a mountain near Ullapool, which Meg climbed about the time when the dog was born. Pollaidh is consistently still and silent throughout Meeting - an example to us all!

The world at large is no nearer to solving the problems with which it was afflicted three years ago and has acquired some new ones. For me, the late Jo Cox personifies our loss in quitting membership of the European Union, as we shall have done in a couple of years.

It was a great joy to meet with Friends on 26 September. I missed a number of people I was hoping to see. There is a possibility that both Isabelle and I may come to University of Warwick for the residential Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2017, which may be another opportunity for catching up.

Croydon is not looking very happy at present with the massive development work going on. I was sad to see Fairfield Halls closed. No one was able to tell me what is being done or when they are likely to open again. February 2019 will see the bicentenary of the birth of John Ruskin. I think that the developing Ruskin Square in Dingwall Road may have taken its name from its projected topping out date, which is likely to be around then, by the look of it.

We both send greetings and warm good wishes for Christmas and New Year.

David & Isabelle Rees

Alan Yardley

Alan was a birthright Friend and attended Sydenham Meeting with his parents.

He attended Sibford school, and continued his life long attachment to the school, as a representative both for West Weald and South London Area Meetings. He never considered himself academic, but enjoyed working with his hands which led him to his lengthy career as a dental technician, respected by local dentists and those who found him through the Yellow Pages to fix their dentures. He never turned anyone away, fixing dentures even on Christmas day. He was also a swimming instructor for all, from children to those in their 80's. Another big part of his life was his support for Crystal Palace football club, evidenced by the number of those who attended his funeral wearing Palace scarves and shirts.

He was our colourful sunshine Friend, always to be found in amazing tropical shirts, whatever the season. Even in the nursing home where he spent the last months of his life, he wore his colourful shirts and was a firm favourite among the care staff.

Alan's funeral was held on 13 June 2016 at Worth crematorium, full to bursting of those who loved Alan for his larger than life enthusiasm for life, and his deep spiritual belief. He was a family man, who adored his wife Pat, their children and grandchildren.

As an adult, he first attended Croydon Meeting and then Caterham meeting. After Caterham Meeting was laid down, Alan became an active member of Oxted Meeting where he took his responsibility as Elder seriously and attended Meeting regularly despite his increasing disability. When Oxted was laid down, he continued to support the resident Friend, who still lives at the old Meeting House, with loving sensitivity. He also made sure he attended the regular informal Meetings for Worship with Ex-Oxted f/Friends for years after the Meeting was laid down.

Latterly he attended Croydon Meeting and participated as much as he could in the life of the Meeting, a welcome figure in his colourful shirts, and with a beaming smile and a warmth which came from his deep spiritual belief. At Croydon he was also appointed an elder, but his increasing disabilities made it difficult for him to carry out his post as he would have wished.

At Oxted he was remembered with great affection and valued as a man of deep spiritual convictions and beliefs. A Friend said: 'He made you feel the joy of life'. He knew and loved the scriptures and, together with his love of the Quaker Testimonies, were the examples by which he lived his own life. "God bless you" was a phrase he used often and with conviction.

He has been described as a very solid Quaker, a holy man, who spoke - when he did - from deep silence. A genuine and honest man, who lived his life in joy and spread that joy to others.

Minute of Record prepared for South London Area Meeting by Lyn Beazley

December 1916

The end of an eventful year...

There is only one entry for December in my Father's collected diary relating to a C.O. Watch Night Service on December 31st which was held at The League House, in Portland Road, South Norwood – I wonder whether the building still stands and the whereabouts of its location.

Many of the family attended and 'the room was crowded and letters were read from Prisoners and leaders. Refreshments served.'

- WEFH

ONE CHRISTMAS AT THE FRONT

Come boys and hear my story, what happened on Christmas Day,
The tale has a touch of glory, and true, so the papers say.

The night was a night of silence, no shots from the Germans came,
Their guns were lying beside them, and ours were the very same.

Up in the dark blue heaven, flocked with a million stars;
Peace seemed no distant angel – in spite of the fears and scars.

Out in the woods close to us, foes might be lurking there,
Yet felt we something thrill us saying 'Be free from care.'

It was the night 'ere Christmas, when, down the stacks at home,
Old Father Christmas wended his way out afar to roam.

But where the homes were ruined, out where the dead men lie,
Thoughts of a Happy Christmas crept from the dark blue sky.

And on the night I speak of, hushed was the noise of strife,
And all the guns that evening breathed not a sound of life.

Slowly the night departed, taking the last lone stars,
Dawn broke and, peaceful hearted, free seemed the world from jars.

Surely the war had ended – no sound of horrid strife,
Surely some love had mended all broken, human life.

For as the day descended, light in the heavens grew bright,
Men with a 'Cheero' wending, walked in the 'enemies' sight.

'Ye'll no shoot th' day', said a soldier, 'It's Yule – we ha' keep it well.'
'We know' in a foreign accent, followed the words that fell.

So just where the tangled netting cut off a hundred foe;
Men of the 'fighting' nations shared bits of mistletoe.

Shared all the things from England, cut up the buns from France,
Bottled cream and fruit canned – was this a war or a trance?

Talked each to each of home-ties, wondered what brought them there,
Sorrowed to think that some eyes, shadowed of Love's despair.

Thus passed the day to evening, happy the time they spent,
Cared they for human slaughter, when brotherhood was meant?

Then when the shadows lengthened, each crept again away,
Glad that it had been Christmas – wished it were on next day!

Wished that in England's London, and in the Huns' Berlin,
Something of that Great Spirit might each the other win.

Strange is our life, perplexing, puzzling to far extremes;
But, through the maze of troubles, God makes a way for dreams.

MHCH (1914)

Mark's poem and final diary entry end the series, and we look forward to Wilf beginning a different series next year.

A Trust in the Light

Our informal discussion group, which meets on alternate Monday afternoons is studying "Words", a book by noted Friend, Harvey Gillman. In each chapter, he takes key religious terms and concepts such as 'Spirit' and 'Worship' and explores both meaning and significance. The chapters are short but full of interesting ideas and questions and much fruitful discussion takes place after each paragraph.

Gillman sees words as 'stepping-stones' on a journey to the 'rightness of things' and believes that they can be suitable tools for this spiritual journey. This week we looked at a very deep chapter entitled: 'Transformation, Redemption and Salvation.' As Gillman points out, there are whole theologies embedded in such words and it may be a lifetime's work to understand the terms and their varying meanings for different denominations within world religions.

We spent a lot of time considering the idea of 'transformation' and the different responses made by two Quakers of differing points of view mentioned in the first paragraph. Gillman mentions that he used the word at a conference and was met by one Friend's indignant response: 'Why should I be transformed?' Yet Ben Pink Dandelion stated in his Swarthmore Lecture: 'We live in expectation of transformation'.

Friends spoke of their understanding of transformation in terms of a gentle, gradual process which takes place within. There may be decisive moments and experiences which point the way on our individual, spiritual journeys. Gillman goes on to explain that these terms are not states of being but are descriptive of 'the process of being alive.' We live a life of 'wisdom and folly,

revelation and blindness, vulnerability and strength, an awareness of darkness and a trust in the light'.

'Trusting in the light' may be the core of this glorious spiritual adventure. Do we just know the words or do we know the Source? Lorraine Sinkler, an Infinite Way teacher tells the story of two men who were called upon to recite the Twenty -Third Psalm in front of a large gathering. The first to recite was a young man with a wonderful, strong and melodious voice. When he finished he was applauded loudly and enthusiastically. Then the other man rose to speak. He was, to appearances, an old man with a cracked and creaky voice but when he finished, the gathering sat in awed silence. After a while, the young man got up and said: 'You know the difference between us? I knew the Psalm.....but he knew the Shepherd.'

Barbara Earl

Quaker Christmas Quiz

Below are the questions we were challenged to answer at Area Meeting. How would you have answered them if you had been there? (*I'd love to have your reply in writing for the next newsletter! Gillian*)

1. *What do you bring from your previous faith or non-faith experience that influences what you hope to find in Quaker meeting?*
2. *How do you support others in their spiritual journey?*
3. *What difference does meeting for worship make in your life?*
4. *How do you contribute to the quality and depth of meeting?*

Area Meeting 27 November 2016

Area Meeting was held at Streatham and Brixton (S&B) Meeting House on 27 November. David Parlett, Gillian and Godfrey Turner and I represented Croydon.

After a simple but tasty meal, the spiritual activity was active listening in pairs (see above). We then completed a full business agenda.

Kevin and Lucy Vento of Sutton were accepted into membership. The membership of Ginny Baumann of S&B was transferred back from Adelphi Meeting, Maryland. Overseers at Croydon and S&B have been trying to contact members who have not been involved for some time, to find out whether they still wished to be members. As a result, the membership of Pearl Allen and Bernard Crier of Croydon and five S&B members was terminated. Sutton reported the deaths of Doreen Morris and Simon Holding. A minute of record of Alan Yardley's life was read (see above).

Area Meeting (AM) nominations committee was laid down, as a result of difficulty in finding Friends to serve. It was agreed Area Meeting Committee (AMC) would take over its role.

Among other appointments for 2017, David Parlett was appointed Membership Clerk and Custodian of Records; Frances Touch Treasurer ; Phil Laurence Assistant Treasurer; Elspeth Andrews Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Brenda Whitaker Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

The AM Trustees' annual report and accounts were accepted (e-mailed to members before the meeting).

AM Trustees' recommendation that the Caterham Building Fund be donated to Six Weeks Meeting (SWM) was accepted. It was explained that these were funds donated for the purpose of providing a Meeting House in Caterham. When it was laid down, Caterham Meeting had decided that, if the funds were not used for this purpose within twenty years, they should be donated to SWM, so it would not be in right ordering to do anything else with them.

A policy of disinvestment from fossil fuels, for AM and our Local Meetings, was agreed, as part of our commitment to become 'a low-carbon, sustainable community'. Legacies Committees were asked to give active consideration to investing in renewables. AM will be returning to this.

Margaret Onians, our representative on SWM, which is responsible for all the Meeting Houses (MHs) in London, presented their annual report and accounts (I have a paper copy). Following completion of Kingston MH, major refurbishment at Westminster and sale of Petts Wood in 2014, 2015 was a quieter year. Some work was delayed into 2016 for various reasons. Margaret said the Secretary had a heavy workload and SWM only had funding for about a third of the work recommended in Quinquennial surveys. The project to respond to our sustainability commitment

continues. SWM is working on longer-term, strategic thinking. In future more paid support is likely to be needed.

Margaret explained that SWM was being replaced by London Quakers Property Trust in 2017. Charity law now requires named persons to take responsibility. Helen Drewery, Clerk of AM Trustees, was appointed to represent our AM.

The S&B spiritual review was presented (e-mailed to members before the meeting).

The next AMC will be on 15 January and the next Area Meeting on 19 February, both at Sutton.

Rhiannon Rees

The horrendous price of peace

Extract from an article by Giles Fraser in The Guardian 29.07.2016

I have never read my scriptures as an instruction manual from God. More a reflection of a historic real-world human struggle for faith, in which faith is discovered. And the difference between good religion and bad religion – like the difference between good and bad people – has little to do with who is right and who is wrong about God and absolutely everything to do with how each religious tradition manages its own propensity for violence.

And it is here that the language of sacrifice is especially tricky. I have no time for the idea that Jesus is sacrificed on the cross to appease an angry God. If that's true, then God becomes the enemy of humankind and I am against him. No, Jesus absorbs the violence that comes from us not from God. He receives our blows, our punishments, our disdain. And, despite his innocence – or, rather, precisely because of it – he refuses to answer back in kind. No more an eye for an eye.

In other words, the sacrifice of the cross is the non-violent absorption of human violence.

The offer of love in return for hate, even to the point of death. This is the horrendous price that peace is sometimes asked to pay.

Written after the murder of Father Jacques Hemel at Rouen

INVITATION

CHRISTMAS WOULD NOT BE MERRY WITHOUT YOU !!!

Join us for drinks, appetisers, Turkish food, at the Eagle Community Centre 52 Tamworth Road, Croydon CR0 1XW, on Wednesday 14 Dec at 6:30pm. RSVP parahat.akmuradov@lhedu.org.uk
The Eagle Community Centre (<http://lhedu.org.uk>) is a South London-based charity working to enable and empower young people through education. It aims to raise confidence and ability to take initiative amongst today's youth. It is a people-centric organisation aiming to give responsibility to all those who are willing to volunteer. We encourage involvement from all ages, focusing firstly on parents. We are currently looking to diversify our services and to reach out to the wider local community through new events and activities, contributing a greater sense of social cohesion and citizenship. The idea of the Friendship Dinner is to bring people from different sectors of the local community together to have an enjoyable dinner. We hope the event will promote interaction and friendship between all different groups within the local community. We would be most grateful if you would consider this request and look forward to your reply. Yours sincerely, Parahat Akmuradov
Eagle Community Centre Croydon Branch Manager RSVP parahat.akmuradov@lhedu.org.uk,

Coming up...

The ladies' toilet will be closed from 5th to 23rd December so that an accessible toilet can be installed. The gents' toilet will be a designated unisex toilet, with the urinals out of use and sight. Both toilets will be repainted and redecorated and provided with hot air hand-dryers.

Sunday 4 December: Meeting for upholding aka prayer for healing. 10:10am, leading straight into mfw.

Sunday 4 December: London's Younger Quaker Worship Group presents... Quakers Unplugged! Join us for an informal evening of music and poetry at Westminster Quaker Meeting House. Enjoy performances by members of London's Younger Quaker Worship Group and friends, with hot drinks and homemade cake available! Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm

start. Entry is free, with a retiring collection for Quaker Social Action. If you'd like to come, please click 'attending' on the Facebook event at www.facebook.com/events/ or email Iwona so we have an idea of numbers.

Saturday 10 December: Peace and good will 5.00 to 7.00, QLG London are having a Peace and Goodwill to All seasonal celebration at Westminster Meeting House. Non-alcoholic punch and mince pies will be provided.

Sunday 11 December:



from 2:15 to about 3:30, followed by tea and mince pies. You are welcome to bring music (CD or live) and/or a reading with seasonal (Christmas winter, etc) significance or at least resonance. Or just come and listen!

Wednesday 14 December: Eagle Community Centre Friendship Dinner See Invitation above.

Sunday 18 December: Additional business meeting to deal with nominations and appointments.

Sunday 25 December: Meeting for worship 10:30 to 11:30 as usual.

Friday 13 January: Red Flag over Bermondsey The Ada Salter Story, Written and Performed by Lynn Morris, directed by Dave Morris. 7.30 - 9pm at Kingston mh, Fairfield East, KT1 2PT. Donations requested £10/concessions £5. All profits and donations from Red Flag over Bermondsey will be used to support our work with the Women's Co-operative of Seir, West Bank, Palestine. Where to start with Ada Salter? She was a true radical, campaigner for equal rights, socialist, republican, pacifist, environmentalist, trade union activist and a leading light in the transformation of the Bermondsey slums in the early part of the twentieth century. Eventbrite booking link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/red-flag-over-bermondsey-journeymen-theatre-tickets-28848372258?aff=es2>

Saturday 14 January: Nurturing our Spiritual Roots A quiet day at Wandsworth Meeting House, 10:00 to 16:30, 59 Wandsworth High Street London SW18 2PT. Bookings/Enquiries to Linda Murgatroyd. A day of reflection rooted in silent worship. Come and nourish your spirit and help prepare for what the coming year may bring, or just come and use the quiet time as you are led. Optional silent activities from different spiritual traditions will be offered, or you might prefer to spend some time journaling or to spend the whole day in an extended meeting for worship in the Quaker tradition. Please bring something to share for lunch which will be eaten together in silence. We will close the day with some worship-sharing, followed by tea and cake at 4pm.

Saturday 14 January: Feeding the Darkness 7.30 - 10.30pm, Kingston Quaker Centre, Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PT. By Journeyman Theatre (Lynn and Dave Morris). 'Art Thou in Darkness? Mind it not for if thou dost, it will fill thee more...' (James Nayler). This 65 minute performance is a result of extensive research into the dark world of state-sanctioned torture and its stark impact on victims, perpetrators, families and those who collude in the 'process'. Immersive in style, Feeding the Darkness frames verbatim and 'faction' monologues, duologues and poetry as a series of 'ministries' which challenge our ignorance and avoidance of this sensitive and disturbing subject. Booking: Eventbrite

Sunday 15 January: Area Meeting Committee meeting 12:30 at Sutton mh. All welcome (not just committee members).

Saturday 21 January: Betty Ellis memorial meeting 2.30pm at Croydon mh. Refreshments provided.

Sunday 22 January: Croydon Friends New Year Social Fun, food and games the Quaker way.

Breakfast every Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am.

Please join us for muesli, toast and coffee. Coffee available until 10.15

Quaker Homeless Action

The Quaker Christmas Shelter will cost £18,550. Can you help?

We need funds, volunteers, men's clothing and shoes, and for all Friends to hold us in the Light.

"More than the dinners, what we really appreciate about this place is being treated like a human being" (A guest in 2015).

We welcome donations from meetings and individuals. Please send cheques and CAF vouchers to Matthew Richardson, Flat 1 Ashton Court, 9 Elmwood Road, London SE24 9NU.

We also welcome direct transfers by BACS: for bank details please see www.QHA.org.uk.

Quote

"He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars: general Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and flatterer, for Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars"

William Blake, *Jerusalem The Emanation of The Giant Albion* (ch. 3)

Collected in November

6 Croydon Night watch 98.50

13 Quaker work at home and abroad 29.00

20 South London Area Meeting 32.00

27 Freedom from Torture 103.50

Collecting in December: 4 Quaker work at home and abroad, 11 Refugee Youth, 18 South London Area Meeting, 25 Friends Family Group

The deadline for the January edition is Sunday 1 January 2017

Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner

Tel 020 8688 9659, email gillianturner033@gmail.com

Prayer for Peace 2017

Lead me from Death to Life
from Falsehood to Truth.

Lead me from Despair to Hope,
from Fear to Trust.

Lead me from Hate to Love,
from War to Peace.

Let Peace fill our Hearts, our World, our Universe
Peace Peace Peace

Cecily writes: This is the international Prayer for Peace translated into more than 40 languages. It is said each day whenever it is noon around the world. You are invited to join in.