

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

February 2020

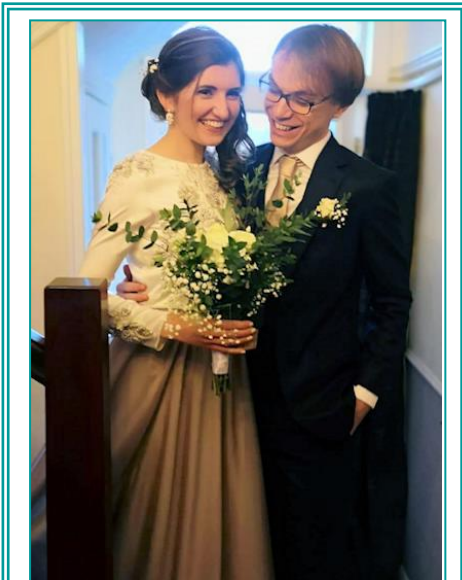
Dear Friends: This month continues some of the themes discussed in our last edition, especially sustainability with suggestions for us to take on board, and as always there is the usual mix of news of Friends. If you would like to feature in this section, please contact either of us.

Gillian Turner and David Parlett

February is the month when gardeners propagate their seeds.

Jesus told his followers this parable: 'the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants, so that the birds come and perch on its branches. ' Matthew 13: 31. 32

Words like birds



Maddy and Tom's wedding was reported in the December issue before we had access to any photos, so – better late than never!

Words like birds
 come settle on my branches
 to spell the recurring
 mystery of leaves -
 returning leaves -
 and blossoms
 wrought in paradise.
 For in a world of restless din
 where war and earthquake
 wreak their worst
 and tragedies run riot,
 I need those reassuring words,
 those silent words
 from depths of peace and quiet -
 that still small voice within. *Cecily Tayler*

News of Friends

Kitty McVey The funeral of Kitty's partner of many years, Nick Singer, took place on 13 January, 2020 at Beckenham Crematorium. Nick had been a musician, and his band led

the cortege and mourners from the gates to the chapel with a stirring rendition of 'When the saints go marching in.' The service was taken by the local vicar with some unexpected songs, one by a Quaker poet and one a recording of Nick singing and playing the banjo. There was a small Quaker contingent supporting Kitty at this difficult time, and we send her our love as always.

News of our Friends in the Quaker Flat

Chris Alton, whom some of us remember as a child in the meeting, with Kathy his mother and brother Matt, has vacated his room in the flat and moved to Manchester to continue his career in art.

Emily Collins, also a child of the meeting, with Gareth Iley her partner, are renting their own flat at the end of February. They have recently announced their engagement and we wish them every happiness in their future together.

Newcomers to the flat

Taking their place in the flat we look forward to getting to know Aidan Phillips, who is our Friend George Hosking's Project Manager at WAVE, Michelle Dumont who attends Guernsey Meeting until she moves to London, and her partner Laurence Hall who attends Westminster Meeting.

Jade and Eka

It is now just over a month since my husband Eka arrived to join me in the UK all the way from Central Java, Indonesia. We were so happy that he arrived just in time to experience Christmas with our family in England, eating a roast dinner, watching Christmas films and seeing the lights in London. Of course, coming all the way from Indonesia means that Eka is having to adapt and acclimatise to life in the UK, which at the moment means wearing a lot more layers than he is used to, carrying chilli sauce everywhere with him and getting public transport as opposed to driving his motorbike. However, this is all being made easier by living in a lovely home with our friend Gillian, having a wonderful support network of friends and family in London and being relieved that we are finally together after various challenges including a lot of paperwork. Eka is enjoying spending time feeding the birds (and squirrels!) in Gillian's garden, cooking Indonesian food for friends and family, going to dance class at the Indonesian embassy and playing Gamelan in groups in the city. He also goes to the big mosque in Croydon and has been happy to meet Friends at Croydon meeting house, in particular at the social last Sunday. Bit by bit we are figuring out our life together in London, and are grateful to all of the support and love we have around us.

Jade FG

Liz Collins: Swimathon

I am supporting two important charities this year by taking part in a swimathon. On 28 March I will swim 2.5k at Purley swimming pool. That's 100 lengths! I have started training for this - currently up to 40 lengths so there is a way to go still, but I am determined.

Any help and support to help me reach my goal will be greatly appreciated. Words of encouragement are free and always welcome. However if you would like to sponsor me you can go to my JustGiving page (click on the link below or type into search bar)

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Liz-collins-swim>

Or see me over a coffee on a Sunday

All funds raised will go to Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie. I have seen first hand some of the amazing progress that has been made to diagnose and treat cancer through research grants funded by CRUK.

I have also received help and support from Marie Curie who provided palliative care, emotional and practical support to my family.

Tony and Jane Robinson - visitors to Meeting for Worship

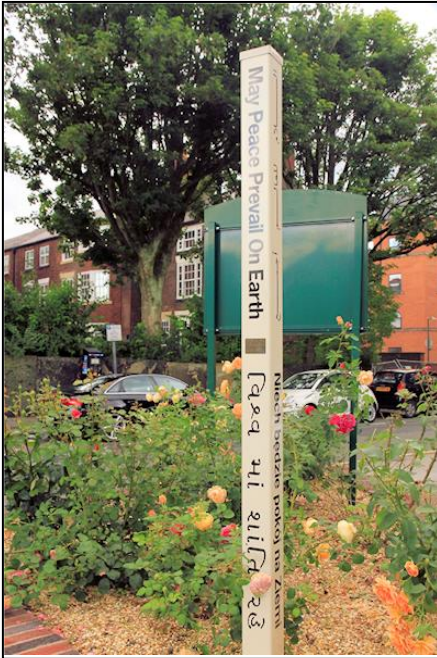
We visited Croydon Meeting in December. In 1976 we got married in the Meeting House and it was great to return. Since then we have been living in the Northwest and are members of Bolton Meeting - we would like to introduce you to Bolton...

Quakers have been worshipping in Bolton since 1668. We are in Pendle Hill Area Meeting but we don't know if George Fox ever visited - we hope he did.

Bolton has gone through many changes - a thriving textile town, it featured in the film *The Family Way* which older Friends may remember. More recently its magnificent 1930s town hall crescent was in *Peaky Blinders*, pretending to be the road outside a London club.

In the late 60s, as the textile mills were declining and Fred Dibnah was demolishing the chimneys, the town centre was rebuilt. The Meeting House was demolished to make way for a bypass but in return, Friends got a brand new Meeting House in the town centre, with meeting rooms, accommodation for wardens and a car park. This has allowed the Meeting to thrive as a centre for the whole community, with many local groups using the building.

In recent years Bolton town centre has suffered, like many towns, not helped by the football team moving to a new stadium by a retail park, some miles out of town. Bolton Wanderers are not doing well either. The town centre has empty shops but there are plans for new developments near the Meeting House at the former canal basin. Unfortunately, the canal is now under the bypass too.



Bolton is, however, still a vibrant community and Friends have recently put up a Peace Pole inscribed with all the languages used in the town. We actively help a destitution project for asylum seekers without support and Friends also volunteer in the local Fair Trade shop. Northern Friends Peace Board have their office in the town and their coordinator is a member of the Meeting.

The Meeting is medium sized and we have a weekly discussion group 'Talks and Thoughts', shared lunches and discussions on aspects of Quaker Practice. Although we don't have enough children for a class, we do invite them to our third Sunday shared lunch where a small group can do activities.

Bolton Friends have asked us to send their greetings to Croydon – if anyone is travelling to the Northwest you will be most welcome to join us for worship.

Purley Friends new meeting venue

In August Purley Friends left the Meeting House in Downs Court Road and began meeting at St Mark's (Woodcote). It is set in delightful gardens and we have access to two large rooms. This means we can still hold a weekly Children's Meeting, indoors or out.

Meeting for Worship now begins at 11.15 am to allow the church congregation to enjoy their refreshments before we arrive. The arrangement comes with the additional benefit of occasional cake donations left for us in the kitchen by our Anglican hosts. We have been made welcome.

Of course, it doesn't yet feel quite like home and temperature control is tricky but people who arrive early for Meeting are warmed by the unavoidable fitness sessions that now come with the need to set up (and then set down) the furniture. Well, there's an incentive for earliness/lateness [delete as appropriate].

Unfortunately, numbers of regular attenders have dropped following our move; and the lack of a physical presence in Purley town centre means that Quaker-curious locals are perhaps less likely to seek us out.

Our sense of having been set adrift has not yet evaporated and a meeting between Purley Friends and LQPT will be taking place soon. It seems that LQP Trustees were not properly apprised of the difficulty of our situation until it was too late to change course. We hope that lessons will be learned and that, in future, meetings wanting to explore more sustainable accommodation options will receive better advice and support.

Eleri Pengelly

The Happy Baby Community

The Happy Baby Community has been really enjoying holding our volunteer supervision/training sessions at Croydon Meeting House since September 2019. The six children of our community member volunteers love the space and the toys and are happy to play around us whilst we work. We all feel very welcome.

On 21 January we also used the East Room to hold a day's training around our new pilot project – providing birth companions for women whilst they are in labour in hospital. This is so important as so many of the women we see are going to hospital alone to give birth, and is something that we have wanted to be able to offer for a long time. At our training we had 16 doulas (doulas are women trained to



offer practical, social and emotional support during birth), three doula supervisors, two specialist midwives, and two community member volunteers (who both have experience of giving birth alone). It was incredibly exciting to see this group all gathered in one room, sharing and learning from each other.

Jo Doherty

On the Far Side of Revenge



Seamus Heaney, the late Northern Irish poet, playwright, teacher and translator regarded by many as one of the finest poets of his generation, won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. He was greatly revered in Ireland, and internationally, for his creativity, searing intelligence and genuine personality which was free from pretension. Michael, his son, said that despite increasing fame and glittering prizes, he never lost ties with his family's rural County Derry farming background. 'He was just dad at home'.

In 1991, as a tribute to Nelson Mandela, he published *The Cure at Troy*, a verse adaption of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. The play, a tale of the savagery and corruption which conflict brings, starts at the close of the Trojan War. Philoctetes, an archer, has been left by Odysseus, the King of Ithaca and his men on the island of Lemnos owing to his festering, badly

wounded foot and his unbearable cries of distress. He is desolate and almost completely broken in his wretched vulnerability and abandonment. Interestingly, outcasts in Heaney's work share these qualities of victimhood.

Meanwhile, Odysseus is told that the war will not be won without the invincible bow and poisoned arrows which belong to Philoctetes. The King hopes that after ten long years, the wounded man will have died and he heads back to Lemnos to retrieve the coveted weapon. The archer greets Odysseus with hatred and fierce anger but decides to sail back with the Greeks and is healed by the King's physicians. Philoctetes overcomes his deep sense of rage and betrayal with the help of advice from the god Heracles, and goes on to enter the Trojan horse and fight at the sack of Troy.

In the narratives of the Trojan War, Heaney found resonance with both the Northern Irish conflict and the South African apartheid regime. He noted that Nelson Mandela, despite undergoing remorseless and unspeakable treatment, went back just as Philoctetes had done to aid his broken city: 'helping the *polis* to get together again'.

Also, Heaney highlighted the fight between personal integrity and the strong pull of political expediency. He speaks of how, understandably, the victim may focus on his wounds in the same measure as the perpetrator clings to the justification of his actions.

The Cure at Troy, however, offers hope:

*History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then; once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge,
Believe that a farther shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.*

Heaney had been expected to leave his papers to Harvard where he had been Professor of Poetry but characteristically he gave them to the National Library of Ireland. To the amazement of Library staff he delivered them himself, without fanfare, from the boot of his car. He died

suddenly in Dublin on 30 August 2013, arousing a considerable outpouring of loss and appreciation. Critic Karl Miller described Heaney as a 'poet to be grateful for'.

His last text to his wife, Marie, said, 'noli timere' – don't be afraid.

Barbara Earl

The Cure at Troy – Sophocles' Philoctetes, Seamus Heaney (1990) Faber and Faber

Death of a Naturalist, Seamus Heaney (1966) Faber and Faber

'Protecting Our Planet - Quakers Working Locally with others'

This was a London Quakers event at Friends House on 11 January. Several Friends from Blackheath Meeting, one of them still at school, told us about a successful outreach event that they had held at their Meeting House. This had brought together local politicians, climate campaigners, faith bodies, young people and schools to exchange ideas on how to work on climate and sustainability issues together. The purpose was to empower participants to take action, so that they left feeling 'yes, we can!' They considered the event had met this aim.

They explained that Blackheath Meeting had for some years had an 'eco-group'. They had shared meat-free meals and taken action to reduce the use of plastic and were used to working with other local groups on sustainability issues. They had considered work on population, but decided this was too controversial. They had decided to hold an event that would: be outward-looking; inform people about what was already being done; see what was already working and how existing initiatives could be supported; and inspire and empower participants.

They also decided that the tone should be positive throughout, with no 'hand-wringing' about the state of the planet: there was a place for this, but not at this event. International issues, including the role of big business, were also important but too broad to be included in the scope of this one day.

A planning group of five people had held lively discussions, shared expertise and divided up the tasks at regular meetings over a period of two months. It was clearly very well-planned - the planning was completed two months before the event. The Blackheath Friends went through the points that they had considered, including the participants, the date, the venue and the detailed organisation of the day. These would be useful for planning any major event. They decided on an invitation-only event and invited 80 participants from different local communities. They spent some money on publicity and hiring sound equipment but the event cost very little. They were fortunate to have an experienced facilitator and the whole Meeting was involved in greeting guests and providing a vegetarian buffet.

Participants reported a variety of actions after the event:

Encouraging school-friends to make little books recording what they had done- taking small steps encouraged them to do more and inspired others;

Reducing plastic use by using re-usable cups, getting milk from a milkman and buying food in recyclable trays;

Reducing their dependence on cars;

Lobbying MPs;

Supporting charities like the Woodland Trust and local groups like 'Friends of Greenwich Park';

Holding the Planet in the Light.

We then split into small groups, based on our locality, to talk about what our Meetings had done.

Books recommended included *The Uninhabitable Earth* by David Wallace-Wells, *Common Sense for the Twenty-first Century* by Roger Hallam, and *Active Hope* by Joanna Macy. (Joanna Macy has been recommended at several Quaker events that I have attended). **Rhiannon Rees**

Pan London Governance

The Steering Group met on 4 December and will be meeting again on 6th February.

There is now an email address by which any member of the London Area Meetings can contact the Steering Group: quakerpanlondonsteeringgroup@gmail.com

It is planned that Area Meetings will be given sufficient time to consider proposals so as to have two meetings when the subject can be considered at the consultation stage, and similarly when a final decision is to be made.

One of the members of the Steering Group has suggested setting up an 'unbounded group' to work alongside the Steering Group and the Working Group. Are we beginning to imagine a new structure, building on the extraordinary organisational creations of early Friends? Anyone interested in joining this group is asked to let the Steering Group know - or tell me and I will pass your name on.

Barbara Cairns

Quaker Arts Network News

Welcome to 2020, Friends. At this time of change, the world needs all the love and truth it can get. I look forward to another year of exploring and sharing our leadings through the arts, including in seeking peace, justice, beauty and a lower-carbon year in 2020.

Our website at <http://quakerarts.net/> already shows a number of Quaker Arts events for 2020 and we hope you will add others as soon as you know about them. We can't highlight them all here, so do take a look there from time to time. Reminders of events and other items can also be shared on our Facebook page, and if you're not on Facebook you can email items to quakerartsuk@gmail.com for the website or newsletter.

We anticipate a Quaker arts presence at YMG, at Bath, from 1 to 7th August. We hope to offer an opportunity to explore the theme of Theatre and storytelling as prophecy and witness.

As well as diverse offerings offered by individuals, we also hope that the Loving Earth Project (see below) will feature at Yearly Meeting Gathering in some form, and may seek help from some of you (especially those who are stitchers) to facilitate this.

The Loving Earth community textile Project started out for our exhibition at Swarthmoor Hall last year. It is proving a good way to help people explore links between our own actions and the destruction of our fragile environment, without being overwhelmed. The community textile is growing slowly, and we welcome further 30cm square textile panels in any style. They can be sent to FWCC's offices at Friends House. Since the initial exhibition it has already visited Birmingham and various parts of London and Surrey. Other displays are in the pipeline.

The project is also beginning to expand both among Quakers and more widely. We will be working with Woodbrooke as part of their work on 'Climate Crisis: spiritual nurture and learning' commissioned by BYM Trustees. Watch out for an article in *The Friend* in the near future, and for publicity from Woodbrooke soon after. If you know anyone who'd be interested in participating in the project, please encourage them to look at lovingearth-project.uk for more information.

Linda Murgatroyd

(Linda originally joined Friends at Croydon meeting, and for many years Croydon was at the forefront of what was then called the Quaker Fellowship of the Arts. – DP)

Events

Thursday 6 February Informal Discussion Group, 2pm, on Paul's letter to the Philippians. If you would like to join them, please contact Barbara or Joyce.

Saturday 8 February, Friends House, 2 - 4.30pm: *Language, Truth and Religion*, talk by Alan York of the Quaker Universalist Group.

Sunday 9 February, Croydon Friends' local Business Meeting, 12.15pm. All welcome. Among other things, we will be looking back at how we spent our money in 2019, and considering ways in which we can take small steps to live more sustainably, as one response to the climate emergency. So join us if you can.

Sunday 16 February at Sutton meeting house: South London Area Meeting. Sutton Friends will provide lunch at about 12 noon and the meeting will begin as soon as possible - about 1pm. The main item will be about our carbon footprint - what we might do and what we are doing to reduce it. Members are encouraged to go, and attenders are always welcome, but if you are not a member please let Rhiannon know in advance.

Saturday 22 February *Compassionate Communities - Kindness in Action*: Sutton Meeting House, 10.30am to 4.30pm. The next in the series of Kindlers' *Everyday Quakers* workshops. All are welcome and you are invited to come to as many as you can. The cost is £5 per session, payable in advance. [Pay: BACS bank code 40-52-40 Acc: 00004560. Ref: KINDL+initials, email

Frances which sessions, ftepsom@gmail.com, or cheque to South London Area Quaker Meeting. Send to: Treasurer, 11 Portland Place, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1DL].

Collected in December

01 Britain Yearly Meeting 70.00
 08 Refugee Youth (for 'Amazing People of the World') 75.00
 15 South London Area Meeting 15.00
 22 Friends Family Group 75.00
 29 Freedom from Torture 40.00

January collections not to hand

Collecting in February: 2 Friends Family Group, 9 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad,
 16 South London Area Meeting, 23 Nightwatch,

The deadline for the March edition is Sunday 23 February 2020

Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner *Te/07805087981 email/gillianturner033@gmail.com*

Another Spring

*If I could see another Spring,
 I'd not plant summer flowers and wait;
 I'd have my crocuses at once,
 My leafless pink mezereons
 my chill veined snowdrops choicer yet
 my white or azure violet,
 leaf-nestled primrose; anything
 to grow at once, not late.
 If I might see another Spring
 I'd listen to the daylight birds
 that build their nests and pair and sing
 nor wait for mateless nightingales,
 I'd listen to the lusty herds,
 the ewes with lambs as white as snow,
 I'd find out music in the hail
 and all the winds that blow.
 If I might see another Spring
 Oh stinging comment on my past
 that all my past results in 'If
 If I might see another spring
 I'd laugh today, today is brief;
 I would not wait for anything.
 I'd use today that cannot last,
 Be glad today and Sing.*

Christina Rossetti