

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

January 2016

Dear Friends,

Our newsletter this month gathers together news of Friends sent in on Christmas cards or in letters and emails, which reflect our Meeting as a family community. It also reflects our lives within the Quaker world, within our community, our Area Meeting, and our Religious Society as a whole.

Gillian Turner

"My grace is sufficient for thee", 2 Corinthians 12:9

At this time of year, we are encouraged to believe that in order to achieve happiness and peace we should draw up a list of New Year's Resolutions. As if by magic we will become fitter and stronger, more intelligent, give up a creeping sugar addiction, be much nicer and more helpful to Friends and family etc. Each year I find the list easier and easier to compile as one "benefit" of the ageing process seems to be a heightened awareness of my shortcomings. When designing advertising campaigns, the toxic bombs of guilt and shame are sometimes used in order to encourage our mostly fruitless attempts at so-called self-improvement. Businesses know that resolutions made at this time of year invariably lead to the need to buy goods and services which purport to help us to achieve our targets. Exercise bikes, subscriptions to improving publications, gym memberships and cosmetics are often marketed as the means to realise our dreams. Of course, thinking about a few, well-chosen, specific and achievable ideas by which to either increase self-esteem and/or help our fellows is no bad thing and can be done at any time of the year, without the purchase of items which will end up in the back of a cupboard or drawer. In "Leave Your Nets", Joel Goldsmith in his chapter entitled, "Hidden Manna", speaks of a more inward way towards peace. The very human feelings of failure, inadequacy and loneliness which may lead us to pursue spurious improvement programmes and the purchase of worthless consumer goods are not necessary. He writes: "Nothing can stay God's hand, not even your sins of omission or commission. Nothing you can do, or ever have done, will prevent the flow of God. He is not sitting around waiting for you to become good or spiritual, or until you have read so many hundred pages of truth, or studied for so many hours". Goldsmith goes on to say that our good does not come to us by might or power but by the very gentle Spirit. Our good comes to us from the depths of our being, "in stillness, in quietness and in confidence". We have no need to struggle to seek and search externally to be fed. The very gentle spirit is, "closerthan breathing, and nearer than hands and feet". ("The Higher Pantheism", Alfred, Lord Tennyson).

Barbara Earl

Peter Taylor, our Buildings Administrator, would like to thank you all for the most generous gift that you collected for him for Christmas. It is greatly appreciated and he sends you all his best wishes for 2016.

News of Friends

Loving greetings to Friends in hospital at this time:

Kathy Alton at the Royal Marsden in Sutton.

Anthea Underwood at Croydon University Hospital.

Alan Yardley at the East Surrey Hospital.

Emails and Christmas cards

From Anita Bennett

For me it's been a year of two halves, as they say. We've had several trips away: 6+ weeks in France, a week in Suffolk, a week in N Yorkshire and 3 short breaks in Bexhill-on-Sea - a funny old-fashioned little town, but with a vibrant art scene, which I just love. Jeff is endlessly supportive and flexible in enabling me to get the most out of these trips and I thoroughly enjoyed them. Alongside that, the main theme of the year has been a series of medical investigations for assorted worsening symptoms that eventually led to a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. The NHS processes ground along very slowly but the upside to that was that, long before I got my diagnosis, it was very clear to me what the outcome would be and I found and got stuck into a programme called Fighting Parkinson's Drug Free. In terms of my general feeling of wellness it's already led to me feeling better than I had for a long time. Although the neurologist's original intention had been to prescribe medication, he gave his full support to my following a drug-free path. There's a fantastic support network attached to the programme so between that and Jeff and the boys I really couldn't ask for better or more loving support.

I'm glad to report that Jeff is continuing to make a good recovery from his recent operation, though I think we're both still getting over the shock of it!

The boys are well. Joe's half way through spending a year in the city of Kharkov in Ukraine, teaching English and learning Russian, and generally immersing himself in the life and culture of the country. We speak often on Hangouts. Ben is 8 months into a year long (paid) internship as a software development engineer and has a permanent job in the same field lined up for when that ends. He'll be joining us for Christmas before going off for a meditation retreat, which he always does over the New Year Period.

From Jean Campbell Leith

As many will know, sadly we lost dear Oliver in late March, after a very gallant five months of acceptance of dependence away from home, during which he was still in many ways himself, and two pretty unresponsive days, all of which made the prospect of losing him a little easier to bear. Lurcher Lizzy and I had spent several hours each day with him throughout, including physio input. Happily my brothers and sister-in-law and family and our Quaker meeting and other groups were very supportive throughout. When the time came, my brothers kindly came to assist with the practical side, and many local friends as well as family from afar were able to come to Oliver's farewell, when I really missed his support, of course. After a pause, though not ideal timing, I picked up on my brothers' suggestion that my kitchen and bathroom were in need of renovation, and managed to get professional help to clear and replace or upgrade the facilities and add a downstairs loo and shower, just in time for my brother's Peter's return visit, with his wife, from France in late August! Although arduous, I feel it was also therapeutic, including as a retirement project. I was encouraged to take my campervan, with Lizzy, to St David's to stay near where my brother Geoff was holidaying with his family for a few days in early August, when my nephews surfed with Geoff and my niece climbed the cliffs on one gloriously sunny day, and we went to a lambing day and picnic on a spring break with some of the 'children's' friends. They kindly visited for the Open Heritage weekend and others for exploring Ruthin and enjoying walks with Lizzy. A lifesaver has been the Ruthin U3A which began in Spring – again sooner than ideal, but offered some new avenues to explore including dog socialising, which has shown Lizzy to be good with other dogs on forest and beach walks and tea after, but also to benefit from more company for confidence, which has led me recently to 'adopt' another dog, Ben, a large black retired racing Greyhound with a kind and intelligent expression, and a lot to learn! I've also taken up with U3A Scrabble, Forensic Psychology talks, contemporary music exploration, Awaydays, when I welcome passengers, as well as a Local History group and am continuing Pilates classes, but won't take on too much as I'm still busy with Quakers and Christian Aid! The dogs and I are expecting to be staying near Geoff and family and visiting them for a few days over Christmas, and hope the work of renewing my patio and paving, to restore them after the earlier work, will be complete before then! I hope things are well with you, and that you have a good Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

With all good wishes, Jean and the dogs

From Sophie Collins

I have been studying in Maastricht since the end of August and I am having a really wonderful time. I am undertaking a Masters in Globalisation and Development Studies, and so far we have covered topics such as global economic flows, the different concepts of poverty and the role of science and technology in the modern day. When I return in January I will begin new modules on roles of NGOs and Global Institutions, and another on the rise of China. I am also currently preparing to start my thesis, which I plan to write on Female Empowerment Movements in India.

Maastricht is a very nice, small city in the Limburg region of the Netherlands. It actually reminds me a lot of York, where I did my undergraduate degree. It is a very international city due to the university, and my closest friends are from France, Australia, South Africa and Holland! I really enjoy the international culture, although the city itself feels very Dutch. I am yet to get a bike, so haven't fully integrated yet!

I really enjoyed seeing some of you in December; I'm sorry I was only able to be here a short while. I look forward to seeing you all again when I am next home. Love to all and stay safe.

From Jade Flahive Gilbert

I am getting a flight to Sumatra tomorrow (13 December) to play flute in a world music festival which is quite exciting! We are being put up in a five star hotel, so I will have hot showers for a few days - that is the most exciting part. 20 December. Performing tonight, SriMara with Gnyaw Puppets at Hitam Putih Festival in Sumatra woohoo! Hope the rain and lightening holds off for us!

(Mary tells us that Jade, while missing home, spent Christmas Day on the beach with her friends.)

From Dave Perry

I was at Colchester meeting on Sunday, and as I took my seat I thought of you all and friends at MfW in Croydon. First impression of walking into the meeting room (it's been a couple of years since I was last there) was how warm and light it was. As one would expect I received a warm welcome on arrival and Friends spoke to me after Meeting during refreshments. Earlier this year when I checked the local buses there was one at 09:45 which would get me to meeting in time. However, when I picked up a timetable from the bus information office this bus now runs 20 minutes later at 10:05 and means I can't get to Meeting for 10:30. John very kindly gave me a lift and I am now checking alternatives. I'll certainly get there one way or another. I was told there are other people in the Meeting who live in Wivenhoe so hopefully next week I'll get to talk to some other people and, you never know, maybe get a lift from someone. Sunday the 20th (when you have your sharing of words and music) Colchester will be having a shared lunch after meeting so I shall be going to that. After Meeting this Sunday I bought a sandwich and coffee and sat in the Castle Park, reminiscent of walking home through Park Hill Recreation Ground. My friend John has been wonderfully helpful. Today he took me to collect a green recycling box and also to buy some cement to fix in the ground a revolving clothes line. It's going to be such a luxury, when the weather is good, to put the washing out to blow dry in the wind. John's also been very helpful giving me a lift to the supermarket to get some shopping, very necessary as I'd cleared the freezer out before moving from Croydon (didn't actually throw anything away but ran it down over a period - have never been able to throw food away, see it as a dreadful thing to do in a world where so many go hungry). I'd hoped to see the new curtains for the meeting room before I left so I'll definitely have to come back some time in the new year to see them. I did tell someone at Colchester Meeting that I have just completed 7 years on Premises and she agreed it's time for a rest (there's method in my madness).

(Later) Greetings from Cornwall. I came down on the 23rd and go back on Monday 4th January. Very mixed weather with gales and lots of rain but fortunately we are not in an area where there is a danger of flooding. Our hearts go out to those people whose homes have been flooded. We had, just the four of us, a peaceful Christmas. My niece has a rescue dog which needs lots of exercise so between showers we have been taking the dog for a walk and getting some exercise. Sat up last night to see the firework display from London and was so glad to think that we didn't need to get home afterwards. Good to read that Barbara is taking Prayer for Upholding. I shall think of you all on First Sunday. May I take this opportunity to wish you and all Friends a healthy, happy 2016 - a year to move further forward on the "road less travelled".

Croydon Friends also very much appreciated the Christmas cards and letters from Bronwen and Lewis Gibbs in Wales, Corrine Loos in Cardiff, Kitty McVey, and Helen and Mark Shorey in Guernsey.

A plea for meeting for worship for business

In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God's will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognised through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus. We have a common purpose in seeking God's will through waiting and listening, believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.
(Quaker Faith and Practice 3.02)

Elders and overseers recently met to consider the current state of our holding of meetings for worship for business. Responses to the spiritual review questionnaire suggest that many within the meeting feel uncomfortable about it and we sought to discern why.

Are Friends are beginning to forget the courtesy of Quaker discipline whereby we seek not to argue a case but to share our thoughts in a spirit of worship? Certainly we feel that there is too much talking among ourselves and not enough standing and waiting to be called by the clerk. To address this concern we ask all Friends and attenders to read carefully the section in chapter 3 of Quaker Faith and Practice headed *Participation in Church Affairs* (paragraphs 3.08 – 3.11).

We are acutely aware of problems posed by bad acoustics and hearing difficulties, and Premises Committee are seeking solutions. Nevertheless we ask Friends to pay attention to what is going on, so that it becomes unnecessary to wander off the subject, repeat points that have already been made, or ask questions that have already been answered or to which the answer is before them in print.

Some of the responses we received express dismay at the length of many of our business meetings. We have asked the clerks to ensure that the agenda does not contain more items than Friends can comfortably address in a prayerful manner, and in any case to place early in the agenda

those matters likely to require more threshing, especially involving finance, and leave till last those that are minutes of record or can be held over to another meeting. Where possible, the agenda, any necessary background material, and possibly some draft minutes will be circulated in advance so that the clerks do not need to read out material that Friends already have in print before them.

Throughout the coming year we propose to appoint an elder with particular responsibility for reminding Friends of discipline when it seems right to do so. Kay Papadopoulos has agreed to fulfil this role at our next meeting for worship for business on 10 January 2016. **David Parlett, Clerk of Elders**

Housing

A main theme of Yearly Meeting 2015 was 'Responding to social inequality and injustice: Housing as a tested concern.' Minute 25 reads in part:

"We have been reminded that our concern for housing has a long history within our Society, carried since 1967 by the Quaker Housing Trust. It is driven by our belief that all are equally children of God and our experience that a home is essential for our spiritual wellbeing not just for our physical and mental health. There is a continuing housing crisis in this country and inequality in housing is a highly visible and damaging symptom of injustice in our society..."

...we have heard of the increasing sense of urgency that this problem needs a solution – a sense of urgency that is felt in other parts of wider society so that there are allies, not least the other churches, with whom we could work.

A number of ideas have been shared, such as offering spare rooms for those in need, working with local housing associations, including social housing as part of a building project associated with a meeting house, supporting those who want to move from larger houses to smaller accommodation, but who are daunted by the upheaval involved.

These are simple things which we can all think of doing. Our meetings and organisations like the Quaker Housing Trust can provide practical support and discernment to help us to act...

We need both to examine our own lives and to seek to influence public policy to support equality. The problem is not an insoluble one and our voices can be heard...

At a 'threshing meeting' in September, seventeen Friends with varied experience considered how Quakers in Britain might take forward this concern. Their main message was: 'Whatever else we do, we must go on saying that people's value is not dictated by their wealth or their housing'. Their specific ideas for what British Quakers might do included:

- ethical investment in providing affordable, sustainable housing;
- establishing an ethical landlords' association;
- supporting tenants' rights groups;

Friends and Meetings should look continually at ways to release the value currently locked up in property. We have different housing needs at different stages in life, but change can be difficult. Friends might help each other to think about and prepare for moves to more appropriate homes. They might also consider possibilities for sharing homes, such as older people sharing their homes with key workers; co-housing or co-operative housing.

London Quakers are organising a day conference on 20 February at Friends House on the theme 'Housing and Inequality - What canst THOU do?' This will include sessions on BYM's concern about housing and inequality; the housing scene in Britain; 'Right to Buy'; housing the homeless; encouraging ethical landlords; creating new housing stock; lobbying and activism; and responding to specialist needs. The conference is open to everyone and is free but we are asked to register at <http://quaker.org.uk/events/housing-and-inequality-what-canst-thou-do>. **Rhiannon Rees**

Nightwatch at Christmas (with more details next time)

The weeks in December were very busy for Nightwatch volunteers. Local firms presented their leftover sandwiches and cake from their Christmas parties, all well wrapped and labelled, to be added to the soup on offer each night. Sixth formers from St Columba's School filled 150 gift bags which were handed out on Sunday 13, and later that week Nightwatch visited Bernard Weatherall House to collect the tins and packets collected by the office workers there.

I hope to have a longer report in the February edition.

GT

An evening with the Croydon Street Pastors

The team gathered between 10 and 10.30. We had hot drinks then moved on to the streets. I was there as an observer to see if it is something I would like to do in future. We walked past rowdy pubs and clubs. Talked to the police and members of the public. Collected empty bottles and glasses. After a

break we handed out water, flip flops and space blankets. Phil the team leader told me it was a quiet night. We finished at around 2.30 am.

Terry Wilkes

Brummana, Lebanon

Among the many charities we at Croydon Meeting support, Brummana High School is one which is close to my heart, as I taught there during the turbulent year of Prime Minister Raffiq Hariri's assassination, and over the next few years visited twice a year. The school motto, 'I serve', is taken seriously by the students, who work for and support various local charities. In their latest newsletter I noticed that they had made their Christmas collection in aid of Caritas, and when I spoke to my friend on the staff asked her whether the students supported the Syrian refugees in any other way.

She told me that the presence of the Syrian refugees, over one million in a country already housing Palestinian refugees, was causing great strain on the Lebanese people. All the aid pouring into the country was focused on the plight of the refugees, who are receiving a huge amount of help. Meanwhile the poverty among the local people was greater than ever. The political situation is very bad, there are piles of rubbish on the streets, and unemployment is high. There is no free health service or old age pensions.

She told me that the staff are focusing their efforts on supporting the workers in the school, gardeners, cleaners, guards at the gates, kitchen staff, all of whom are paid in Lebanese lira. To give an idea of their wages, they earn in an hour what a sandwich costs in the supermarket. The staff put together gift bags for Christmas for each of the workers, with clothing for the children, especially shoes, which cost a fortune there.

We hear so much about the dreadful plight of the refugees that we forget the problems of the countries they move to or pass through, and I wanted to share this story from the Quaker school in Lebanon.

Gillian Turner

Children's Meetings in January are on the second and third Sundays, but we hope to change to the first and third Sundays from February onwards.

SUTTON MEETING - NEW YEAR'S PARTY FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES FROM 0 TO 100!

Saturday January 23rd 2016 at 4.0 pm Please let your inner child out and join us at the Meeting House on **Saturday, January 23rd 2016** from 4.0pm, followed by a bring-and-share tea at about 5.30 pm and finishing about 6.30 pm. In the last two years members of all ages from the meeting, have said that they greatly enjoyed participating in the games, activities and dancing with the younger ones! Following this successful format, it has been decided once again to open up the New Year Party to all our 'children'! We hope as many of you as possible will come along, bringing something to share for tea. Friends and family members also welcome! If you need any more information, please contact Gay McDonagh at gaymcdonagh@operamail.com or 020 8647 1879.

Diary dates

Friday 8 January: Quaker MP Ruth Cadbury (Lab, Brentford & Isleworth), will speak about being a Quaker MP at the Living Adventurously group, Sutton meeting house, 7.30 - 9.30pm

Sunday 10 January: Croydon Friends meeting for worship for business. We ask all Friends and attenders to come with heart and mind prepared, and to read first the 'plea' on page 3. It is important to start on time at 12:15 in view of the following item...

Sunday 10 January: Area Committee meeting, Sutton meeting house, 1:30pm after a picnic lunch.

From now onwards this meeting is not restricted to committee members – all Friends are welcome and indeed encouraged to attend and participate.

Sunday 17 January: Croydon Friends New Year Social. Details to be announced, but guaranteed Quaker fun (and food)

Saturday 23 January: An Evening with Flanders & Swann - and Friends, at Wandsworth meeting house, 19:30 to 22:00. Professional singer and Quaker Hazel Morgan will be performing songs by Flanders and Swann, including songs from *The Road Goes Ever On* by J.R.R. Tolkien set to music by Donald Swann, and material by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann. There will be a break for tea and home-made cake, and the evening will end with a rousing rendition of the Hippopotamus song, with audience participation essential!

Saturday, 30 January: Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2016, 14:00 to 17:00 at Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, Bromley-by-Bow, London E3 3HJ. Quaker Concern for Animals [quaker-animals.co.uk] would like to kindly invite Friends to GANDHI: THE SANCTITY OF LIFE & THE ETHICS OF DIET. Every year, around the anniversary of his assassination (30th January 1948), The Gandhi Foundation's Multi Faith Celebration is normally held in London, and brings together

people of different faiths such as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. Please see the PDF at London Quakers for full details.

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

December Collections

6th: Quaker work at home and abroad £20
14th: Croydon Churches Together Floating Shelter £68
21st: Area meeting £31
27th: Friends Family Group £29

Amounts collected by standing order have not yet been notified

The deadline for the February edition is Sunday 24 January 2016
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner
Tel 020 8688 9659 email gillianturner033@gmail.com

Afterthoughts...

Timmy and Jack went to watch the Tour de France.

Timmy shook his head and asked: "Why on earth do they do that?"

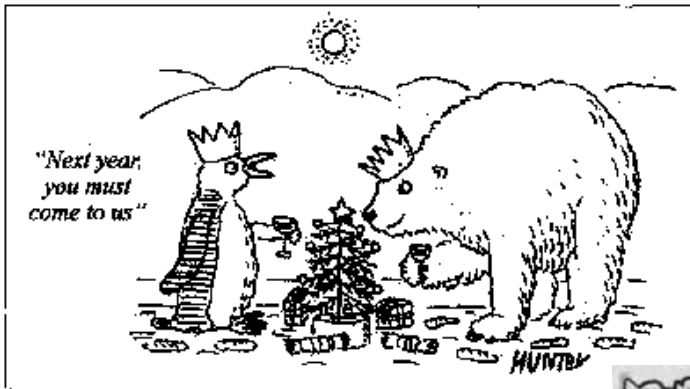
"Do what?" replies Jack.

"Go on their bikes for miles and miles, up and down the hills, round the bends — day after day, week after week. No matter if it's icy, raining, snowing, hailing or boiling hot. Why would they torture themselves like that?"

"It's all for the prestige and the money," says Jack. "You know the winner gets about a million Euros."

"Yes, I understand that," says Timmy, "but why do all the others do it?"

From Towards Wholeness, magazine of the Friends Fellowship of Healing

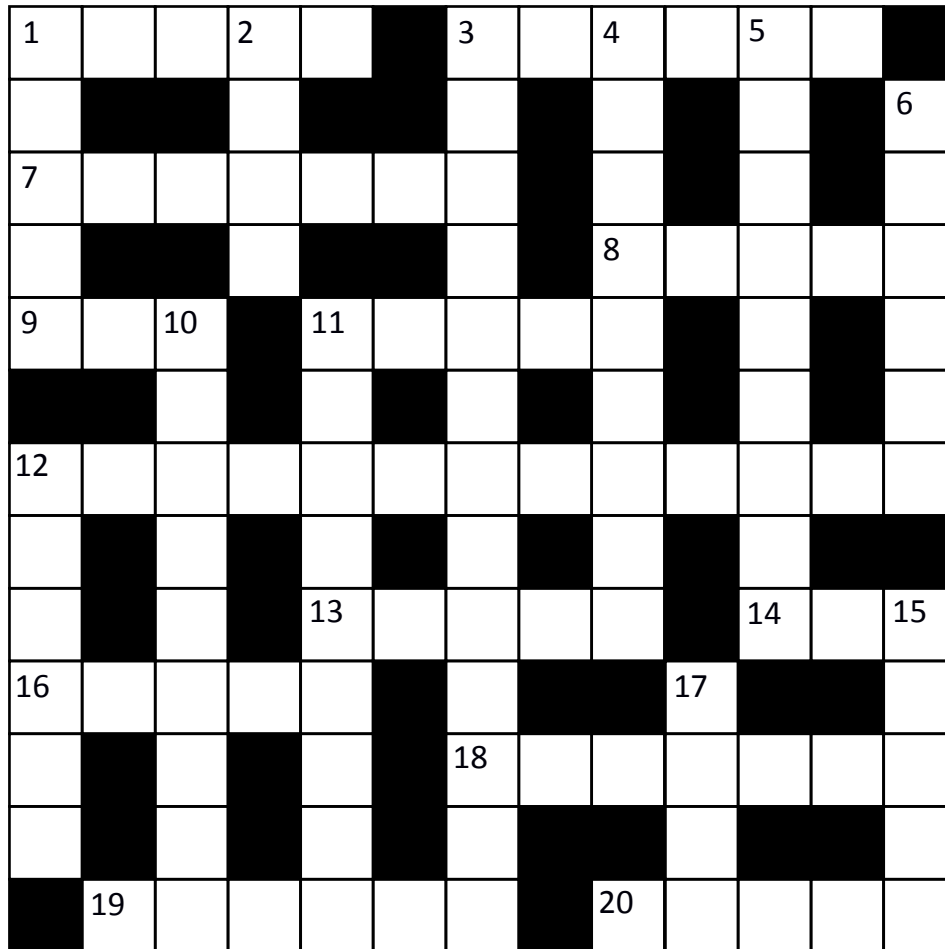


Cartoons from Private Eye



Friendly Crossword #4

by Grumpy Old Quaker



3 down and 12 across are well-known Mesozoic creatures, each of 13 letters
(but not both the same length!)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. It's between Mars and Venus (5) | 1. Jane Austen's wheat? (5) |
| 3. Square root of a gross (6) | 2. No, not that! (4) |
| 7. Check out this lizard! (7) | 3. <i>See note above</i> |
| 8. Old African birthplace (5) | 4. Seriously like a Wilde character (9) |
| 9. What the RFC became (1,1,1) | 5. Structural back supports (9) |
| 11. It's paddled (5) | 6. Heavenly twin (6) |
| 12. <i>See note above</i> | 10. Flippant (9) |
| 13. Foliate (5) | 11. She's sweet as an apple! (9) |
| 14. The day before Adam's (3) | 12. Star-like (6) |
| 16. Briefly an odd-toed ungulate (5) | 15. Suitable timber for benches? (5) |
| 18. Oliver's more reluctant son (7) | 17. Get rid of that outhouse! (4) |
| 19. Female donkey? For you to judge! (6) | |
| 20. Summer snake (5) | |

P	E	N	N	S	Y	L	V	A	N	I	A	N
L	O	A	E	A	N							
U	S	E	R	N	I	N	E	P	I	N	S	
I	S	K	U	H	E							
A	N	T	E	C	E	D	E	N	T			
O			E			H	E					
G	R	A	T	I	S	B	E	A	U	T	Y	
E	W					R						
						I	M	P	R	I	M	A
T	S	R	S	V	S							
W	H	I	T	G	I	F	T	A	R	C	H	
E	E	V	L	S	A							
Y	E	A	R	L	Y	M	E	E	T	I	N	G

Solution to Friendly Crossword #3