

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

July-August 2018

A Modern Litany

O vast and undeserved the gifts we share:
Sunlight, and home, music, the lilt of words,
Laughter of friends, and summer's plangent air
That echoes with blown leaves, and songs of birds.

O vast and undeserved the gifts we share.
O cruel and undeserved the pain we bear:
Loss, and betrayal, loneliness, defeat,
The torturing doubts, angers that wound and tear,
Injustice borne, discovery of deceit.

O cruel and undeserved the pain we bear.
O unaccountable such heavenly care:
It gives no guarantees, nothing explains,
It has no secret interest to declare.
It is Itself Alone, and so remains.
O unaccountable such heavenly care.

O blind and trusting we must shun despair
And hold our life's enigma in suspense,
Bending bewildered heads in burning prayer
That one day it will all make perfect sense.
O blind and trusting we must shun despair.

Ronald Walker

I found a copy of this poem when turning out a cupboard of past Quaker papers the other day.

Ronald and Kathleen Walker were the first wardens of the newly-built meeting house erected after the war. He was also an elder and clerk of the meeting, and she was an overseer and was a doorkeeper at my first visit to Croydon meeting. I remember the roundabout, widening of Park Lane, and the underpass, had just been completed.



A Modern Litany must have been written during or soon after the Second World War. It reflects Ronald's love of language and depth of thought. Who nowadays would use 'plangent' to describe summer's air? He was a student and teacher of Literature, a senior teacher at Cambridge Tutors in his retirement, when I first met him. He and Kathleen had come to Quakerism from Christadelphian families. He was immersed in theology as well as being widely read. I don't know what he did as a conscientious objector during the war, but he wouldn't have taken the decision not to fight lightly.

I admired him greatly. His minutes were masterpieces of cogency, and his ministry beautifully expressed, though perhaps rather too schoolmasterly for everyone's taste. I still remember his ministry inspired by Hamlet's great speech: What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!

He found the duties of a warden onerous, unsurprisingly. He told me once he timed his arrival at the meeting room door to the second, having been put out once when stopped on his way in with heart and mind prepared, by someone complaining about a cobweb in the gents.

For me this poem reflects the reality of the human life, its love, pain, and despair, with the hope that we are under the care of a God we can experience and trust. I love the rhyme scheme and

repetitions, the unusual verse length, the lilt of his words. I hope you enjoy it too, though you will need to read it a couple of times to appreciate it. **Gillian Turner**

News of Friends

Godfrey Turner manages with some difficulty to attend meeting for worship from time to time. He has difficulty in sitting for a long period and his mobility is very limited. He would like to thank Terry Wilkes who takes him for his appointments at the Royal Marsden Hospital, and to Roger Haworth who takes him to St Christopher's Hospice where he is an out-patient..

Croydon Festival of Peace



This Festival seems to have been the inspiration of one woman, Katie Rose, but through her energy many community groups came together and contributed to a week-long Festival, commemorating the centenary of the Armistice and celebrating the diversity of Croydon. The London Mozart Players commissioned an *Anthem for Peace*; Croydon Council and the Mayor of London provided some support. The Friends of Park Hill Park are creating a Peace Garden and organised a Festival on 23 June.

The Meeting decided to have a stall at Park Hill Park with a selection of Quaker literature. Liz offered to create an art-work and invited us to craft individual white poppies for the 'Collateral Damage' project. (White poppies commemorate *all* the victims of conflict on all sides).

Following various health problems in the run-up to the Festival it looked as if we would not have enough Friends to cover our stall throughout the day, but in the end Friends made a big effort and worked together as a team so that everything came together. Kay worked hard to create the Quaker plot in the Peace Garden, planting roses and lavender. Cathy joined the banner-making workshops, organised by Josi Kiss, in the Adult School Hall and created a Quaker banner, displaying our testimonies. Liz and Jean made the lovely installation of white poppies which adorned our stall. Steve re-arranged his work so that he could transport the tables and chairs to the Park. Blair, Kay and Liz helped with setting up the gazebo and stall. Gordon offered meditation sessions at the Meeting House and joined the 'yogathon' in the Park. Barbara, Blair, Gillian, Gordon, Kay, Kitty, Liz, Mary, Pam, Roger and Wan Hing ensured that we always had a good Quaker presence at our stall. David lent chairs and Margaret bought the gazebo and contributed refreshments. I am very grateful to them all. [*As we are to Rhiannon for the central role she played.* – Eds.]

There was a very full programme of events during the week, starting with the Wandle Park Festival on 16 June, where a few of us gave out white poppies. This was a bigger Festival and I think the organisers were a bit disappointed that there were not more people at Park Hill Park, but

a number of people stopped at our stall and expressed an interest. The weather was glorious and it was an opportunity to celebrate all the people who contribute positively and creatively to Croydon as a 'community of communities'.

In the moving Finale Indian dancers performed a graceful dance about Peace and offered others the opportunity to learn it. The London Mozart Players and a choir from Ecclesbourne Primary School taught us the Anthem for Peace and led us in singing it. The words are on the Festival of Peace web-site: <http://festivalofpeacecroydon.org/>

The Meeting has to maintain our plot in the Peace Garden for two years, so there is still an opportunity to get involved! You could also still make a white poppy, which will eventually form part of an installation at Friends House in November: <http://ppu.org.uk/collateral-damage/index.html>.

Rhiannon Rees

Croydon Friends' Peace Garden

Park Hill Park is a delightful green space in the centre of Croydon. Its main entrance is on Barclay Road, and if you follow the path past the cherry trees and the large plane trees, past the tennis courts and children's playground, you will see on the right an old walled garden.

This garden contains six large beds which include a herb garden, the Cicely Mary Barker garden, a community garden and a peace garden (the other beds are a work in progress).

The peace garden has been further divided into small plots, 8 feet by 10, which have been allocated to local churches and community groups, and Croydon meeting has committed to planting and maintaining one of these plots.

In the lead up to the Peace Festival last Saturday (23 June) we planted three roses (two Peace, one Simple White) and some white violas, and on the day of the festival we planted a small olive tree. The aim is to fill the bed with plants which symbolise in some way, either by name or connotation, Quaker values and testimonies.

If you would like to contribute to this ongoing project, either by donating a plant or helping to maintain the bed, please contact...

Kay Papadopoulos (pictured above)



'100 Years....Peace, Protest and Conflict'

On 21 June I went to a very interesting evening at Ruskin House about the history of peace protests in Croydon, part of the Festival of Peace. Sean Creighton, a local historian, gave a talk about peace campaigning in Croydon from the Napoleonic Wars until the 1950s. I had no idea that Croydon had such a radical past and that Quakers played a leading role throughout! There were many mentions of Quakers, including the Hayler family, and the role of our Adult School Hall, as a place where conscientious objectors planned their cases for Military Tribunals in World War I, was also mentioned.

Then Daniel Frost, a PhD student at Reading, spoke about his research into the history of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Croydon. He would like to hear from anyone who has been involved and I have contact details.

I recommend the exhibition '100 Years...Peace and Protest in Croydon' at the Croydon Museum. This commemorates the centenary of some women gaining the vote, as well as the end of WW1, and includes feminist as well as anti-war campaigns. It features Mark Hayler's book recording the names of WWI conscientious objectors. You can also touch the screen and see a photo of the Hayler brothers. Downstairs another exhibition, 'The Art of Peace, Protest and

Conflict', shows related paintings by local artists. The staff said the exhibitions would continue until the autumn.

The web-site for these exhibitions is:

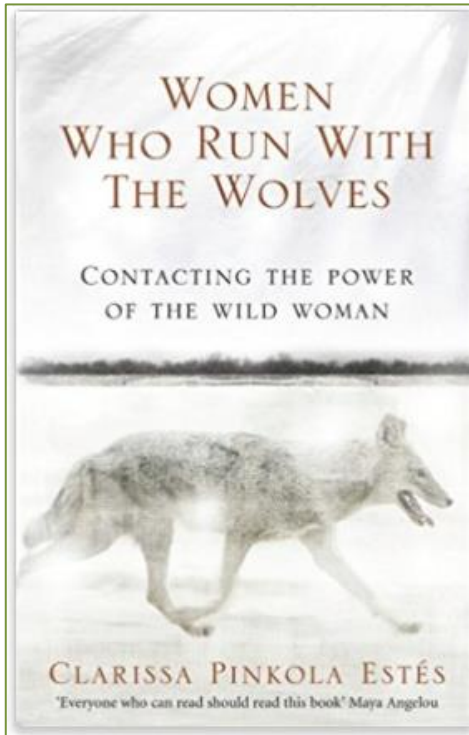
<http://festivalofpeacecroydon.org/events/museum-of-croydon-heritage-exhibition/?occurrence=2018-06-16>.

Sean Creighton's website is:

<https://sites.google.com/site/historysocialaction/>.

Rhiannon Rees

A Refusal to Dwell



In *Women who Run with Wolves* writer and activist Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes profoundly on the difficult topic of forgiveness. She asserts that when we decide to forgive it is not an act of surrender but a conscious decision to “cease to harbour resentment” and a “refusal to dwell” on perceived slights and hurts. Estes suggests that to forgive and forget is an active, rather than a passive endeavour, which requires us to work towards a personal refusal to dredge up and re-hash certain memories or harsh judgements.

The practice of generosity and patience are cited as vital components of the process which will often require time and space to allow us to “give a bit of grace to the situation and see how that assists”.

In *Waiting on God* Simone Weil goes further and suggests that when saying the part of the Lord's Prayer in which we ask that our trespasses (debts) be forgiven “as we forgive those who trespass against us”, we should give up any ideas of reparation for wrongs we think we have suffered and the hope of gratitude for “the good we think we have done”. Weil states that “we think we have claims everywhere”, and these expectations of the past on the future need to be renounced “in a lump”.

In renouncing fully both past debts and hopes of compensation we “can ask God that our past sins may not bear fruit”. (It is useful here to remember that “sin” translates the Greek *hamartia* meaning “missing the mark”). We may then let go of the past and go forward intact and purified.

In *Advices and Queries* 17 we are reminded to sense “what has nourished the lives of others”. In deep consideration of this we may be helped to understand the background and feelings behind our own often unskilful behaviour as well as that of others. We all stumble at times and fall short of the glory of God. If we look within we may find the very same difficulties in ourselves which so disturb us when displayed by others. Our Friend Reg Briscoe once ministered briefly but powerfully: “Have compassion for ignorance”.

Perhaps it is in this kind of insight and empathy for the shared challenges and struggles of what it is to be human that we may look within to find the seed of forgiveness for self and others.

Barbara Earl

Kierkegaard, Marx and, not forgetting, Disneyland Paris

The holiday was a great success. The heat was so intense that my decision to stay in the cabin, complete with air-conditioning, while the grandkids were causing havoc on the beach, was perfectly sensible. I watched a DVD, in preparation for the Sea of Faith conference at the University of Leicester on 24-26 July (<http://www.sofn.org.uk/conferences/index.html>). No prizes for guessing that it was the six-part documentary that Don Cupitt delivered on BBC TV way back in 1984, over thirty years ago. (More recently, in May 2018, Donald Murray has written about both Don Cupitt and Richard Holloway <https://unherd.com/2018/05/losing-religion-priests-turned-god>).

To my mind, the film holds up wonderfully. It is coherent and engaging, full of information and argument. It starts with Galileo and Pascal, moves on to Darwin, Freud and Jung and his argument

for inner integration, on to Schweitzer and Nietzsche and ideas about active love, and then onward to the Enlightenment and Kant - and to the contrast between Marx and Kierkegaard. (There's more....Schopenhauer, Besant, Wittgenstein). But it's the latter duo that's really caught my attention.

As we all know, Marx wasn't impressed by religion. It's his great cliché that religion is the opium of the masses. To him religious minds are 'shy of the world' and that the religious consciousness is 'without political significance and earthly aims.' Religion is the 'product of arbitrariness and fantasy'. But do his views on religion matter any more? In a secularised Europe, does religion matter any more? Additionally, he wasn't much taken by ideas about individualism. To his mind, people are merged into classes and groups - and social conditions are what make us. Marx had no belief in the individual and was contemptuous of the competitiveness between individuals, the war of everyone against everyone else.

Kierkegaard is seemingly the complete opposite. For him, according to Cupitt, every single individual needs to be reformed. It is the choices we make, as an individual, that determine the world we live in. Regarding ourselves as a class, as in a herd, we are released from the standards and ideals (presumably higher) of the individual and we become 'just numbers...just copies'.

This is the contrast in my head when we arrived at Disneyland Paris. I can't guess how many times I've driven by this large park determined to get somewhere else. But the kids were excited and, I hold my hands up, I was curious. It's certainly been cleverly put together and is well maintained. Lots of restaurants and shops, lots of places to buy things....it's almost as though a visitor would understand what goes on here and become involved just by spending money. Of course, everything refers back to the Disney movies. Some of the other visitors (including adults) are unselfconsciously wearing Disney costumes.

Let's pretend I was watching it all in a detached fashion. But then, in a group of friends I had my photo taken with Darth Vader, who just happened to be there. Of course, I did. Wouldn't you? It's fun and we go outside to enjoy the final parade (waving at Mickey Mouse and Princess Elsa) and perhaps continue our escape from thinking (and trying to understand on a rational basis) for a few minutes. Then I remembered Marx's comment about fantasy, and Kierkegaard's idea about not being a copy....Without being too pompous and humourless, when does commercial banality start to address something deeper, the need for some form of belonging? All harmless fun... or perhaps not?

So, where does this get me? The trouble with this Quakerism business is it requires each of us to find our own truth, none of this settling for pre-packaged dogma and/or conclusions, be they religious or philosophical. There's seemingly a truth to be found in both Kierkegaard and Marx - and, would you believe it, even at Disneyland, which, despite having its fun side, seems, under the surface, to be a disconcertingly cynical exercise in money-grabbing manipulation. All of this has kept me thinking, not to say, puzzled for weeks.

Then after a bit of a gap, I make it to meeting and there's a reading from *Quaker Faith and Practice* (10.20) about God being in relationships with other people. Of course, that's it....next time on holiday, those of us who belong to the freckled-people, will put on a sun hat, cover ourselves with sun lotion, stop over-intellectualising and venture outside to help the kids build their sandcastle on the beach. Now that's meaningful!

Helen Johnson

Commemorating Windrush

Westminster Abbey was packed out on Friday 22 June for the marking of 70 years since the arrival of the Windrush ship, bringing people from the Caribbean to Britain to help to rebuild the nation post war. It has been well marked by the BBC over the weekend and there was good press coverage.

From a personal point of view, can I share that it was a very interesting experience for me to be in Westminster Abbey in a minority as a white person. I felt very humbled by the family I sat with who had come from Birmingham for the day and commented several times that they had seen the Abbey many times on TV but never thought they would ever get the chance to be at a service there. Truly it was their day. It made me reflect on the privilege I have to move in so many different circles - when so many people in Britain feel they do not have that right. Theresa May appeared suitably subdued, and a number of congregants noted loudly that she should look ashamed. I really enjoyed getting to know the people I was sitting with, who were celebrating their Jamaican identity with vibrant colours of black, yellow and green. Everyone was excited and unlike the usual very formal Westminster Abbey events, there was clapping and responsiveness, especially for the

Gospel music. Multicultural Britain is a truly glorious thing and something to be proud of, to recognise its challenges and for those of us with unearned privilege, to defend.

It was an important celebration of service, of Christian witness and of love expressed in many ways. **Marigold Bentley** *Head of Peace Programmes and Faith Relations, Quakers in Britain*

An appeal

I need some help with something and wondered if any of the Quakers could help me?

I currently volunteer through Independent Age where I visit lonely people once a week to keep them company; however, due to working full time and other day to day life commitments, I can't give any more time than I do already.

So my issue that I need help with that I was wondering if you knew of any one or if anyone would be interested is this:

One of the ladies I visit is called Cathy, she is 65 and is very lovely. However, she has a condition which means her walking is very limited and due to moving to London and her condition she has become very isolated and lonely – I am working with her social worker to try and improve her quality of life as in new housing etc., but they have also given her an allowance – through the social workers - or someone to visit her up to 6-hour a week and take her out (so could be 2 hours over 3 days or 3 hours over 2) they would need to have a car and they will of course get paid for it and it will have a contract as it will be through the social worker.

She has a frame and can walk certain amounts then may need a rest. She likes to still keep her independence she just wants to get out of her flat from time to time as she only ever sees her carers and me. She lives in south Croydon a really lovely lady!

It would suit anyone who has some free time in the week

Please if you could see if anyone is interested. I would be so so grateful! **Nirvana Underwood.**

Our buildings during July and August

Once again we are playing host to the National Community Service charity during the school holidays, for students between the end of their GCSE exams and the beginning of their Sixth Form.

They come in large groups, with facilitators and mentors, and are given a variety of social challenges to work through. They always enjoy using the Adult School Hall, as they can spread out into smaller groups for planning, and come together for plenary sessions. This year they will be able to sit in our peace garden since it looks so bright with all the flowers Kay and her helper Helen Buckland have put in. We plan to have some benches installed in July before the first cohort arrives.

Part of their challenge is to learn more about Quakers, about how we use our buildings to support other charities, and to raise money for a charity of our choice.

This year I asked them to support Jo Doherty's concern for supplying maternity bags for refugee women about to go into hospital, and Jo has agreed to speak to this. I also have arranged for a speaker from two other refugee groups, Pan Arts and APOW to talk about those charities.

The Quinquennial work. We expect to hear, early in July, which firm has been chosen to undertake the building work that needs doing on our site. It seems a long time since the surveyor identified what needs to be done, and we are particularly anxious to see the work begun, especially the ASH drains, which are in a deplorable state. **Gillian Turner**

Events

Ongoing till December 2018 100 Years... Peace, Protest, Conflict. Exhibition at Museum of Croydon, Croydon Clocktower, Katherine St, Croydon CR9 1ET, www.museumofcroydon.com. Entrance free. This exhibition looks back at the Museum of Croydon's commemoration of the First World War and features untold stories for its citizens and their experience of peace, protest and conflict. It will also reflect on the changing role of women and Croydon's involvement in the suffrage movement.

Ongoing till December 2018: Art of Peace exhibition. An artistic response to the themes of peace, protest and conflict which complements the exhibition in the Croydon Now gallery. The Exhibition gallery stands within the Town Hall building which endured the conflict of both the

First and Second World Wars and has been the site of much political and social change in Croydon. See more about this history in the Research Room.

Sunday 1 July: Meeting for Upholding And prayer for healing. All welcome. From 10:00 to 10:30, leading into mfw.

Friday 6 July: William Penn at Blue Idol. Shipley Arts Festival concert: "A Joyful Life" – an uplifting programme to celebrate the life of William Penn three hundred years after his death. Information and booking at www.blueidol.org/calendar.html.

Sunday 8 July: Croydon meeting for worship for business From 12.15. All welcome.



Friday 13 July: Quakers and friends together against Trump-ism. 12:30 to 19:30. Donald Trump is confirmed to be coming to Britain on Friday 13 July. His politics of racism, war and hate represent the opposite of Quaker values of equality, peace and love as we understand them. A massive demonstration moving from Portland Street to Trafalgar Square will send a message to the world that Trump's vision is not shared. Quakers and friends will be meeting at 12 noon in Friends House café (opposite Euston Station) ahead of a 12.30 Quaker Meeting for Worship in the Ada Salter Room. At 1.30 we'll walk the 15 minutes down the Euston Road to join the demonstration at 1.30pm. The march will finish in Trafalgar Square where all are welcome to join the regular Drop-In Silence at Westminster Meeting House from 5.30pm.

Friday 13 - Sunday 15 July: London Link Group Summer Link. At St Albans from 18:00 to Sunday, 15 July, 2018 - 16:00. For young Quakers aged 11-18. Please get in touch for details via <https://londonlinkgroup.org.uk/events/book/summer-link-st-albans/>

Saturday 18 - 25 August: FSSE Junior Gathering and Senior Conference. 11-18 aged? Join us for a fun, inspiring, exciting, relaxing and enriching residential week on the 18-25th August. Quaker Junior Gathering and Senior Conference 2018. See <http://fsse.org.uk/> for more.

Collected in June

3 Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs **61**
 10 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad **18**
 17 Childline (Children's choice) **66**
 24 Brummana High School **120**

Forthcoming collections - July: 1 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 8 South London Area Meeting, 15 Woodbrooke, 22 Croydon Local Meeting, 29 (Open); **August:** 5 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, 12 Croydon Refugee Centre, 19 South London Area Meeting, 26 Mind in Croydon; **September** 2 South East Cancer Help Centre

The deadline for the September edition is Sunday 26 August 2018
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to
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