

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2015

Dear Friends,

May was special for those of us attending Yearly Meeting, so I have begun our newsletter with impressions from both ends of the age spectrum - David Rees and Albie and Jacob French. Hearing the final minutes is always a treat. We considered the BYM minute 36 at our Fourth Sunday discussion, and the article by David Parlett (p.3) responds to issues we discussed then. We have heard the Epistle read at meeting for worship, and Junior Yearly meeting epistle is on the Britain Yearly Meeting website, but as the minutes from the children's groups are always a delight, I have included the minute of the Penn Friends, which Jacob, Albie and Georgina were in together.

June will be a busy month for us, with the Whitgift Heritage Fortnight in Croydon, in which the Adult School Hall is playing its part, as well as the other activities mentioned below.

Gillian Turner

God does not need our own works. Our neighbour does. Strictly speaking, we do not serve God; God always serves us, and through us, serves our neighbour.

All our work in the field, in the garden, in the city, in the home, in struggle, in government, in our meeting for Worship, to what does it amount before God except child's play by means of which God is pleased to give his gifts in the field, in the Meeting, everywhere?

These are the masks of God behind which he wants to be hidden, and to do all things.

Martin King (via Joyce Trotman)

Attending Yearly Meeting - Some Impressions

In my twenty-four years of membership (twenty-three odd in South London and nearly a year in West Scotland) I had never attended Yearly Meeting in London before 2015. Having attended residential gatherings in Aberystwyth, York and Stirling, I had become acutely conscious of the opportunities I had let slip when Yearly Meeting was little more than an hour's train and tube journey away. The theme which had been chosen for the coming three YMs: *Living out our faith in the world*, was one which drew me specially. Having decided to go this year, I asked Rhiannon, Clerk of Croydon Meeting, to find out if anyone was prepared to put me up. A Friend whom I had not seen for some time modestly told me that I should likely be offered more comfortable accommodation elsewhere, but that I was more than welcome to stay with her and her partner if I chose. I did choose and am still trying to think of ways to repay them as they have firmly declined any recompense which I have offered.

My experience of attending meetings for worship for business confers a dimension to membership which is otherwise missing. The first of the documents in advance of Yearly Meeting to be received concerns spiritual preparation. Coming to meeting with heart and mind prepared is one of the most valuable of all Quaker disciplines. This becomes almost palpable as silence descends on a crowded Large Meeting House when the Clerks enter at the start of a session.

I was impressed by the sensitivity and discernment of the Clerks, by the quality of all the presentations and most of the spoken ministry. One of the most difficult sessions, as might have been expected, was that dealing with proposed amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*, our book of discipline. Agreement could not be reached on proposed changes to 3.27 concerning authority for public statements, and these had to be referred back to the Church Government Advisory Group of Meeting for Sufferings. Changes to Chapter 16 concerning Quaker marriage procedure gave rise to a certain amount of hair-splitting. It is ironical that notwithstanding our acknowledgement that words are inadequate as we try to discern the way forward in silence, we still allow words to create divisions amongst us.

I was partly drawn to YM by the "add-ons", the Salter Lecture, the Swarthmoor Lecture and the special interest group presentations which occur in the lunch and afternoon tea breaks. I suspect that other Friends are also drawn by these. I commend both Jude Kirton-Darling's and Diana Francis's lectures as worth studying. Two shorter presentations which I thought outstanding were on Trident, given by members of QPSW and Young Friends General Meeting, and on the treatment of British citizens of Austrian and

German origin during the First World War, given by the Quaker Historical Society.

David Rees



Albie and Jacob at Yearly Meeting in the Penn Friends for 5 to 7 year olds

Beforehand, we'd wondered how Jacob and Albie would find going to Yearly Meeting as they'd never been before - Albie in particular was very reticent about it. In the event, they both seemed to really enjoy the two days we were there and it was hard getting them to leave their room when we collected them at lunch! Their favourite thing was getting to play with the Lego which was also very popular with lots of the other children. They also enjoyed trips out to Tavistock

Square and Coram Fields playground, and joining in with games and a play about fairness – growing up in our house they already know a lot about politics and were aware of the upcoming General Election so found it easy to imagine Political Parties with fair and unfair policies. The talk by Kurt Strauss about the Kindertransport was also good and one they could relate to as he was their age at the time, six years old. On the Sunday morning it was nice to spend some together in all-age worship. Albie especially said he liked the quiet.

At home the day after when we talked about what Yearly Meeting had been like, they both asked when they could go again! Overall a positive experience for all of us.

Laura Roling and Andy French

The photo shows Albie and Jacob showing the little people of themselves on the family tree

Penn Friends the 5 to 7 years olds: Report

At Yearly Meeting this weekend fifteen 5 to 7 year olds became Penn Friends.

We settled in by making little people (ourselves) and we put them on a family tree in a place that we showed how we were feeling.

We thought about our homes and what makes them special – friends, neighbours, pets, a place to pray. We drew and talked about homes that everyone can live in.

Kurt Strauss came to visit our group. He told us how he had to leave his home a long time ago on the Kindertransport.

We did some plays in small groups. We learned how unfair it feels to be poor and how hard it is to have to leave your home and become a refugee. We need to share what we have.

We thought about the election this week and we made two new non-colour parties, the fair and the unfair party.

We played fair and unfair games, which sometimes made us feel sad. It wasn't fair when the elves and wizards game was a draw.

Some of us played Lego.

We went to Coram Fields and there was a play park. We saw some animals and most of us liked the rabbits, the goats and the chickens.

We shared songs and played games with the Spiritual Adventurers.

We all took part in a nominations process, which wasn't easy but moments of worship helped us through.

News of Friends : Marjorie Evans

Marjorie successfully completed the three-mile St Christopher's Sponsored Walk on Sunday 17 May, and at age 94 must have been the oldest person to undertake this task. She was accompanied by Therle Cryer around the course and was driven to and from Keston Common by Roland Cryer. Marjorie visited her neighbours seeking sponsors, and of course we at Croydon Meeting were happy to join in.

She raised an impressive £750, enough to pay for 10 hospital visits by ambulance. *'Our ambulance brings people into the hospital for medical and welfare appointments and to meet up with friends and to take part in social and therapeutic activities. £750 ensures that our day patients can continue to come into the hospice.'*

Letter from Rachel Edgson

As some of you might know, over 18 months ago my mother was diagnosed with leukaemia. Fortunately she was well looked after and given amazing treatment which helped her get back on with life very quickly. The only obvious side effects she has now are the lower levels of energy but it could have been a lot worse. She now has to live with it and manage her reserves very carefully. This did mean discontinuing with various Quaker commitments. Her resilience is testament to us all.

To this end, I saw and grabbed the opportunity do the half marathon walk in September. I wanted to do my little bit to support those who give so much to helping sufferers get on with their lives. Now just to get fit again!! Having Tessa our puppy will certainly help! Indeed today I've just done nearly 5 miles with her... she's now shattered and I'm actually ok! :-). If you would like to sponsor me, please do - my page is: <https://www.justgiving.com/RachelEdgson>
Thank you so much. However, if you would to join me in the walk, then sign up for it at 7.30pm! <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/support-us/find-an-event/charity-walks/shine-night-walk>.

Letter from Corinne Loos

Dear Friends,

Firstly, a big thank you to you all for the copy of *Quaker faith and Practice* and the lovely bookmark. Each time I open Qfp, I am instantly reminded of Croydon Friends – I have such very fond memories of you all!

I have been attending meetings at Cardiff Quaker Meeting House and getting to know the people here. They have been most welcoming to me. With regards numbers, it is much the same as Croydon, with between 30 and 40 attending, including a new-born baby (though I haven't seen any other children here).

Another thing that struck me is their Toilet Twinning – each of the toilets are twinned to a toilet in Africa, the picture of the African toilet on the back of each door reveals a ramshackle hut as a constant reminder to us of how lucky we are to have decent sanitation. (*I've asked Corinne to send me contact details especially now when we are considering our accessible toilet. Ed*)

This morning's meeting very much focussed on forgiveness and one Friend's ministry was about the compassion he felt at Meeting. He was moved to tears which was very touching. At the end of Meeting there is a lengthy slot for the appeal. This week it was Forces Watch which works closely with QPSW and aims to educate school children about the harsh realities of joining or supporting the military.

With regards to my work situation, after a very lengthy application procedure with an employment agency, I am still waiting for one reference to come through. After this, I should be eligible for some Teaching Assistant work. In the meantime I am enjoying the lovely warm weather and continuing to go on walks with two walking groups. I have seen some wonderful parts of Cardiff and met some nice people through joining the groups.

I hope Friends at Croydon are well and enjoying the sunshine and flowers!

With Love and Friendship,
Corinne XXX

What canst thou say?

In the opening worship on the Saturday morning of Yearly Meeting I was more than a little disturbed to hear a Friend in ministry assert, with apparent pride, that “As Quakers we have no creed or doctrine”.

It is true that we have no creed, but misleading to claim that we have no doctrine. Paradoxically, in so far as asserting no creed means that we do not summarise our faith in a set and unalterable form of words, the fact that we have no creed is itself part of our doctrine; for one of the many beliefs that unite us is that “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”.

Could our Friend have mistaken the meaning of the word? Doctrine means nothing more than “that which is taught”. But if as Quakers we have no doctrine, then we have no message – in which case we have nothing to teach, Quaker Quest is a pointless exercise, and Woodbrooke a waste of space.

But such is not the case. If anyone asks what our doctrine is, we need only put a copy of *Advices & Queries* in their hand, and, when they have absorbed that, *Quaker Faith and Practice*. Almost every sentence of both publications is an expression of what we “teach” in one form or

another.

Or did he get his vocabulary muddled up? Perhaps when he said “doctrine” he was thinking of “dogma”, which is not merely a statement of belief or doctrine, but by definition one which members of a religious community are expected to avow without question. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as:

1. *An opinion, a belief; specifically. a tenet or doctrine authoritatively laid down, especially. by a church or sect. Also: an imperious or arrogant declaration of opinion.*

2. *The body of opinion, especially on religious matters, formulated or laid down authoritatively or assertively; systematized belief; tenets or principles collectively.*

As Quakers we do not lay anything down “authoritatively” in the hierarchical sense of the word. Our authority is the leadings of the Spirit, and these proceed from the bottom up, not from a centralised top down.

Or, again, was he being misled by the pejorative associations of the related word “indoctrination”? The primary meaning of this word is only formal teaching, which is not really our scene because we tend to do most things informally anyway. But it has in recent history become tainted by association with so-called brainwashing, the enforcement of assent to things not truly believed. That also is not our scene. Indeed, so far are we from dreading the dangers of indoctrination that we more readily go to the opposite extreme and fail to impart any useful information about our beliefs and practices to those who would be only too willing to hear it.

There is a little badge you can get from Friends House that reads “I’m a Quaker – ask me why”. If we are to have the courage of our convictions - or convincements – we should all wear such a badge and welcome the question why. In answer to which, Friend, what canst *thou* say?

David Parlett

Quakers on creeds

Qfp 27.23: We do not in the least deprecate the attempt, which must be made, since man is a rational being, to formulate intellectually the ideas which are implicit in religious experience... But it should always be recognised that all such attempts are provisional, and can never be assumed to possess the finality of ultimate truth. There must always be room for development and progress, and Christian thought and inquiry should never be fettered by theory... Among the dangers of formulated statements of belief are these:

- *they tend to crystallise thought on matters that will always be beyond any final embodiment in human language;*
- *they fetter the search for truth and for its more adequate expression; and*
- *they set up a fence which tends to keep out of the Christian fold many sincere and seeking souls who would gladly enter it.*

Particularly in these days we need to be on our guard against these dangers. Multitudes of people are being shaken out of their comfortable beliefs by the terrific experiences through which the world is passing, and are seeking a secure basis for their faith. And some are finding a Reality which is much too great to be confined within the narrow limits of a creed.

True basis of Christian unity, 1917

Recommended Reading: The Infinite Way

A small group of us will meet on Monday 15 June at 2.30 to discuss this highly thought of book by Joel S Goldsmith.

“Since the beginning of time, human nature has driven people to explore beyond their surroundings. The results have shaped the world not just in terms of geographic boundaries, but also in the context of spiritual values. Seeking direction, generations have looked to others for spiritual guidance hoping to find timeless wisdom that will withstand any turmoil or hardship. Over time, one message has provided comfort and continues to ring true today seek the answer from within, and you will find the Truth. Now considered a spiritual classic, *The Infinite Way* and this timeless message have instilled comfort and hope in the hearts of millions who now look inward for long-lasting peace. If human nature continues to push our lives towards a new spiritual horizon, this simple gift will point the way and help each reader discover the Truth.”

Erica Johnson Bequest: Update on Premises

Friends will be pleased to know that, following our Meeting for Worship for Business on 12 April, Premises Committee is planning to begin the painting of the meeting house at the beginning of August. This means that we will need to move any hirings to the Adult School Hall if rooms are not ready for use.

The building consultant Richard Turner has been employed to draw up a feasibility study to include an accessibility toilet within the ladies' toilet.

We hope to bring estimates for double glazing throughout the building to a meeting in July, having consulted Six Weeks Meeting.

Adult School Hall

Whitgift Heritage Fortnight: We will be opening the ASH to visitors on **Sundays 21 and 28 June** from 2pm to 5pm. Outreach committee plan to put up an exhibition of Quaker posters and literature, as well as information about the history of the building. Socials Committee plan to offer refreshments during both days. We would be very grateful for donations of cakes and biscuits, or cash, and also volunteers to help out during the afternoons.

Refugee Youth is a small charity working to combat alienation and despair amongst young refugees by supporting opportunities for their development, inclusion and integration.

One of our core projects is APOW (Amazing People of the World), which we have been running in Croydon for the past two years in partnership with the Refugee Council, bringing together young people (aged 15-19) from all over the world regularly to create an inclusive, creative space of friendship and belonging, where they can move beyond the label of 'refugee' or 'migrant'.

The young people we work with in Croydon are newly arrived to the country. The majority are navigating their way through the immigration and asylum seeking system, still struggling to get their basic needs met (such as housing, education and finances). Many have been sent by their families at a young age to escape conflict and war, completely alone in seeking asylum in Britain. They need to learn to survive, (let alone thrive), without family or community to fall back on for help and support. Many are living in limbo, in fear of deportation, and sometimes waiting years for a decision on their case, often, in the meantime, denied the right to work, travel or study. Many of the young people we work with experience high levels of stress and disruption at a very young age, which often leads to mental health problems.

They will be using the ASH on 10 June, and are planning an EID party on 19 July – more details in our next edition.

One of the churches who hire the meeting room during the year (Christ Embassy, Norwood) will be having a youth day in the ASH on 20 June, and a singing session organised by the Whitgift Foundation on 26 June.

June diary

*Events at Croydon meeting house unless otherwise stated
For details of items marked * see <http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/events>*

Sunday 7- Meeting for Upholding (Prayer for Healing)

Saturday 13* - Wandsworth Pop-up Tea Shop and exhibition, 14:30 to 16:30. An opportunity to visit the historic Wandsworth Friends Meeting House and Burial Ground - a peaceful green jewel in the heart of Wandsworth - and enjoy tea and home made cake, possibly in glorious sunshine outside (failing that in the library).

Sunday 14 - Croydon meeting for worship for business, from 12.15. All welcome

Wednesday 17* - Climate Lobby 12:00 to 18:00. Palace of Westminster, London SW1A 2PW, Central London.

Saturday 20* - What can we do with what we've got? Simon Best of Woodbrooke is running a day for those in meetings where there are not enough people to do all the jobs. £40 course fee. Book via London Quakers website or 07806 663 023.

Sunday 21 – Adult School Hall Open Day

Sunday 28 - Fourth Sunday Talk on the poetry of Rumi, given by Christopher Head. Followed by a shared lunch.

Saturday 13* - Building relationships in children's meeting. Friends House, 10:30 to 16:00.

Saturday 27* - Pride in London Festival 11:00 to 16:00. An opportunity to join the group of younger Quakers from London Link group and enjoy the parade and festival for Pride in London. Pride is the annual celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

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

The poetry of Rumi

On 28 June Christopher will give a longish prepared ministry on Rumi and his poetry, and will also touch upon the non-dual tradition of the Sufis, and the whirling of the dervishes of the Mevlevi Order (which Rumi founded).

The Sufi tradition, although profoundly theistic, also has interesting resonances with Buddhist non-dual thinking – which may be of interest to members of meeting who bring a Buddhist perspective to matters of Spirit.

May Collections

Figures received at time of printing but the editor had some finger trouble over the email attachment containing them.

As you probably know, **Circles of Support and Accountability** was originally a Quaker initiative. It has been very successful and now gets some funding from the Probation Service, but it still needs money to start up new Circles and train volunteers

I've been working in a Circle for the last year with a Core Member (the name used for the sex offender). We are a circle of three volunteers and meet with him every week to talk about how he is coping, how he can go about making a new life for himself within the restrictions imposed on him as well as how he can find ways to prevent himself reoffending. Also, as far as we can, to pick up on any signs that he might be breaching the terms of his licence or feeling tempted to reoffend.

The difference this first year of Circles has made to him has been well worth the effort, he has talked about how the circle is enabling him to understand the situations that led to his offending and this is giving him more control and the chance to think about how he might get his needs met more appropriately. He is using the support we are giving to try and recreate a life for himself which isn't easy given the level of restrictions surrounding his every move and it is giving him a sense of belonging in the world again and that is probably the most important thing that we can give to someone who through the nature of his offending, feels totally excluded from society.

Veronica Double

<p>Happy birthday! Olivia Edgson will be 8 years old on 31 May</p>

The deadline for the July edition is Sunday 28 June 2015

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