

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

March 2017

Dear Friends, I always try, in our newsletter, to cover past and future events in our local meeting, our Area Meeting and further afield. This month I thought we would have a little more than usual about our town, with an article by Helen Johnson. Readers who haven't visited Croydon recently may be aware of the roadworks and proposed building works, but perhaps not so much on their impact. Coming out of Meeting the other Sunday we found, unusually for a weekend, traffic on Park Lane stationary, the whole of central Croydon gridlocked because of roadworks on Wellesley Road. At our business meeting we heard of proposed development of Queen's Gardens, across the flyover from us, and of course, so many of us, working in London, have been affected by the strikes and wretched service of Southern Rail. I also want to make reference to Lent, which starts on 1 March, with quotations sent in to give us thought. **Gillian Turner**

Art thou in the Darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will fill thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of darkness to lead thee. Art thou wounded in conscience? Feed not there, but abide in the Light which leads to Grace and Truth which teaches to deny, and puts off the weight, and removes the cause, and brings saving health to Light.

James Nayler - Quaker Faith and Practice 21.65

News of Friends

We welcome back among us **Kate Orchard** who has been working in Scotland and has recently begun an exciting venture at the Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley near Woking. She is travelling back and forth from Croydon most days and finding driving on the M25 very time-consuming.

We are also looking forward to having **Jade Flahive-Gilbert** home among us again. Jade has been having a rewarding musical career in Indonesia, and is planning to return for the new university year in September. We look forward to hearing all about her travels and music-making.

Longstanding Friends will remember **Helen Shorey**, who moved with husband Mark and daughters Myra and Olwyn to Guernsey some 12 years ago. Helen visited Croydon recently and made contact with several old friends. Helen is clerk of Guernsey Meeting, a small, lively group which plays its part in Friends and other meetings and events on and off the island. Mark is now fit again after a health scare, Myra is married and expecting their first baby, and Olwyn is studying German and Portuguese at King's College, London. It was a pleasure to be in touch again.

Wilf Hayler is spending four weeks back home before moving to the Bernhard Barron Homes in Polegate permanently. He is busy clearing his house ready for putting it on the market, packing the belongings he wants to take with him, and disposing of the rest. He has a huge collection of sheet music.

Jacob French is back home and back at school after two separate short stays in hospital with an auto-immune condition. We send him our love and best wishes, and to his brother Albie, as well as to Laura and Andy at this stressful time.

Marjorie Evans has had cataracts successfully removed in both eyes and is able to read again. She has had better hearing aids and is reasonably mobile. She misses coming to meeting because of the cold weather, but keeps up to date on all that is going on via this newsletter and visits from Therle and other Friends. She is 95, she tells me.

Anthea Underwood and Celia Snaith continue to be housebound at present, and we send them both our love and best wishes.

Worship

"Worship is our response to an awareness of God". Advices & Queries #8

I attended my first Quaker Meeting for Worship in Caterham aged 16 years. It felt right as soon as I sat down. I also received a very warm welcome from Friends, especially the doorkeeper. Having already practised meditation in my Yoga sessions for three years, I think I must have impressed

Caterham Friends by sitting completely still for the whole hour of the meeting. Experiencing Quaker worship for the first time I found it rather different from meditation, despite many common factors.

I was aware of God's presence, but had great difficulty with the word "Worship". In subsequent Quaker Meetings my experience of divine Presence was extremely uplifting and always most treasured when it happened. I had the "awareness", but no response. While experiencing some aspects of God, I was unable to bring myself to worship. I also had a problem with the word "Religious".

After seven years of regular attendance I applied for membership and following the visit, was welcomed into membership of the Religious Society of Friends. I had two etymological difficulties: "Worship" and "Religious". I wondered if "Spiritual Society of Friends" might feel better, leaving out the ecclesiastical baggage about guilt and salvation that I and most others associate with the word "religious". However, my main problem was with the word "worship". It continued to bug me for the next thirty-three years, altogether forty years of regular commitment and attendance, during which time I even served for several years as an elder. My difficulty was removed eventually in a highly emotional experience. I was listening to organ and choral music from J S Bach* late one night and there was a chorale prelude based on Psalm 130:1. In the King James Bible the words are: "out of the depths have I cried unto Thee oh Lord". In the chorale Bach used words from the Lutheran Bible "Aus tiefer noth schrei Ich zu Dir", which translates as "Out of deepest need I cry unto Thee". I was completely overcome realising that in spite of 43 years of fairly regular daily meditation and having enjoyed meetings for worship for 40 years, I nevertheless had a *deep spiritual need* and felt completely humbled and fully inclined to worship God. What had been my spiritual need? – To let go of my ego and in total humility to experience true worship. Forty years in Meetings for Worship to get the desire to worship God; yes, it can take as long as that. So if you find it difficult you are not alone. Just stick with it, however long it takes!

Gordon Spence

*CD *Clavier Ubung*, part 3. Played by and given to me by Stephen Davies.

An Introduction to the Alexander Technique at Claridge House

A recent weekend break at Claridge House, the Friends Fellowship for Healing retreat House near Lingfield, was based upon learning about the Alexander Technique. The Technique, founded by Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955) seeks to allow the individual to realign posture and refrain from unnecessary mental tension and muscular strain. The vagaries of life can leave their mark and over time, we tend to adopt unhelpful habits of posture, tension and force which can cause pain, stiffness and other problems. Evidently, many musicians and actors have found help and support for their individual needs with the programme and conservatoires and leading Drama schools provide lessons for their students. The National Theatre has its own tutor. The course was taught most ably and sensitively by Jill Payne, a practitioner based in Beckenham. Jill emphasised that the Technique is more usually taught one-to-one and many of the participants left on Sunday keen to find a teacher in their own area. Teaching is by gentle hands-on contact and spoken instruction which gradually over time enables one to improve thought processes and movement.

I don't believe that I have ever encountered such subtle and gentle activities relating to the movement of the body. The focus upon more awareness, natural posture and improved breathing was so finely woven into the weekend as Jill used skilfully guided touch to help us discover more poise and efficient functioning in basic activities such as sitting, walking and even hovering. This course was just a taster, and to enjoy long-term improvements a series of sessions is advised. Many turn to the Technique for back and neck pain, headaches or stress, but some of those on the course were there for other issues not related to the more traditional aches and pains. Some old hands reported that since practising the technique they had had improvements in health and emotional well-being. As is usual at Claridge House, the vegetarian food was delicious, the company congenial and the setting just beautiful. Course participants ranged in age from 30 to 94 years old. Twice daily, short, quiet periods enhance one's time there and Meeting for Worship on Sunday is always an added joy. The quiet times are held in the small library and I spotted a notice on the door which announced: "No Wi-Fi - try a deeper connection". Typical Quaker humour!

Barbara Earl

London Quakers Housing Day 11 February

This second successful housing conference organised by London Quakers followed up the concern from Yearly Meeting 2015. Kitty McVey helped organise it and Helen Johnson and I attended. It was timely: a few days earlier the Government White Paper '*Fixing the Broken Housing Market*' had admitted there was a housing crisis.

The first of the excellent speakers was from Octavia Housing. This housing association was started by Octavia Hill, a 14-year old, in the mid-nineteenth century, with two properties - showing what could be achieved by individual action. He said that there was not just one housing market, but a number of different housing problems. The shortage in London was demonstrated by 500 applications for their recent shared housing project for eight flats. Those accepted as homeless were likely to spend 12 years on the housing list or be placed as far afield as Burnley. There were problems with delayed payment of benefits - rent had to be paid in advance. Many homeless people had mental health problems. Although new developments were required to include 'affordable housing', intense competition for land meant developers often claimed they could not afford to include 'affordable housing'. The White Paper did not address the main problems.

Alison Gelder spoke about 'Housing Justice', a non-denominational Christian organisation which aims to be 'a Christian voice on housing' and also provide churches with practical support. They encourage partnerships with other local organisations. She said the White Paper had hardly mentioned homelessness. The main problems were in the private rented sector. The majority of people were homeless because a private rental had ended, and many had children.

Three workshops told us about opportunities for advice and support from different housing and faith organisations. We heard about the programme 'Homes for Londoners' just launched by the Mayor. A 'London Hub for Community-led Housing' was being set up to support the community-led housing sector. The GLA representative emphasised that the Mayor was interested in working with faith organisations and they would respect our values. We also heard about different models of community housing, including self-build and co-housing and how Community Land Trusts can help. In 'Innovative Approaches to Affordable Housing' we heard more about examples in the London area and techniques for rapid construction of affordable housing units. Kitty built a model to demonstrate the Walter Segal method of self-build construction.

In plenary we heard how Reading Meeting used a bequest of £50,000 for research on homelessness locally. This concluded there were enough concerned individuals with unused or under-used properties to make a difference. A social lettings agency or 'Ethical Landlords Association' could help.

Ideas for action that we could take included:

- Share our stories about housing;
- Find out about our Council's housing strategy;
- Look at the 'Housing Justice' web-site and what others were already doing;
- Do 'the little things' like supporting food-banks and night shelters;
- If we had property, take in a lodger;
- Pray together.

Rhiannon Rees

Joan Pick: A Croydon Legend

You know that you've got time on your hands when you watch television programmes where people do nothing except bake cakes. Another way of telling that your life could do with more fulfilment and excitement is having the time to make a special trip to the local newsagents to buy a copy of *The Croydon Advertiser*. And that's exactly what I did this week - but I did have a very good reason for the effort to get a copy. My daughter had posted the front page of the *Advertiser* on Facebook and that prompted the walk. What was so special about that front page? It carried a large photograph of the Running Lady, Joan Pick, who, sadly, died on 29 January. Anybody who knows Croydon has seen her running, running, running - quite where was never obvious, but certainly if you lived in the Park Hill area or worked in any part of central Croydon you must have seen her short, spare figure. According to the lengthy article in the newspaper, Joan ran ten miles a day and twenty-five miles on Sunday. She was out in all weathers and her nephew has calculated that she must have run about 200,000 miles in her lifetime – and that, as he pointed out,

is approximately eight trips round the world. She was originally from the north, born in Barrow-in-Furness in 1940. She moved to Croydon in 1967 and spent the rest of her life here. Why did she run everywhere? Did she have Olympic ambitions? Did she long to run the London marathon? The reason was a little more complicated and principled. She was a scientist in the energy industry and, in 1973, she started to boycott cars, aeroplanes and trains for environmental reasons. She wrote endless letters to policymakers, councillors, MPs and scientists. She ate raw fruit and vegetables and had no heating in her flat to save energy, to reduce her carbon footprint as much as she could. So, why was she so respected? I'm sure most of us didn't know about the depth of her commitment to environmental causes, both politically and at home. But somehow it's not surprising. She carried her herself with such determination and dignity. For all her presence in Croydon streets - in public view - her running did seem a private quest, her own internal journey. She just quietly got on with it. Somehow we all knew she was worthy of respect. The *Advertiser* front page puts it well: 'Joan Pick was the best of Croydon'. She will be missed. **Helen Johnson**

Area Meeting at Sutton on Sunday 19 February

We were provided with soup, cheese, cake and fruit before the Meeting. There were several children present who were entertained by Karen Jashapara during the first part of the Meeting, on the subject of Trees.

Chris Walker from QPSW spoke about sustainability and economic issues, and we split into pairs to share what we had done individually to reduce our carbon footprint. We heard about local community projects such as the Sutton Community Farm. We were encouraged as an Area Meeting to build on our recent decision to divest from fossil fuel extraction. This may be taken up by the People & Planet Group.

In the rest of the Meeting, we recorded the death of Helen Fensterheim, and welcomed Richard Chinn into membership. The Tabular Statement was presented: the membership of the Area Meeting reduced from 185 to 173 over 2016. Various appointments and releases were recorded, in particular it was agreed to release Chris Sharp as Elder/Overseer. Finally, Frances Touch presented the Core Accounts for 2016, which showed that there was a surplus over the year so that the funds at the end of the year were greater than the agreed maximum reserve. She said this situation was not likely to reoccur as Local Meetings are now contributing quarterly, so she is less likely to have to make an urgent appeal for funds towards the end of the year.

Barbara Cairns (from Epsom meeting's Newsletter)

Yearly Meeting Gathering: A Reminder

29 July – 5 August at Warwick University

Every three years we hold a Yearly Meeting Gathering, an event which brings together Friends, friends and families for an exciting week of community, fun, worshipping and working together. There will be business meetings, outings, lectures, workshops, singing, talking, swimming, knitting, dancing, new friends, old friends and fun. There are the Young Adults at YMG, Junior Yearly meeting, Children and Young People's Programme, all taking place at the same time.

Booking opens on 4 January and closes on 30 April. You should book online via the Quaker website at www.quaker.org.uk/ym or phone 020 7663 1040 to be sent a form. If you wish to be accommodated as a group the whole group must be booked and paid for at the same time.

If you require a bursary please alert Overseers who will advise you (Veronica Double is clerk of Overseers). If you are considering attending please tell Elders (Liz Collins is clerk of Elders).

The theme concludes our three-year consideration of Living out our Faith in the World, working with Others to change the World.

The Spiritual Preparation document will be sent out in early April and Documents in Advance in May. If you would like a printed copy of all the details of booking, cost and dates, and any other information, please speak to Godfrey Turner, a member of the clerking team.

Our Fourth Sunday events

March I have written before about the Refugee Youth Group that meets in our Common Room and the Adult School Hall on Fridays. Elders have asked the organiser of the group to talk about his

group, who they are and what they do, on March 26 after mfw, and hope that you, and they, will join us for a simple lunch afterwards.

April We hope to show the film we promised you last month ("Friendly Persuasion"). Hopefully we will have acquired a projector of our own.

May Elders would welcome suggestions.

Diary dates

Saturday 11 March: Women's tea party... Lighthouse Education Society 2.30 – 5.00pm. The purpose of the tea is to celebrate International Women's Day and to have informal conversations about issues relevant to women.

Sunday 12 March: Croydon Friends meeting for worship for business From 12.15. All welcome.

Saturday 18 March: Recognising Spirit (Kindlers) Friends House, 10:00 to 16:30. Third of five Spring 2017 Saturday workshops in London. Recognising Spirit, led by Paula Tait and Alec Davison, is an open experiment to discover what lies universally in our humanity, as source of creativity, worth-ship and love. Booklet launch: *The Power of God*.

Saturday 18 March: Healing Day A Quaker Day of Healing for all Meetings and Distant Healing Groups, an initiative of the Friends Fellowship of Healing. It is hoped that a continuous MfW for Healing will be held from 11.00am to 4.00pm at meeting houses throughout the country.

Saturday 18 March: Local Quaker websites – inreach and outreach Friends House, 10:30 to 16:00. A non-technical day to look at how we might improve the websites of UK local meetings, area meetings and recognised groups.

Sunday 19 March: SLAQM area committee meeting From 12.30 (time to be confirmed) at Purley FMH. All welcome, whether or not a member of the committee.

Sunday 23 March: People and Planet group at Sutton meeting house. Eleri Pengelly on "Influences". 7.30 – 9.30pm.

Monday 27 March: Feeding the Darkness 'Art Thou in Darkness? Mind it not for if thou dost, it will fill thee more...' James Nayler (17th century Quaker) 18:30 to 20:00. Here is your chance to see this important production at Friends House, if you have missed it elsewhere. It starts at 18.30 with hot drinks available from 18.00, is followed by a short discussion, and should finish at about 20.00. No charge for entry, but there will be a retiring collection. Organised by Q-cat (Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture).

Collected in February

5 Tommy's £58, 12 Quaker Work £28, 19 Area Meeting £31, 26 Timanne School £111

Collecting in March: 5 Area Meeting, 12 Local Meeting, 19 Young Friends GM, 26 CAAT

The deadline for the April edition is Sunday 26 March 2017

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

A conflict must be resolved - not won. - Anon
Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost. - Robert Browning

People are often unreasonable and self-centred. **Forgive them anyway.**

∩ If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. **Be kind anyway.**

If you are honest, people may cheat you. **Be honest anyway.**

If you find happiness, people may be jealous. **Be happy anyway.**

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. **Do good anyway.**

∩ Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. **Give your best anyway.**

∩ For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

Mother Teresa