

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## May 2016

Dear Friends,

May is the month that links us in our local meetings to our national society, Britain Yearly Meeting, which meets at the end of May, from Friday 27 to Monday 30. Representatives from Ireland, Europe, Canada and the US, Africa etc also attend, reminding us that the Religious Society of Friends is an international church. Everything we do that is described in our newsletter is part of that wider family, so that going to Friends House is an exciting experience. Details of the agenda are to be found online at [www.quaker.org.uk/bym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/bym). There is a copy in the common room, and remember, you must sign up to say you intend to attend. There is too much going on for me to list, but the Friday event chimes with our first article.

**Gillian Turner**

### **The Salter Lecture: Red Flag over Bermondsey – The Ada Salter Story** **Quaker Socialist Society, Friday 27 May, 12:30–14:00, Large Meeting House**

A play, written and performed by Lynne Morris.

Ada Salter was a true radical, campaigner for equal rights, socialist, republican, pacifist, environmentalist, trade union activist and a leading light in the transformation of the Bermondsey slums in the early part of the twentieth century. The play explores both the private and the public lives of Ada from 1909 until 1922.

Following the play Graham Taylor, who has recently published a book about Ada, will provide additional insights and answer questions

### **“By occupation he was a barber” : Testimony regarding Percy Cleave**

*For last year’s words belong to last year’s language  
And next year’s words await another voice.  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.*

T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”, *Four Quartets*

The concept of letting go and moving on from possibly harsh words said or received is a welcome idea in an age of strident opinion and accusation both on and offline. On a wider level, Oswald Chambers, a Baptist minister at the time of The First World War, offered comforting words on the same theme. He spoke of the joy of discovering that we can leave “the broken, irreversible past in God’s hands and step out into the invincible future with Him”. A wonderful permission to go forward without clinging to unhelpful concepts such as guilt and resentment which may hamper personal and spiritual growth.

One man who, it seems, did not allow a challenging past to affect his loving and positive presence in the world was Croydon barber, Percy Cleave (QFP 23.59). He was spoken of as a man whom “adversity had refined” and he and his wife had borne a “multitude of troubles.” He had accepted “the changes and chances of this life” and had not forgotten them but used them to develop openness and empathy for others in their struggles. His warm relationships, insight and kindness drew many to his door regardless of whether they needed a haircut or not! It seems that just to be in Percy’s presence was a blessing, not surprising as he intended “all his actions to be sacramental”.

On retirement, Percy ministered by making himself available so that others could talk to him at leisure, without hurry. This led him to visit some local families in their homes to cut the hair of each member of the household in turn, smallest first! The testimony ends with the words, “To have Percy cut your hair was a grace”.

In our Monday afternoon informal discussion group we are exploring Chapter 23 of *Quaker Faith and Practice* and looking at the wealth of material on Social Responsibility. The Testimony on Percy Cleave comes under the heading, “The Individual and the Community” and it stands like a beacon as a powerful guide to making wonderful beginnings from the trials of adverse circumstances.

**Barbara Earl**

## APRIL 1916

Following his appeal for absolute exemption being refused by the Appeal Court, my father decided it was high time he left the Farm School and came home. He didn't want another meeting with the Head, so, without telling anyone, he cycled home – I can hardly believe there was not an overnight stop!

But there was just one snag – he had brought the keys of the school with him – So they had to be returned by post.

After ten days at home, he was visited by the police – ‘Why haven't you appeared at Army Headquarters?’ they asked. He was able to delay by saying that the matter was being heard in Parliament.

He was still trying to help others as, later that week, he attended Marlborough Police Station to support another CO. But freedom was not to last – it was Easter and on Good Friday, he was working on a map for Arthur Mee, the founder and editor of *The Children's Newspaper* (whom he knew from the Temperance Movement)\*. He was arrested at home, having just returned from Marlborough, and was taken to South Norwood Police Station, still carrying the map, where he was fed and boarded for the night.

The following day he appeared in court at Croydon in front of ‘a big crowd’ (his father Guy was good at publicity); he declined from paying the imposed fine and left with an escort to Kingston. He was there for four days, refusing to obey any orders (eg putting his uniform on inside out, and not washing his cup), before he was sent on to Northampton, where he was boarded with the Porter family, but presumably attended the barracks daily. Many years later he returned and visited the Porters, who greeted him warmly.

He was to stay at Northampton for nearly three weeks before his Court- Martial in May.

**Wilf Hayler**

*\* It is interesting to note that Arthur Mee was said not to have liked children very much, but his aim was ‘to raise a generation of patriotic and moral citizens’*

### **IN ANTICIPATION OF ARREST**

*Give me to know I still am free,  
Who have not yet surrender'd up my Soul;  
Give me to feel that Love is still for me,  
Who follows Love will surely reach the goal  
Faint though I now may feel, yet still,  
Save me from fainting in the fight;  
Arm me with yet a stronger will,  
Dare me, to dare my all for right.*

### **An update on my time so far in India (18/04/2016)**

I have been in India for just over two weeks now and time has flown so quickly. I am currently volunteering at the Institute of Indian Mother and Child (IIMC) in Calcutta.

I am here to do research for my Masters Thesis on the subject of women's empowerment. It is proving to be quite a challenge for numerous reasons. The biggest hurdle at the moment is the heat. We are experiencing 45 degrees with 85% humidity! It is so hard to stay motivated when it is so hot.

On Thursday I will be going to Darjeeling for a few days for a small trip (it's only 10 degrees there and I'm very excited).

I have done many interesting things already, such as visit a women's microcredit group and bank, stayed in a remote village to celebrate Bengali New Year, dressed in a Sari for a cultural dinner and many more things. Later today I will be going to a rural awareness camp to give a presentation on domestic violence to a group of women.

I am here with a group of 15 medical volunteers, mostly from Belgium and Italy. I have learnt a few medical skills here at the hospital, such as how to give injections, check blood pressure and to properly clean wounds. All things I never saw myself doing three weeks ago before I left!

I hope everyone in Croydon is well. I will send another update soon.

Love x...

**Sophie (Collins)**

### **Terry Wilkes: Trip to India**

On Sunday 24 April, after meeting for worship, Terry told us about his five week retreat and three week holiday in India (total eight weeks). He left on 10 February, flying to New Delhi via Dubai. It was his first visit to an Asian country and he vividly described his shock at the volume and lawlessness of the traffic as he went by taxi to his hotel. Vehicles did not observe any rules, turning into main roads without waiting for a gap, there were no traffic lights or pedestrian crossings, and vehicles drove on the wrong side of the road with impunity. Pedestrians crossed the road at will, and cars swerved round them as a matter of course.

His next shock was when he left his hotel to buy a train ticket to Haridwar, his next destination. He was kidnapped by his taxi driver, taken to an office and held for over an hour, told he had to buy a holiday for a large amount of money. He was carrying quite a lot of cash on him so found this a scary experience, but managed to get out of the building and escape.

He found the number of beggars, especially the number of very young children, very upsetting. Whole families seemed to be subsisting on the earnings of their children, and it was impossible to move without being surrounded by a crowd of people asking for money or offering to drive him somewhere, or even offering him a prostitute, on one occasion.

He set off on the morning train to Haridwar, a city much visited by Hindu pilgrims as it is where the river Ganges flows through and has a number of Hindu temples. On leaving the station the hordes of taxi driver confused him but he was rescued by a friendly family who offered to share their taxi for the final stage of his journey, the Parmarth Niketan ashram at Rishikesh, where he was to spend the first three weeks on a retreat led by the guru Mooji who he had heard London the previous year.

Rishikesh, a centre for meditation and yoga, is situated at the foot of the Himalayas on the Ganges. Terry was overwhelmed by the beauty of the river and mountains. He set off every day very early for the talks by the spiritual leader followed by his meditation practice. He found this experience very enriching, his only problem being with the way the guru was treated. In describing the teaching given, it seemed to him to be very similar to much of Quaker practice, with an emphasis on stilling the mind.

At the end of this period he spent time exploring the area, visiting temples and taking part in a variety of religious ceremonies. Rishikesh is a vegetarian and alcohol-free town, and when he heard that there was an international AA meeting back in New Delhi he decided to attend, and was asked to be a speaker. Unfortunately, after the conference, he became very ill. He was unable to walk and having difficulty in breathing. He was befriended by the owner of a chai shop who took him back to his hotel and then the hotel manager took to hospital where he spent a few hours. He was told it was a virus. Luckily for Terry he had already returned to Rishikesh but was unable to take any of the more strenuous trips he had planned.

He spent the final days before journeying home sitting quietly and resting in the shade, and was often joined by individuals who, to his discomfort, asked for his blessing, to lay his hand on their heads. These people never asked him for money.

Terry made a number of friends from around the world who treated him well and look after him when he was unwell. Many of the Baba befriended him and would sit in silence with him

Returning to England was difficult, the difference in temperature from 40C to 12C, and having to take up his duties again. However, Terry found the whole experience stimulating and helpful, and plans to return to India, feeling he will be better prepared for the experience next time. **GT**

### **Report on BYM Sustainability Gathering**

Over a hundred Friends assembled in March for the second week-end Sustainability Gathering, convened by the Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Sustainability Group. Most of us were appointed by Area Meetings (AMs). Many were professionally involved and others were passionately committed to environment projects.

Many Friends had low expectations and were in despair at the current situation: it is very doubtful whether humanity will even reach the target of limiting temperature increase to two degrees - not a safe level. Despite the Paris agreement our Government lacks commitment to

carbon reduction. Many AM representatives felt isolated in their Meetings as 'the usual Green suspects'.

Lis Burch, who was clerk of Yearly Meeting in 2011, when Quakers in Britain committed to becoming a low-carbon community, recalled the real sense of being pushed by the Spirit. Like the discernment on same-sex marriage, the Spirit had led us beyond our expectations. However, unlike same-sex marriage, this commitment required action from us all.

The Sustainability Group supports BYM in living out this commitment. In June 2014 Meeting for Sufferings agreed four action areas:

- Strengthening our communities;
- Changing our lifestyles;
- Quaker core activities and property;
- Taking political action and promoting system change.

Three speakers told us how their faith had led them to different journeys of commitment. Siobhan Grimes campaigned for fossil fuel divestment. Gregory Norminton, a writer, spoke about the importance of shared stories. Rachel Howell had been in various communities working for justice and peace.

The week-end was worship-based and we shared our experiences in small groups. Workshops included a Skype discussion with the Quaker United Nations Office about the Paris negotiations; 'Principles for a New Economy'; a session led by Jessica Metheringham, the BYM Political Engagement Officer, on talking to politicians; 'Telling Compelling Stories about the Future'; 'Greening our Meetings' and 'Leicester Footpaths'.

In 'Greening our Meetings' we heard about the project on energy efficiency in London Quaker buildings. Unfortunately there is no additional funding, at least until the Hammersmith redevelopment is resolved.

Sue Meredith Velado told us about 'Leicester Footpaths', a series of study groups. considering topics related to sustainability, such as Water, Home Energy or Consumption, including information, activities such as games, and sharing experiences.

Many ideas for action emerged, including campaigning to hold the Government to its Paris commitments and stop subsidies to fossil fuels, as well as actions for Quaker Meetings.

We agreed that singing, dancing and having fun were important too! We were reminded of the importance of trusting in our Spirit-led processes and encouraging each other and that 'hope is a state of mind, not a response to data'.

What more could we do to implement our commitment in our AM? Could we, for example:

- Arrange an AM session on Sustainability, with an outside speaker or a 'taster session' for a series like 'Leicester Footpaths'?
- Arrange a one-day workshop, led by 'Woodbrooke on the Road' or 'Living Witness'?
- Convene an AM 'Green Group'?

**Rhiannon Rees**

*You are warmly invited to the forthcoming meeting of the*

**Council of Churches Together in South London**

**on Tuesday 17 May 2016 at 7pm**

**in the Newcomen Room at Trinity House**

4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW

There will be a buffet from 6pm, and the meeting will close by 9pm.

The evening will begin with (South London's shortest!) AGM and a special thanks to Bishop Donnett Thomas, who will Chair her last event for CTSL. We will also launch our new local grants scheme.

This gathering will focus on the refugee response, and aside from our main speakers listed below, we will also be joined by local agencies working in the capital to address this crisis. Please do let me know of local organisations that you think might like to join us.

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

### **April Collections**

**3** St Christopher's Hospice £104.00  
**10** Quaker work worldwide £52.50  
**17** South London Area Meeting £15.00  
**24** Quaker Concern for Animals £100.00

**May collections:** **1** Quaker UN Office, Geneva; **8** Christian Aid; **15** Médecins sans Frontières;  
**22** Circles South East; **29** Friends World Committee for Consultation

**The deadline for the June edition is Sunday 22 May 2016**  
**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to Gillian Turner Tel 020 8688 9659 email [gillianturner033@gmail.com](mailto:gillianturner033@gmail.com)**

*Grumpy Old Quaker regrets that he hasn't got time to compile a crossword for this issue, and the assistant editor regrets that he was unable to update the calendar of forthcoming events owing to computer problems.*

### **May 8th: how to recognise it**

*The tulips have finished their showy conversation.  
 Night's officers came briefly to report,  
 And took their heads off.  
 The limes have the look of someone  
 Who has been silent a long time,  
 And is about to say a very good thing.  
 Roses grow taller, leafier,  
 Duller. They have star parts;  
 Like great actors, they hang about humbly in the wings.  
 On the lawn, daisies sustain their candid  
 Childish shout. Hippy dandelions are stoned  
 Out of their golden minds. And always  
 The rub-a-dub recapitulation  
 Of grass blades growing. The plum tree is resting  
 Between blossom and fruit. Like a poker player,  
 She doesn't show her hand. Daffodils  
 Are a matter of graceless brown leaves and rubber bands.  
 Wallflowers have turned bony.  
 This not the shining childhood of spring,  
 But its homely adolescents, angular, hypothetical.  
 How one regrets the blue fingertips staggering  
 Up from the still dank earth.*

**U. A. Fanthorpe**