

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

November 2021

Dear Friends: .With the world's eyes turned this month to the Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, we share Advices and Queries 42 with all our readers: 'We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's creation'.

Gillian Turner, David Parlett

Liz Collins writes: This time of year always makes me think of this poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him. **Gerard Manley Hopkins**



Meeting for worship on line rather than in person 24 and 31 October

With the changeover from Summer to Winter heating, our system hasn't been able to cope and we have called out the engineer to get us up and running again. Unfortunately the repairs are too numerous and expensive to carry out. We are promised that a new, more sustainable system will be in place by the end of the year. In the meantime we hope to meet in the common room, but will notify everyone if this should change. **GT**

News of Friends



On 24 August, **Anita Bennett** wrote on the Meeting's WhatsApp page: *I'm feeling excited and grateful. After a series of assorted assessments over the course of the last few months, I've just been told that I'm a suitable candidate for deep brain stimulation surgery. This will involve the implantation of two electrodes deep in my brain, attached to a pulse generator implanted in my chest. It acts like a pacemaker to the brain, and should lead to a significant reduction in my Parkinson's symptoms. King's College Hospital anticipate admitting me in October or November.*

After a cancellation on 29 September because of flooding, Anita now has her November date Wednesday 10th. We send her and Jeff our love and assurance that she will be in our thoughts and prayers.

Anita has shared this photo of her younger son Ben with his partner Maaryan, at their civil partnership registration last month.

Rhiannon Rees has recently returned home from more than a week at the Royal Surrey Hospital, having been transferred there from CUH. She had a difficult time there, being isolated, on a variety of drips, and allowed only sips of water for nourishment for most of that time. She did not have a smart phone with her and so tracking her down to her ward and then informing her friends not on the Quaker network took some ingenuity. She is back home, on a restricted diet and building up her strength with plenty of rest. She was very touched by all the Get Well cards and emails she received, and we look forward to seeing her again before too long.

It was good to be back in touch with **Tima and John Beckett**. John phoned up in search of Rhiannon, who has been helping out with their shopping for some time now. It is a long time now since we saw them at Meeting as they are both confined to their home. Hearing John's cheery voice brought back vivid memories of his appearance in our meeting house kitchen every fifth Sunday without fail to do the washing up. We send them both our love.

Also housebound is **Mary Clarke** in her care home. Margie booked to visit her recently and went through the procedures of being tested and wearing a different face mask before seeing her. Her hearing has always made speaking to Mary on the phone difficult, but face to face Margie reports she was very chatty and asking after friends.

Wan-Hing and Ian Tonothy have recently moved into a care home together, The Peony Cot in Addiscombe Road, very near their family home, which they are in the process of selling. Both have had health problems, and it is a great relief to have their day-to-day care the Home's responsibility. Their GP and all the local shops they have used for so many years are readily available, and it was a real joy to meet Wan-Hing for a coffee once again.

Barbara Earl became the grandmother of another little girl, Sienna Grace, on 20 October.

Antony Barlow launched his book *An Exacting Mistress* at Westminster Meeting on 6 September.

Dame Judi Dench, a fellow Quaker who sadly had to cancel due to her work-load, sent the following message, with her good wishes: *I would like to wish Antony's launch of his latest book on the FAU every possible success and I hope it will encourage many readers to discover the invaluable work Quakers do, often unacknowledged behind the scenes, following in this instance, the time-honoured Quaker Peace Testimony.* Dame Judi Dench



Some of the 'children of the FAU' descendants of those who served with Antony's father in the Friends Ambulance Unit (Photo: Piers Allardyce)

Thanksgiving

Having reached the end of my ninety-fourth year I give thanks for the grace of God as shown in the lives of those Friends who have gone before who as patterns and examples showed me how to live my life the Quaker Way.

After my first step into Croydon Meeting House on that Sunday in February, 1976, encouraged by a visit from Joy Evans on the previous Saturday, week by week I learned the discipline of joining with others in Meeting for Worship and to respond to the presence of God in the silence, and the discipline of our Meetings for Worship for Business. Week after week I was shown the ropes of



*Bouquet for Joyce
(photo by Gillian)*

how our various areas of ministry contributed to our lives as Quakers, from the warm welcome of our doorkeeping at the beginning of Meeting for Worship to the coffee ministry at the end and all those ministries in between - the spiritual nurture of our Quaker life through Bible readings and study, constant reference to our Red Book of *Quaker Faith & Practice*, from time to time reminding ourselves of our Quaker heritage, and finding ways of looking after one another in the Meeting, with special care for our children. On the practical side, a comfortable Meeting house - I still smile when I think of two of our Friends who were always concerned about the arrangement of the chairs - and all the other areas of ministry that contributed to our lives as members of our Meeting. Time after time all through those years I felt nurtured, supported, upheld, loved, and I have this wonderful feeling that I have been blessed.

Now that I am beginning my 95th year, I give thanks for the grace of God as being shown in the lives of those who are still with me, upholding me in so many ways. When I think of the Friends who have gone before, I feel 'encompassed with so

great a crowd of witnesses' - our Quaker 'patterns and examples'. I can now continue on the way enfolded in the loving kindness of you who are still with me. In the end, for me every day is Thanksgiving Day.

I thank God for all that is past. And trust Him for all that's to come.
Photo by Gillian. Once of many bouquets from Joyce's neighbours

Joyce Trotman

Musings

Autumn and winter is a time to take stock and think.
 Well, that's where I seem to be.
 I have so enjoyed the autumn colours,
 the mass of beautiful trees on our local landscape.
 Walking with friends around High Elms near Farnborough village, and Lloyd's Park
 has been a true delight for me.
 So often depending on which path chosen we are given exciting views.
 How come when we are so close to London?
 The walking, sharing thoughts, laughter,
 watching little dogs enjoying their time, adds a bonus to every trip.
 I feel very blessed to have such caring friends in my life
 who truly help make my day.
 Thank you dear people.
 Our outing often finishes with a cuppa,
 more conversation, possibly a little snack.
 Wishing friends best wishes for the next few months.
 Stay warm and safe.

Margie Ashley

Kinder Ground: Creating Space for Truth

Our fourth Sunday Session this month was a chance to consider Thomas Penny's 2021 Swarthmore Lecture, entitled *Kinder Ground: Creating Space for Truth*.

The lecture considers how Quakers can bear witness to Truth and Peace, in a world where misinformation spreads like wildfire and calm conversation across disagreement feels increasingly out of reach. Penny is a political journalist and his early preparation for the lecture was with Brexit in mind: he observed a climate in which politicians were (and are) regularly lying to suit their own interests, and the public had become deeply polarised into two political teams, each equally convinced they were right. During the pandemic, Penny tells us that his concern only became even more urgent as online technology narrowed debate still further, and misinformation soon became 'a matter of life and death'. It is with this in mind that he asks us:

How can we [as Quakers] remove our blinkers limiting our view of the world, and help others to remove theirs? Can we find ways to reduce the conflict from such different takes on reality? In short, how can we be champions of truth?

What encouraged me most about his lecture was the consideration of Truth and Peace together. I have sometimes felt Quakers can (ironically) become so convinced that we are *not* mistaken, particularly on campaigning issues, that we stop seeing 'that of God' in other people, and start seeing political opponents. Perhaps we respond to the testimonies as if they were different aspects of Quaker witness, rather than viewing them as descriptions of a single way of being – and of course, at worst, they can easily become comfort blankets, reassuring us that we are on the right side of any given issue. With this in mind, I found Penny's lecture both a challenge and a breath of fresh air. He calls us to remember that being a Friend of Truth is ultimately about drawing closer to God's love, and our Peace Testimony may be calling us to something more expansive simply than non-violent political resistance. He muses, 'I dislike the term culture war, but if we accept that terminology our role is clear'.

In our discussion as a Meeting, we considered how these issues are experienced differently at different stages of life. We reflected on the importance of realising that we do not always need to express all our opinions, and the need to resist inflammatory language. Do we get involved because we think we can make a positive difference to the conversation, or because we want to win? Will our words clarify and raise up compassion, or simply add fuel in an unkind space? We

were reminded of the words of 1 John 4.18: 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.'

We also talked about the role of social media. Especially for those who have grown up online, it can often feel hard to escape the clamour of raised voices competing for our attention – even when we know that they have been passed through an algorithm that is designed precisely to make us angry or fearful. Our discussion closed with a consideration of how we can act on the themes of the lecture, and we reflected that Quaker wisdom has something valuable to offer here. We hope we can promote this wisdom in online spaces as a first step towards a different mode of interaction. I have since decided that it is best for me to leave Facebook altogether, but I will remain on other forms of social media. And we were especially reminded of the enduring significance of Advice 17, which we shared on our Meeting's social media page as a record of our conversation:

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Maddy Pennington

Wait in Patience till Light Arises

At the moment, there is much which may give rise to serious thought, concern and feelings of being overpowered by our inability 'to take the world's measure'. One form of aid may be to turn to the great minds of the past, many of whom having lived through previous extremely turbulent and notable times themselves, have left us with much to comfort and support. Unsurprisingly, many, whether writing in a deeply spiritual, esoteric sense or more practically, recommend the wisdom of stopping, turning within, and consciously taking pause before reacting without thought. This may enable a more calm and rational response to what can seem to be unnerving, external energy and pressure.

Omar Khayyam (1048-1131), the Persian polymath, poet, mathematician and astronomer, highlighted the necessity of returning to the source of being by harnessing the timeless and mystical practice of focusing mindfully upon the breath:

*From the house of unbelief
to true religion
is a single breath;
from the world of doubt
to certainty
is a single breath;
enjoy this precious single breath,
for the harvest of our whole lives
is that same one breath.*

Many years later, Viktor Frankl, (1905- 1997), psychiatrist, author and Holocaust survivor, wrote in another way about the importance of taking space: 'Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom'. Frankl believed that the most important freedom is 'to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way'. When we are not able to change an overwhelming situation, 'we are challenged to change ourselves', to seek acceptance, meaning and purpose regardless of the situation.

Aldous Huxley in his last novel, *Island* (1962), wrote these exquisite words of advice for times when 'quicksands are all about you': 'It's dark because you are trying too hard. Lightly child, lightly. Learn to do everything lightly. Yes, feel lightly even though you are feeling deeply. Just lightly let things happen and lightly cope with them'.

On a pragmatic level, in 1820, the Reverend Sydney Smith, abolitionist, reformer and wit offered a full letter of advice to Lady Georgina Morpeth as she was suffering from the kind of low spirits about which Rev. Smith himself had personal experience. It is interesting to note that he was

said to be so warm and engaging that attendance at his weekly sermons was standing room only. (Historians have put forward the idea that Jane Austen based on Smith the character of Henry Tilney in her Gothic satire, *Northanger Abbey*).

Lady Georgina had had quite a lonely, unconventional childhood and had married at 17 and given birth to twelve children. A short selection of the Reverend's ideas to help her included the following tips:

- Read amusing books.
- Take short views of human life - not further than dinner or tea.
- Be as much as you can in the open air without fatigue.
- Don't be too severe on yourself, or underrate yourself, but do yourself justice.
- Be firm and constant in the exercise of rational religion.

He suggested that it is wise to manage one's expectations of human life and share feelings freely with friends rather than keeping a 'dignified concealment' of emotion.

To return to the world of spiritual advice, *Quaker Faith and Practice* has much to offer. James Nayler (1618- 1660), the prominent early Quaker travelling preacher, leader and member of the Valiant Sixty whose life ended at 42 in physical ruin after much controversy, imprisonment and a brutal robbery and physical attack (which led to his death), had these beautiful words of counsel regarding the importance of abiding in the indwelling Light by seeking stillness and developing our capacity for peace when meeting the challenge of arduous times: 'Art thou in darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will feed thee more. But stand still, and act not, and wait in patience till Light arises out of Darkness and leads thee'. (Qfp: 21:65).

Two hours before he died, Nayler gave a profound spiritual statement which has upheld many, many Friends throughout the years: 'There is a spirit which I feel delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself'. (Qfp: 19:12).

Barbara Earl

Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl , (Beacon Press) (Listed in 1991 as one of the ten most influential books in the U.S. by respondents to a Library of Congress survey).

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Edward FitzGerald (trans.) (Wordsworth Classics)

[Dust, see under bed](#)

It always annoys me that novels don't have indexes. It means I keep having to flick back to the introductory chapters to remind myself who's who, who they're related to, how old they are, and what they do for a living. Of all 66 Perry Mason novels only one opens with a cast list, though Robert van Gulik's Judge Dee mysteries always do, probably most westerners would otherwise complain 'all those Chinese names look the same to me'. Fortunately, most of my reading is of works of non-fiction, or what I prefer to call 'fact'. And the best of these I've lately read is Dennis Duncan's *Index, a History of the* (Allen Lane, 2021).

Duncan notes that fiction hasn't always lacked indexes. The second edition of Richardson's seven-volume *Clarissa* (1748) incorporates an index of the heroine's 'instructive sentiments' running to no fewer than 85 pages. I've read its predecessor the two-volume *Pamela*, and even without an index that was enough to give me mental arthritis. More excitingly, in 1977 J G Ballard published a short story called *The Index*, the subject of which was supposedly all that remained of a biography of one Harold Rhodes Hamilton ('HRH'). To reconstruct the missing text one has to read such entries as 'Hamilton, Marcelline (formerly Marcelline Renault), abandons industrialist husband, 177; accompanies HRH to Angkor, 189; marries HRH, 191' and 'Hemingway, Ernest... portrays HRH in *The Old Man and the Sea*, 453', and then work out what order these events occurred by deducing it from the page numbers – the lower the number, the earlier the event. To add to the fun, the last few entries of the index itself are missing. Needless to say, they're the most critical ones.

Indexes have also been deployed as satire, or even as insult. In 1895 Horace Round published his *Feudal England*, which sets out to discredit scholarly errors made by E W Freeman, Oxford's Regius Professor of Modern History. The index includes an entry beginning: 'Freeman, Professor,

unacquainted with the Inq. Com. Cant, 4; ignores the Northamptonshire geld-roll, 149...' The professor's errors are as long as your arm.

'The first appearance of alphabetical order in Latin', Duncan tells us, 'comes not from a scholarly work but from a bawdy comedy'. An outraged wife, finding her husband where he shouldn't be, exclaims 'That explains why he has to go to dinner every day. He says he's going to Archidemus, Chaerea, Charestratus, Clinia, Chremes, Cratinus, Dinias, Demosthenes...' - Eight dodgy excuses already, and we're only up to D!

And how do you arrange an index? In indexing one of my own books I once argued with a friend of mine over whether to go letter by letter or word by word. Duncan gives us an example:

Letter-by-letter: Newman, Cardinal; Newman, Paul; newspapers and news-sheets; *New Tenures*, *New York Review of Books*, *the*; *New York Times*, *the*; Nitpickers and windbags; *Notes & Queries*...

Word-by word: *New Tenures*, *New York Review of Books*, *the*; *New York times*, *The*; Newman, Cardinal; Newman, Paul; newspapers and news-sheets; Nitpickers and windbags; *Notes & Queries*. Take your choice. I prefer letter-by letter, ignoring spaces and punctuation.

As to the (nowadays) vexed question of whether to have your computer-generated book indexed by a computer or a human, Duncan furnishes his book with two – the first generated by a computer, the second by a professional indexer. It's thanks to the professional indexer (I think I missed my vocation there!) that I've been easily able to pick out the examples quoted above. I believe computers will always remain functionally illiterate. (Incidentally, shouldn't an index of digital documents be called an indocx?)

In short: Book, funniest, one of the I've ever read.

David Parlett

On the subject of books, we've just had to find a way of sustainably disposing of some 2000 from my late brother's flat. The answer: www.bookrescuers.com. They've been providing book disposal and recycling services to libraries with surplus books since 2003. The disposal service is free of charge, collects all books, and works with libraries across the UK to reduce their environmental impact by recycling and diverting hundreds of thousands of books from landfills. Through their work with The African Children's Education Trust (A-CET) they've already given thousands of young people in Africa the vital chance of an education.

Anagroans

Find seven six-letter words all using the same six letters. Listed alphabetically, they may be clued: least colourful, crayon, floral bits, flat bits, folds, marking a boundary, primary commodity
Solutions to previous Anagroan: ARGON (element), GROAN (inarticulate vocalisation), ORANG (- utan), ORGAN (keyboard instrument), ONGAR (underground station), ROGAN (josh). - DP

Coming up...

Sunday 14 November: Croydon Friends meeting for worship for business, 1pm via Zoom.

Sunday 21 November: South London Area meeting for worship for business, 1.30 pm via Croydon meeting's virtual meeting room

Every Tuesday: London Friends Together meetings are running every Tuesday at 7pm. Meeting ID 832 5021 1050 Password LQMFW Zoom link:- <http://bit.ly/LFTtogether> Meetings open at 1845 for conversation and worship starts at 1900. Join later if you like. Look on the London Friends Together page for details <https://londonquakers.org.uk/>

Woodbrooke courses: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>

Collecting in November

7 Quaker Work at Home and Abroad, **14** Croydon Nightwatch, **21** Croydon Local Meeting, **28** Open (for discernment at November business meeting)

The deadline for the December edition is 28 November 2021
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please)
to Gillian Turner Tel 07805087981 email gillianturner033@gmail.com
Photographs are best sent directly to David Parlett on
quakers@davpar.uk



Praying

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

—Mary Oliver