

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## October 2016

### Dear Friends

I am writing this at the beginning of Quaker Week. For the first time in many years our meeting is offering an event on Saturday, details below. Our clerk sent out a rallying call to those on our Quaker contact list for support, and our very small Outreach Committee is scurrying about dealing with advertising the event and hoping someone turns up!

The Quaker Week edition of *The Friend* will be on display, giving a snapshot of the work of our Society nationally. It makes excellent reading, with so many interesting articles that it is impossible to pick one out. The latest issue of *Quaker News* is also now available.

Our local newsletter does its best to record and celebrate the life of our meeting. There is a lot going on this month: two events for Quaker Week (except that one comes later in the month), as well as our usual Fourth Sunday talk, in which Eleri Pengelly will be helping us to "let our spirits fly".

**Gillian Turner**

### *Inspired by faith to build a better world...*

...is the theme of this year's Quaker Week, and we decided to focus on the faith aspect equally with the action. We felt that talking about what we do in the world is easier than describing our faith, yet it is our faith and our way of worship that differentiates us. Most if not all of other churches and faiths work to make a better world, and Quakers join them in their efforts.

So on Saturday the 8th we are offering four 20-minute sessions of meetings for worship, on the half-hour during the afternoon, with a short introduction, along with an exhibition of our history and our faith in action. We prepared ourselves for answering questions we might be asked by visitors by practising together (example: "What is the difference between meeting for worship and meditation?" "Are Quakers Christians?")

We have sent press releases to local papers, the Croydon Churches Forum and Croydon Voluntary Service newsletter, advertised the event to everyone using the meeting house and the Adult School Hall, prepared an exhibition, obtained copies of the Quaker Week edition of *The Friend* and extra copies of *Advices and Queries*, and now we wait to see who comes.

Read our report next month!

**GT**

### News of Friends

Last month we reported the death of our Friend **Robert Silver** 17 August. His funeral has now been arranged to take place at St John the Evangelist, Auckland Road, Upper Norwood.

### October 1916

Still at home, this was a month of literary work, and working with and for conscientious objectors. My father was the speaker at Golders Green by invitation of Mrs Graham and remained overnight with 'a Mr & Mrs Roab'. His short period of work at Heinemann's ended the following week, and he attended court for the case of Charlie Knight later, followed in the evening by a meeting of the Croydon No Conscription Fellowship (NB: Note the error last month – not the No Christian Fellowship!)

The following day he visited the Poetry Bookshop for a talk by Harold Munro and the reading of poems by James Elroy Flecker. I believe Harold Larwill was someone who studied with him at Trevecca College. Now teaching at Hackney College, my father visited him there. There are references in the diaries to League House, Portland Road, South Norwood where religious services for COs took place, and it was also possibly used by the NCF - he took the service there on the 22nd. CO's were given short holidays from the camps, and his brother Glen returned from Dyce Camp for a week at this time. A visit to Streatham ended the month to hear Miss Muriel Matter(?) speaking about Walt Whitman.

**WEFH**

## THE HOUR THAT COMES

*The leaves of Autumn rustle in the wind;  
The swaying grasses blow towards the sea;  
But ever do I hear within my mind  
The footsteps of an Hour that comes to me!*

*Some days are only dreams and undefined;  
Some castles are but meant to be 'in Spain';  
Yet these are things that pass, and leave behind  
The music of those footsteps once again!*

*Some gleams will always take men out afar;  
Some streams through summers dry will find the sea;  
But yet more eager than all these things are,  
I wait to greet one Hour that comes to me!*

**MHCH**

### In Praise of Claridge House

Claridge House, the Quaker retreat centre for rest and renewal in Dormansland, near Lingfield, has recently undergone extensive refurbishment thanks in great part to the provision of two generous legacies. All but three of the 12 bedrooms are now en-suite, disabled facilities are much improved, the kitchen has been modernised and wi-fi installed. The new manager, Roberta Monticone, and her team have worked hard to ensure that refurbishments have not marred the original atmosphere of this special place of healing. Indeed, I was informed that the Claridge House Trustees had insisted that the ambience of the house, which has been in the tender hands of The Friends Fellowship for Healing since 1954, remained as far as possible, intact. I believe that this has been achieved and I noticed that it is much appreciated by staff and guests alike as many commented on the success of the improvements.

The centre offers a wide range of courses and workshops with a healing focus. Forthcoming courses include The Healing Power of the Voice, Soul Collage, and a New Year Retreat. Each day two fifteen-minute periods of quiet time are held in the library for those who wish to attend. On Sundays, a Quaker Meeting for Worship is held in the sitting-room and members of the local community join with guests of the house.

Rooms are single or twin and well-appointed, with some overlooking the garden. There are, quite deliberately, no television sets or electronic gadgetry at the house in order to encourage rest and relaxation. Guests may, of course, use devices in their own rooms, although I must say that I found it liberating to leave both phone and iPad undisturbed for the duration of my visit.

Always keen to experience a weekend of peace and nurturing, I booked myself on a gentle yoga and meditation course which had a particular focus on the Autumn Equinox as a time to reflect and let go of aspects of life that may no longer serve one. The Equinox, when the earth is poised in balance of light and dark provides an ideal opportunity to turn within and get in touch with a deeper awareness of self.

The tutor, Ceri Young, was warm and empathic and balanced the needs of a diverse group which ranged from 27 to 90 years of age. The tranquillity of the beautiful two-acre garden added to the sense of a positive and peaceful atmosphere. Locally-sourced organic vegetarian food was plentiful and wonderfully cooked. The timeless Claridge House tradition of tea and home-made cake at 4pm still stands proudly as one of the highlights of each afternoon.

As well as booking in for a specific course, guests are able to stay for individual or group retreats or Bed and Breakfast. There are many interesting places to visit in the area, such as Forest Row, Standen House and Chartwell. There are generous bursaries available for both courses and retreats.

Further details are available on the website [www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk](http://www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk) or you may telephone on 01342 832 150. The nearest train station is Lingfield and, if needed, by arrangement with the office, staff from the house will collect guests from the station.

**Barbara Earl**

## Croydon Nightwatch 40th anniversary conference

The statistics clearly show that homelessness is a national crisis. Of course, that's well known. Then you take a shortcut up the steps behind Alders and well-meaning concern turns into jaw-dropping, stop-you-in-your-tracks shock. There, in the car park of one of those deserted office blocks are three tents. Lots of questions... could those tents be turning into a camp? What does this mean for homelessness in Croydon? And who's trying to do something about it?

This kind of reality was part of the backdrop to the Croydon Nightwatch conference held in the Croydon Conference Centre on Wednesday 21 September. (Croydon Quaker meeting has close links with Nightwatch). The Mayor of Croydon, Cllr Wayne Trakas-Lawlor welcomed, its participants, who described homelessness as a stain on our society. Then Jed Adams, Nightwatch's Chairman, explained quite what the organisation and its partners has been doing for the last forty years in Croydon to help the homeless and to discuss what will need to be done in the future. Among the other people addressing the conference were Marcus Jones MP, the Local Government Minister with special responsibility for homelessness and two former homeless people that Nightwatch has helped.

In 1976, after the death of a homeless man in Croydon, a group of local people founded Nightwatch. Their concerns were the same as those of Rev Martin Wharton, then of Croydon Parish Church and he became Nightwatch's first chairman. Forty years on, Nightwatch is working with the broader community to help address the challenges underlying homelessness, from unemployment and debt through to immigration and changes in the benefit system.

Quite what does Nightwatch do? In terms of its core activity, its volunteers are out every night of the year in Queen's Gardens, by Fell Road, at 9.30pm giving food and other help to the street homeless, those in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation and vulnerable former homeless people who need continuing support if they are not to become homeless again. They are seeing approximately eighty homeless people each evening.

Specifically, Nightwatch lists its objectives in this way:

- To act as first line contact for homeless people, to sign-post them to other agencies
- To provide urgent and necessary items of food, clothes, toiletries, pots, pans, household goods to people in need
- The stabilisation of former homeless people in new accommodation
- To assist in helping unemployed homeless people (both financially and emotionally) to take up vocational training and education
- To befriend homeless people to encourage empowerment and increase in confidence
- To educate the community at large in Croydon about the realities of homelessness

There are many reasons for homelessness but Nightwatch identifies some form of institutional background as a frequent characteristic: people who have been through the care system, former members of the armed forces or a background of psychiatric care. Additionally, there are many homeless people who are in Croydon because of the Home Office's Immigration Department in Wellesley Road. Also, Nightwatch volunteers are now seeing people who are working but do not have enough money to buy food or people who have suddenly and unexpectedly become unemployed. It is clear that one of the many great divides in our society is the gap between the financially secure and the financially vulnerable. Academic research backs this up. In his recent book, *Good Times, Bad Times*, John Hills, director of the LSE International Inequalities Institute, discusses the volatility of poverty. He describes the regular weekly or monthly income received by a high-income family as stable and predictable. While the same graph for a low-income family "would look more like the hospital heart monitor of someone in trouble, with big jumps and falls from week to week."

It is clear that homelessness and the poverty caused by high rents are issues that Croydon's voluntary organisations expect to be working together to ease both now and in the future.

Nightwatch has no paid staff and permanent offices but can be contacted by email:

[Info@croydonnightwatch.org.uk](mailto:Info@croydonnightwatch.org.uk). Potential volunteers: [cindeeNW@hotmail.com](mailto:cindeeNW@hotmail.com)

**Helen Johnson**

## Meeting on Sunday 23 October: A Vision for Croydon Meeting?

*“Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence and they carry the same expectation that God’s guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other...” Quaker Faith and Practice 3.02*

Croydon is changing rapidly. There is massive redevelopment. The Council has plans for regeneration. There is a severe housing crisis in London and many more housing units are planned for central Croydon to help meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. Many British Quakers think of Croydon as the location of the Borders Agency, which brings refugees and asylum-seekers to the Borough, or perhaps the scene of riots several years ago.

Like many other Quaker Meetings, we face challenges. Many members who have worked very hard for the Meeting over the years are older and cannot be expected to do as much as they once did. Younger Friends have family and work commitments and find it difficult to commit themselves to regular service to the Meeting and several Friends have moved away from Croydon. Our buildings are costly to maintain and run and we rely on funding from other London Meetings and legacies to keep them going.

Yet we also have opportunities. We have inherited a prominent site in the centre of town. Our attractive listed buildings are admired by visitors and, thanks to the very hard work of our Premises Committee, are being used more, including by the Friends Family Group and other community groups, and are bringing in more income.

The Quaker message is more relevant than ever. Many non-Quakers are interested in it, and we are not alone. Croydon has more faith communities than any other London borough. There are many other people of goodwill working to make Croydon a better place through charities, such as Nightwatch and the Refugee Day Centre, and new community groups, such as South Croydon Community Association or the community gardens.

With all these changes, what should be the role of Croydon Meeting?

We will be holding a special meeting on Sunday 23 October after Meeting to consider how we might develop a vision for Croydon Meeting. Our Friends in Purley have already worked on a vision for Purley Meeting and Eleri Pengelly has kindly agreed to come and share their experience with us. I hope that as many Friends and attenders as possible will participate. **Rhiannon Rees**

## Nightwatch Harvest Festival Appeal

Nightwatch has advertised their collection days to local businesses, churches and schools for each Sunday in October, delivered to the Adult School Hall, and sorted and stored there.

Could we make a special effort this month to bring tins of soup please? Last year they were over 1000 tins down and so are making a special appeal this year.

### **London Quakers: Break up the banks, - we need a banking revolution**

Are you, like me, so old that you can remember when banks and bankers were boring but oh so respectable? (Captain Mainwaring in ‘Dad’s Army’ comes immediately to mind).

The London Quakers day conference on Saturday (1 October) at Friends House explored how the banks (and the City of London) have changed; how they are now regarded by many people; and what kind of ethical behaviour the banks and their customers should display.

The conference started with a presentation from leading financial journalist David Shirreff. (He was formerly with *The Economist*.) He made it clear that, after the banking crisis of 2008, regulators in the United Kingdom and the USA (and all around the world) came up with the same solution. Deregulation (which had been memorably enough been called Big Bang in London in 1986) had given us a banking system that had merged investment and retail banking in an under-regulated, unmonitored way. This had led to financial chaos and greed. This major crisis in 2008 – where banks who were too big to fail were bailed out by taxpayers - allowed the regulators to suggest that these functions, these two very different types of business, should be separated once more. Eight years on, what is significant, according to David Shirreff, is that there seems to be reluctance by the powers-that-be to bring about this separation – and this delay is happening while the bankers are paying themselves extraordinary salaries and bonuses. There is a clear need for a dramatic change in the culture of banks and bankers to something that is more ethically-based and something that serves the real economy.

In the afternoon session an interesting group of speakers were allowed to offer and explore alternatives to the status quo. Cait Crosse (QPSW) explained what was already being done in the new economy project for Quakers in Britain. This project asks pertinent questions: what does a successful economy look like? How can economic progress be measured? Is there an economic system that does not have to be based on perpetual economic growth?

Peter Borgers described how Triodos, the ethical bank set up in the Netherlands, is now operating successfully in this country. Fran Boait from Positive Money, argued for a fair, democratic and sustainable money system. John Adams, with much experience in the City, made it clear that he is concerned that banks are the cause of our financial problems. Monica Middleton talked about Oikocredit, which is a financial co-operative that lends money to a variety of microfinance institutions, co-operatives and SME in developing countries.

Participants at the event were given the opportunity to discuss their own feelings about and experiences with banks - but were asked to confront a couple of interesting questions. A lot of the issues being discussed were systemic – but what could they as individuals do, what were they as individuals going to do? David Shirreff (2016) *Break up the Banks!* Melville House

**Helen Johnson**

### Area Meeting September 18 at Croydon Meeting

Thirty-five Friends attended and the meeting was clerked by Sutton Friends.

We began with a delicious lunch in the Adult School Hall.

After the initial period of worship, a spiritual activity to help us address the divisions in our society which emerged during the referendum.

This was introduced by Karin Andrews who told us a really moving story. Adults split into groups to discuss what we might do either as individuals or as an Area Meeting to help heal divisions and the children prepared a puppet demonstration about Vietnamese boat people which they presented to us after our group discussions.

We concluded that we might:

- Acknowledge our own prejudices (Advices and Queries 32)
- Encourage reading of *The Spirit Level* to make us more aware of equality issues.
- Meet with Christian and other Faith Groups
- Really listen
- Use social media, the website and Friends House statements to spread the word.
- Small acts of kindness can mean a lot.

This was followed by a number of business items:

Three Deaths were reported & Friends were appointed to produce minutes of record.

An application for Membership had been received and visitors were appointed. A certificate of transfer for Frank Ardley was accepted by Oxford and Swindon AQM.

A nomination was received from Sutton Meeting Nominations Committee for Elizabeth Page as Elder. Area Meeting Committee has appointed Friends to AM Legacies Committee, Website Committee and Area Meeting Committee.

Cathy Spence and Kay Papadopoulos spoke about the work and achievements of Croydon Friends Family Group: from 2011 to 2016 they have supported 38 families. The full report is available and is attached to the AM minutes.

The treasurer has reported a current deficit of around £5,000. In the AM budget.

Area Meeting Legacies Fund have recommended investing via a 'Funds Platform' which is something that I don't understand except that "platform" is the current buzz-word used for media and several other things, even as part of a railway station. Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) has decided to disinvest from fossil-fuel extraction companies. Friends have discerned that investment in these companies is incompatible with the commitment made by BYM in 2011 to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. Our trustees ask us to disinvest from fossil fuel extraction companies as BYM has done and perhaps investing in renewable energy if that can be done without undue financial risk. We note that Area Meeting Legacies have already moved towards disinvesting from fossil fuel companies and encourage Croydon Legacies Committee to do so.

The next Area Meeting will be at Streatham and Brixton's Meeting House at 12.30 p.m. on Sunday 27th November.

**Gordon Spence**

### Also happening...

**Sunday 9 October:** Croydon meeting for worship for business from 12:15pm.

**Sunday 16 October:** AM elders and overseers at Streatham & Brixton meeting house after mfw

**Monday 17 October:** Informal study group at Croydon meeting house, from 2pm.

**Friday 21 October: For Conscience' Sake - see foot of page**

**Sunday 23 October:** Let your spirit fly (see page 4). Followed by a light lunch as usual.

**Sunday 6 November:** Area Meeting Committee special meeting at Sutton meeting house after mfw to assist Standing Committee on Nominations.

**Sunday 6 November:** Croydon meeting for worship for business (date to be confirmed.)

**Wednesday 9 November:** Embodying Equality in Business - Why & how? Quakers and Business Group Conference 2016. Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, 9:30am to 10:00am Registration 10:00am, meeting for worship (10 minutes). 4:30pm Close.

**Friday 11 November:** Housing and inequality...

**Creating now Housing Stock - the sequel.** 10am to 4pm, in the small meeting house at Friends House Euston.

**Sunday 13 November:** Area Meeting at Streatham & Brixton following mfw and a picnic lunch.

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

### Collected in September

**4** South East Cancer Help Centre **109**

**11** Croydon Local Meeting **48.50 YM 240**

**18** The Retreat, York **81.50 AM 183**

**25** Worldwide Alternatives to Violence (WAVE) **155 LM 487**

**Collecting in October:** **2** Quaker work at home and abroad, **9** South London Area Meeting, **16** Croydon Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Support Group, **23** Hlekweni Quaker Training Centre, Zimbabwe **30** Homeless Floating Shelter

The deadline for the November edition is **Sunday 23 October 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)**

### To view video recorded in the Adult School Hall see:

<http://ukfilmlocation.com/Media.aspx?ShowreelID=479957b9-7db2-4c8e-8136-8557aac7be29>



**This new play by Plain Quakers explores the choices faced by conscientious objectors in World War One against the backdrop of growing militarisation today. It was written to mark the centenary of the introduction of conscription and to help counter the infiltration of a military ethos into schools through projects initiated by the government and the military establishment. The play was previewed in Quaker week 2015 at selected venues. Admission free: there will be a retiring collection for Quaker peace work.**

**At Croydon meeting house Friday 21 October  
7:30pm**