

CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

October 2019

Dear Friends: The usual eclectic mix: events attended and the concerns of our hearts.

Gillian Turner, David Parlett

In worship we have our neighbours, right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not exist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But it is in the depths of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being.

Thomas Kelly 1938

I am afraid of almost everything:

Of darkness, hunger, war, children mutilated.
But most of all I am afraid of what I might become
Reconciled to injustice,
Resigned to fear and despair,
Lulled into a life of apathy.
Unchain my hope, make me strong.
Stretch me towards the impossible,
That I may work for what ought to be:
The hungry fed, the suffering comforted,
The peace accomplished.

(Quoted in *'Marie's Commonplace Book'*)

News of Young Friends

My Summer News – Pioneer! Kinetika Bloco 2019

This summer, I attended Kinetika Bloco Senior Summer School for 2 weeks from 5th – 16th August. Kinetika Bloco is a performance ensemble for young people, mainly from South London, featuring brass and woodwind players, drummers, steel pan players and dancers.

In previous years, I had attended shorter Kinetika Bloco workshops in Croydon and Tulse Hill. This year I was eligible for full membership of the Senior ensemble based at the Southbank Centre and so I had to travel daily to Waterloo Station to participate in workshops held in the Royal Festival Hall.

I was joining the drum section with several of my friends and I chose to play the surdo, beating a mixture of bassline and rhythm parts. The surdo is a type of Brazilian samba drum. Kinetika Bloco typically play a mixture of samba, jazz, funk and carnival anthems as well as covering familiar popular tunes. This summer, some of the music played included tracks by Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Ezra Collective, Skepta, Stormzy, Fela Kuti and Dizzee Rascal.

Every year there is a different theme with specially designed costumes to reflect this, and for 2019 the theme was 'pioneer'. This was chosen because it marked the 5th anniversary of the death of Kinetika Bloco's founder, Mat Fox.

Mat was a pioneer in founding the group and hence the songs that were performed were from different musical pioneers across different music genres and eras. The costume colours were yellow/gold, black and white and included black T-shirts and white hats with the word 'PIONEER' printed on them.

Every day would go quickly because we were kept on our toes throughout. A typical rehearsal day would run from 10:30am to 5:30pm. During the day, in addition to learning and practising the performance tunes, there would be special masterclasses and opportunities for us to learn new skills such as learning how to play the drum kit, photography, ballet or just playing games to make new friends. These sessions were called 'Bloco Breakouts'.

At the end of a day's rehearsal, the four different sections (i.e. brass, steel pans, drums and dancers) would go to the level five function room to share the pieces we learnt and combine them so that they sounded polished and any problems could be ironed out.

There were also 'Bloco Lates' which were held in the early evening after the sharing session

and day's rehearsals had ended. These were sessions where you could hone musical skills, listen to panel discussions from e.g. the Head of the Southbank Centre, professional musicians including some former Kinetika Bloco members or you could put on jam sessions with other members of Bloco.

Several times a week, we would parade along the South Bank riverside to the crowds of people. We would leave the Royal Festival Hall, parade past the skatepark up to the Wahaca (Mexican) street food stand, then continuing all the way to Hungerford Bridge and from there, back to the Royal Festival Hall. Parading was a great experience because it was great to see everyone cheering and clapping; we all enjoyed it.

To top it off, we had a grand finale concert on the evening of 16th August in the Clore Ballroom at the Royal Festival Hall. We started playing our first number whilst up in the viewing gallery, eventually ending up on the ballroom floor and stage. After every song, we received standing ovations. Everyone had a great time playing numbers such as *Let's Dance* by Bowie, *Kashmir* by Led Zeppelin, *Juan Pablo* by Ezra Collective, *Who're You* by Fela Kuti and a garage medley by artists such as Skepta, Dizzee Rascal and Wookie.

As part of attending the Summer School, all members received a copy of their individual professional portrait photos and were awarded a certificate as part of a special presentation ceremony on the last day.

The fun has only just begun because Kinetika Bloco have many gigs lined up throughout the next few months including performing at the Roundhouse Theatre, Africa Utopia Festival, Tolworth Brazilian Festival, South African Festival at Trafalgar Square and numerous performances across the country.

To date, I have now performed at the Notting Hill Carnival where Kinetika Bloco were leading the procession on the Sunday and at the London Jazz Festival Summer Stage – Join the Docks, held at the Royal Albert Dock.

Notting Hill was an experience I will never forget because we opened the Carnival and played half the route to cheers for more. It was my first time at Carnival and I hope to return to parade and play there again. The London Jazz Festival Summer Stage was less demanding as we mainly played a set on stage with a short parade around the docks and although the weather was less sunny than Carnival, there was a good turnout and we had calls for an encore.

Next up will be the Folkestone Harbour Festival which I am looking forward to as this was postponed from August.

Overall, I have loved becoming more involved with Kinetika Bloco this summer; I've made new friends, been introduced to great music and even though I'm a rock guitarist at heart, it's been brilliant playing on a surdo drum!

Malakhi Chjiutomi-Ghosh

Thoughts on Quaker Week

I can still remember the first time I came to Croydon Meeting, in my mid-twenties with a lifetime of church-going behind me: the welcome at the door, ushered into the meeting room, realising that I would not have to say or sing words I did not believe and gradually relaxing into the silence. I remember that the collection was for Oxfam so that I knew that the church was socially aware. I came with a friend who found the silence intimidating and who never came back.

In the last few months I have visited four different meetings where I did not know anyone. I found each experience gave me a snapshot of the meeting. One was held in a pleasant comfortable room in a community centre which had all the accoutrements of a Quaker meeting – the posters, leaflets, books etc. Here was a meeting which catered for its group, with regular bible and Quaker study sessions, hymn singing, discussion groups in people's homes, coffee, biscuits and chat afterwards. The next meeting I visited was in a refurbished listed building which was proud of its place in the community, its meeting house on the maps of the town, its garden open to the public, its social events listed on social media. I brought back its offer to hirers to take a book home free of charge from a table in the corner of its library. In both these meetings ministry followed from *Advices & Queries* and was measured and thoughtful.

My third visit was not so happy. I had trouble finding the building so that when I arrived the door to the meeting room was closed and I had to sit outside in the draughty corridor for nearly 20 minutes, able to hear the sound of ministry but not the actual words. Once inside I noticed that there were more empty chairs than occupied in the large room, and I spent the rest of the

hour trying to work out what the ministry I had missed had been about. Afterwards, no one spoke to me as I stood holding my cup of coffee. I was glad to leave.

Oh but then I went to Swarthmore Meeting, walking there from Swarthmore Hall where Helen and I were staying, the home of George Fox and Margaret Fell. The birthplace of Quakerism. Here was an original Quaker meeting house, small and rectangular, with a barn added on at the side, surrounded by fields. There were still the elders benches, and beneath the clock were the words *Stand Up, Speak Up*, but not, to my disappointment, *Shut Up*. The room was full, with visitors staying at the Hall and coming from surrounding villages, and it was easy to imagine early Friends worshipping there. Once again we had a reading from *Advices & Queries*, and then a deep, gathered silence.

And that was the Quaker Experience. We see the work and beliefs of Friends displayed on notice boards and shelves, and we value our friendships. It is the silent worship that gives it all meaning and purpose.

Gillian Turner

A healing week at Claridge House

In early September, I was fortunate to attend an inspiring four-day course with Quaker Spiritual Healers (QSH) held at Claridge House, the peaceful and welcoming Friends Fellowship for Healing (FFH) retreat centre in Dormansland, near Lingfield. As is usual at this house, vegetarian food was plentiful and nourishing, the garden beautiful and the atmosphere calm and relaxing. The perfect conditions in which to lean in and enjoy any course.

Twelve participants, all Friends or attenders, some of advanced experience, travelled from across the U.K., (except one who gamely flew in from Bialystok in Poland) to meet with tutors Lee Britten-Jones and Anne Le Marinel for a full programme covering such topics as: energy centre, chakras, body scanning, meditation, listening skills, distant healing and practical contact, including the laying on of hands as both healer and recipient. The impact of the course has stayed with me on my return as the experiences that we shared as a group were deep. Friends were so engaged with the material and practices that discussions often continued during meals and free time as we came together more surely after each session.

The FFH was established in the 1920s initially to provide distant or absent healing and to promote a prayerful healing ethos generally. The idea that in 'Spirit we are One and It knows no distance' underpinned the fellowship. It is one of the largest special interest groups within the Religious Society of Friends and has over 500 members. The Quaker Spiritual Healers (QSH) which was inaugurated in 2001 is a sub-Group of FFH.

Spiritual healing may often be confused incorrectly with the concept of complete cure and unfortunately, this can lead some to reject the whole idea of what is really an expression of Divine Love. Healing works towards wholeness and it is no coincidence that the FFH magazine is titled as such. It is not an exercise just aimed at bringing about improvements in physical health as emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual are embraced with as much importance as bodily well-being.

Course notes reminded us that 'The Healing Ministry is not just about spectacular miracles (although these may happen). There may not be a physical cure but that does not mean nothing is happening. Healing the mind or the spirit can be just as, if not more, important and it is not so obvious to the outside world'.

To be a true conduit for what can be termed Universal Energy we must ensure firstly that we 'get out of the way' by forgetting self and coming out of mind. As we still our ego in silent contemplation we ground ourselves in order to attain conscious union and allow the Spirit to go where It will. To receive healing, however, one only has to have hope and belief in the power of Life. Rosalind Smith in her FFH pamphlet *Simple Healing* suggests that if healer and patient are aware that healing energy is abundant around and through us it allows us to let go and open ourselves so that 'it floods through to where it is needed'. As Quakers we know that we need no intermediary to link directly with the Divine but perhaps in times of stress or great need we need a little assistance in connecting with the Source and this is where this kind of practice can help.

Healing, of course, is not confined to those who have been on Quaker courses, we can all be channels for the Light even in informal settings. When we listen actively with compassion to others with no fixed agenda and put aside our desire to frame a glib reply or give unwanted advice, we are using the spiritual gift of healing. When we speak someone's name warmly and

give kind eye-contact we are offering a small, but powerful, healing act. Anyone can do it, one does not need to be demonstrating unique aptitude. For we ourselves are not the healers, that would be the province of God, the Presence, we are but instruments or transparencies. We are the lamps that cast that Light. (course notes) As Jesus said:

'I can of my own self do nothing... the Father within, he doeth the works '. (John 5.30 and 14.10)

One of the many joys of the week was the way in which the course tutors gave space and encouragement for participants to share their spirituality and specific healing techniques. On returning home, I have been reminded of the simple but profound words of Walter Lanyon, 'when you see that of God in someone, you bring about a healing.'

Simple Healing, Rosalind Smith (FFH)

A Temple Not Made with Hands, Walter Lanyon (Kessinger Legacy Reprints)

For further details about the FFH please contact the Clerk: David Mason

David.mason1948@gmail.com

The Meeting holds copies of *Towards Wholeness* in the magazine and periodicals rack outside the Common Room.

Details about courses and personal retreats at Claridge House are to be found online:

www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk

Also, the course programme is featured in *Towards Wholeness*. Bursaries are available or speak to your Overseer about possible funding.

NB Steve Betts attended the same course in 2018 and wrote a moving piece about his personal experience for the newsletter earlier this year.

Barbara Earl

Coffee and integrity

The Friends House book and coffee shop is always worth a visit. There are hundreds of books and pamphlets about every aspect of Quakerism – and, it's where I discovered the delight that is the onion bhaji sandwich. (Not to be missed). In the summer the doors are sometimes wide open; though, it must be said that in cold weather the shut doors could make the shop invisible to passers-by who didn't already know it was there. A recent visit got me thinking.

Gillian and I were going on a course at Swarthmore Hall and had arranged to meet at the coffee shop before getting the train northwards from Euston. I arrived first and spent some time in the bookshop – buying a book about assisted dying that we'd been told to read before QLRC. (I did read it over the weekend – don't tell me I don't know how to have a good time). Then, Gillian arrived and it was time for a drink in the newly refurbished coffee shop. The old chairs has been moved out and replaced with lots of new café furniture. Clearly there has been a change in the business plan (perhaps in the overall corporate strategy, as Rex Ambler might say. See his letter to 'The Friend', 30 August 2019) - and the shop management are gearing up for increased throughput and lots of new customers. This would also seem clear from the notices placed on the tables, asking everybody to look after their belongings. We are no longer in safe Quakerland, seemingly protected from some of the aspects of a world where if you leave your handbag unattended, when you come back, it and certainly your credit card will have been nicked.

That got me thinking about another part of the Quaker world. I've got links with a Quaker school and am interested in a project to introduce and discuss the Quaker Business Method with some sixth formers there. Of course, it is about more than process – the way of doing things - and it carries with it some fundamental Quaker values about honesty and behaviour towards others. Historically speaking, it is well established that Quaker businesses were in part so successful because they were trusted by their customers. Arthur Larrabee, in a Quakerspeak video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H08cyXVYDw>, talks about how Quakers live their lives today and the way they 'model God's truth in the world'. This isn't, of course, always easy.

As ever, Advices and Queries are helpful. Sections (especially, 37 – 38) offer a couple of questions that can't be dodged. Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standards of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? You could say that Quakerism isn't so much a belief system or experience of the Divine as an expression of integrity. This is tested by how much people trust you, feel confident enough to open up before you and feel respected and safe. (But, of course, it could be all three approaches – and more – are relevant).

The integrity approach to life is as appropriate today - perhaps even more so – than it has ever been. After all, today's sixth formers have a right to feel sceptical about a lot of things, including religion. So that makes the behaviour of the individual (and his/her supporting community) even more relevant and important.

Helen Johnson

Righting a long-lasting wrong: getting a polluter to pay

Along with climate change and the spread of plastic, a major part of the damage being done to the planet is the dumping of toxic waste from industrial operations. There are thousands of examples, but probably the world's worst Industrial disaster was the leak of tons of deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas from the poorly maintained pesticide plant of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India, on 2/3 December 1984.

Some 10,000 to 20,000 people died and up to half a million suffered damage to eyes, lungs and other organs. Many are still unable to work. A second disaster has been caused by toxic chemicals stored on the site: they have leaked into the water supply (which had been polluted even before the tragedy). Further illnesses have resulted, and congenital disabilities and stillbirths are reported at a significantly higher rate than in the rest of India. The 35th anniversary of this tragedy will be on 2/3 December 2019.

UCC paid some compensation: an average of only \$400 for an injury and \$1250 for the death of a family member (\$470 million in total). A government petition to review this is currently before the Indian Supreme Court, but still asks for far too little.

UCC was taken over in 2001 by the Dow Chemical Company, which merged with another giant, DuPont, in 2018; now this in turn is splitting into three. The companies' conduct is the subject of separate legal action by survivors' groups in civil and criminal courts. We are supporting this by stressing the reputational and commercial damage caused by their denial of responsibility.

We also make a humanitarian appeal, hoping to reach 'that of God' in company directors and shareholders. The restructuring of the companies makes legal liability hard to pin down, but Dow Inc. and DuPont are clearly successors to UCC, and their rebirth provides an opportunity to set an example and adopt the new climate of corporate responsibility, by putting right past wrongs as well as avoiding new ones. We believe that this makes commercial good sense, as well as being the right thing to do.

It is encouraging that there is current interest in environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, as well as the American Business Roundtable statement that the purpose of a corporation includes concern for customers, employees, suppliers and communities as well as shareholders. However, while it is fine for companies to declare that they will conduct business ethically and sustainably in future, they need also to put right the harm they have caused in the past.

Action for Bhopal is a pressure group of Quakers and others aiming to secure the cleaning-up of the contaminated site. To drink clean water and to be born without poison-induced disabilities are basic human rights. We aim to achieve some progress for the people of Bhopal and those who have the misfortune to live near other toxic sites.

There is more information on our website <https://actionforbhopal.org>.

Martin Wright is an attendee at Streatham and Brixton Meeting

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Visit website <https://actionforbhopal.org>

Obtain new book *Mother and Child* by Annie Murray, inspired by Bhopal story, proceeds to Bhopal Medical Appeal

Write to CEO of Dow Inc.

Write to your pension fund, investment adviser, etc, asking them to let Dow know they cannot recommend its shares until it follows ESG and Roundtable principles.

Arrange screening of film *Bhopali*

Sign up for AfB email updates

Area Meeting

Area Meeting (AM) was held in Croydon on 15 September, attended by about twenty Friends. The theme was the best use of our Legacies.

Many thanks to Cathy and Kay for the tempting refreshments-we could have done with more time to eat them and chat! Thanks also to Margaret Skelton and David Parlett, for clerking us through a heavy agenda, Elders for their preparation and Barbara for taking the children. There were only three children, so plans for their participation had to be changed.

After the opening worship, Pam Sellman and Helen Drewery, Clerk of Trustees, gave an overview of our Legacies. Substantial amounts were held by AM and Local Meetings (LMs). They highlighted the importance of legacies for our work. It was important to have a prudent policy for maintaining reserves, but AM could afford to spend more. We considered in small groups how AM Legacies should be used, as well as any legacies we might be able to make as individuals-what was needed for nourishing our spiritual life; financial support for individuals; training; maintaining our buildings; Outreach and support for Quaker causes?

On other business, we heard of the death of Ronald Pearse of Purley and that our Friend Celia Snaith had transferred to Mid-Thames AM. We heard the minute of record for our Friend Mary Jakeman (?attached). Our Friend Steve Betts was welcomed into membership.

Carol Contant and Caroline Goffe were released from service as Overseers. David Parlett was appointed as an Overseer at Croydon and Marian Noble as an Elder at Sutton until December 2020. Helen Drewery was re-appointed as Clerk of Trustees until December 2020.

The Trustees' annual report and accounts were accepted, subject to any changes required by the examiners. The Meeting agreed the amount of AM Legacies should be reduced over a period of ten years. AM Legacies Committee were given delegated authority to spend up to £5,000 a year. Trustees were asked to draft a process for seeking grants for Quaker concerns, to bring forward to AM. The Meeting agreed to pay £785 from AM Legacies to 'Sanctuary Everywhere'.

Croydon Meeting's spiritual review (attached?) was received with thanks.

Bob Rogers, AM representative on Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), had asked for advice before their residential on Sustainability and Assisted Dying. LMs were asked to send photos or short pieces on Sustainability to Margaret Skelton by 29 September. The Meeting wished Friends in Britain to explore Assisted Dying. We noted that MfS Arrangements Committee would draft a report on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs.

The Meeting agreed to suggest a Spring series of monthly open Kindler Saturday Workshops, 'Everyday Quakers'. We heard the annual report on Croydon's children's activities.

Purley Friends expressed considerable frustration at the way London Quaker Property Trust (LQPT) had treated the problems associated with their move. The Clerk was asked to send relevant minutes to the LQPT Trustees.

Next AM Committee: Sunday 20 October;

Next Area Meeting: Sunday 17 November, both at Streatham and Brixton.

Rhiannon Rees

Meeting for Worship with a Difference

On 3 September I was at a Quaker Meeting for Worship held in the road outside the ExCel Centre in Docklands. It was the week before DSEi, the world's largest arms fair, started. Throughout the week many different organisations were holding protests, trying to prevent lorries bringing in weapons for display to delegations from all over the world, including repressive governments that are promoting conflict and killing innocent civilians.

A grass-roots Quaker movement, 'Roots of Resistance', has supported Quakers in witnessing for peace by going to protests, writing to MPs, making small 'banners' to be taken to protests and made into a new 'Quaker tapestry', and upholding these actions. The Quaker Meetings were part of a 'No Faith in War' day. Over 700 people of different faiths are estimated to have participated. The previous afternoon we prepared at Friends House, with talks and legal briefing, learning songs and making banners. The Large Meeting House was quite full for the evening Meeting for Worship. We left inspired for the following day.

When I arrived Meeting for Worship had just started. Thought to have been one of the largest Quaker Meetings ever held in this country outside Yearly Meeting, this included Quakers from all over Britain and was held in one of the access roads into the ExCel. Although I couldn't hear

much of the ministry, I felt closer to the experience of the early Friends, meeting in the open air and never knowing whether the authorities would break up the Meeting.

Afterwards we sang songs such as 'Dear Friends, Dear Friends' and 'We are Gentle, Angry People'. Meanwhile Anglicans, including two bishops, arrived with their banners and held their service in the road, which some of us joined. Later I saw a number of Buddhists meditating, a Buddhist monk and nun with a drum and a group of Catholics from 'Pax Christi'. I understand there were also Moslem prayers.

There was a strong police presence, but the atmosphere was generally peaceful and good-humoured. During the morning Meeting police asked us to move but most of us stayed. I heard applause for two protestors who had 'locked on' to block the road and were arrested. The road was blocked for several hours. In the afternoon I went to the station to direct Friends arriving for the afternoon Meeting, so I missed most of it. However police had given an ultimatum that they would clear the road and a number of Friends, many more elderly than me, were arrested. Friends arranged for them to be supported and met when they left the police stations later.

About 100 people were arrested during the week. There was little coverage in the mainstream media but the 'Guardian' and the 'Independent' reported that the Mayor of London wrote to the DSEi organisers to say that they were not welcome in London and he would do all he could to prevent the arms fair returning to London.

Rhiannon Rees

Events

28 Sept to 6 Oct: QUAKER WEEK This year's theme is 'Quaker Stories'.

All of October: Nightwatch Harvest Appeal Nightwatch are again running their annual Harvest Festival Appeal throughout October. They need as many tins of soup as possible, to see them through the winter.

Monday 30 Sept: Quakers and Peace One of a series of sessions at Friends House 7.00 – 9.00

Friday 4 Oct: The trial of Penn and Mead 6.30 – 8.45 at Friends House: The trial of Penn and Mead, play adapted by Nigel Pascoe. Book via Eventbrite <http://bit.ly/PennandMead>. We will ask you for a donation at the event.

Monday 7 Oct: Quakers and God Part of a series of sessions at Friends House 7.00 – 9.00

Tuesday 8 Oct: Mindful Weaving day at Claridge House. This workshop, led by Jenny Webb, offers an introduction to both handweaving and mindfulness. Non-residential price: £50.00

Friday 14 Oct: Quakers and Truth Part of a series of sessions at Friends House 7.00 – 9.00

Friday 21 Oct: Quakers and Simplicity Part of a series of sessions at Friends House 7.00 – 9.00

Friday 25-27 Oct: The healing power of the human voice. Course at Claridge House. Residential price: £285.00

Sat 26 Oct: Woodbrooke on the Road day: 'What can we do with what we've got?' Our Friends at Sutton have invited us to join them for a 'Woodbrooke on the Road' day on Saturday October 26th from 10am to about 4pm. An opportunity for Meetings to reflect on our practical and spiritual resources and consider what our ministry might be. They ask those of us who are going to let Phil Laurence know in advance and to pay £5 pounds as a small contribution to the cost of the day and to show our commitment to attending.

Sunday 27 Oct – Friday 1 Nov: Resting in Presence: Retreats at Woodbrooke

Saturday 2 Nov: Quaker Activist Gathering 9.30 – 5.30at Friends House. This event is free. Please book a place via the online registration form.

Collections

Apologies: I am unable to record recent and forthcoming collections as my new computer will not (yet) enable me to convert the format in which they are recorded. - DP

Next issue

The deadline for the November edition is Sunday 24 October 2019
Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to
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