

# CROYDON FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## October 2020

**Dear Friends** Our October newsletter celebrates the changing of the season and the coming of autumn as we meet together, some still on Zoom, but, at last, having seen through a glass darkly, now many face to face. We are gradually getting used to meeting with masks, like so many Guy Fawkes personages, and trying to measure our two metres apart. We are also waiting... for the leaves to change colour and fall, for the latest statistics about coronavirus, for news of friends and relatives who are sick, for the clocks to go back... And eventually, we can only hope, for some kind of normality to reappear. With the spring, perhaps? **Gillian Turner, David Parlett**

### From Advices and Queries

*25: A long-term relationship brings tensions as well as fulfilment. If your relationship with your partner is under strain, seek help in understanding the other's point of view and in exploring your own feelings, which may be powerful and destructive. Consider the wishes and feelings of any children involved, and remember their enduring need for love and security. Seek God's guidance. If you undergo the distress of separation or divorce, try to maintain some compassionate communication so that arrangements can be made with the minimum of bitterness.*

**Chosen by Julia Abley**

**Julia** was accepted into membership at area meeting on 20 September and we are delighted to welcome her!



### Autumn poem

*To accompany morning photograph by Liz Collins*

<b>kare-eda-ni</b>	on a withered branch
<b>karasu-no tomari-keri</b>	a crow is perched
<b>aki-no kure</b>	autumn evening

Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) wrote this haiku 1680.

It is often considered to be a marker of the beginning of his mature style [Wikipedia].



**Gemma Tighe -  
foraging for mushrooms**

### **Being scared of the Light**

*doesn't stop your soul calling you - that restless feeling, that yearning for a deeper connection are all signs that your soul needs you to move closer to the Light within.*

*The heartache of being lonely at times, which is different to being alone, is a sign that your soul is trying to find its way to find a connection with your true path.*

*The connection with animals brings its joys and peaks of delight but also its sadness when they come to a close of their physical existence.*

*But it can teach us to live in the moment and be happy in the experience of being present-adoring each moment we have together.*

Author unknown (Contributed by Pam Sellman)

### **Small Kindnesses**

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you by. Or how strangers still say 'bless you' when someone sneezes, a leftover from the Bubonic plague. 'Don't die,' we are saying. And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder, and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass. We have so little of each other, now. So far from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say, 'Here, have my seat,' 'Go ahead — you first,' 'I like your hat.'

It's not often that my Twitter feed throws up something so timely and fitting as Danusha Lameris' poem, *Small Kindnesses*. The beauty of her words as she highlights the deeper meanings behind how we relate and communicate to each other particularly in times when we may be feeling 'so far from tribe and fire' is quite stunning.

The grace behind such lines as 'Mostly, we don't want to harm each other' chime with the response most people have given regarding the need to socially distance and wear masks in public. The driver giving way and the kind stranger who helps to pick up the lemons spilling from our grocery bag are offering valuable acts of consideration and kindness. Such gifts should mean a lot at any time but may unfortunately go unnoticed under usual circumstances. In times of strain and difficulty, however, we may welcome these 'brief moments of exchange'.

Having so little of each other (I really miss the warm offering of coffee and the 'second Meeting' on Sundays), we may indeed come to see these acts of goodwill as spiritual. These 'fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here, have my seat" may indeed hold the 'true dwelling of the holy'.

**Barbara Earl**

## The Circling Prayer

*God divided light from darkness by a circle. - Job 25:10*

Circle me, Lord,  
keep love within, keep strife without,  
keep hope within, keep despair without,  
keep peace within, keep harm without

*Celtic Daily Life*

## Making connections

Lockdown is starting to take its toll... that's my excuse as here we go again... a long rant from this old girl about the television programmes that she's *not* watching (well, at least, not any more). This time, it's a real disappointment... as both the novel and the film of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* in their time were important to me. After all, I have found myself in more situations than I like to remember where I think I'm coping, but, of course, I'm not. I'm really stressed out and the situation - not me - is in control. But, somehow the prequel, *Ratched*, on Netflix currently, isn't holding my attention... even though it stars the wonderful Sarah Paulson. It's the usual three episodes and I start asking myself 'Quite why am I watching this?' Why don't I give up and return to reading, listening to the radio, going for walks even as the temperature plunges?'. But, amazingly at the same time as this television let-down, there's something so excitingly good that I'm emailing friends to ask if they are watching and enjoying it too. It does happen! This time it's *The Romantics and Us with Simon Schama* (not the snappiest of titles on BBC2).

What's it about? Well, everything really. History, politics art, music, psychology... with lots of explanations from 'experts' that range from Peter Doherty to David Attenborough. The first programme starts with Victor Hugo, so it's clear that we're not going to be tied to the usual chat about the Anglo-American world. The focus on the move away or, at least, on from the cool rationality of the Enlightenment to something more internal, emotional and personal. Long before Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis, it was the Romantics who started an exploration of what is described as 'the deepest, darkest corners of the human mind'. We're very quickly in the world of poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Blake. Schama tells how these artists (not forgetting Piranesi and others) changed how we see and describe that human mind and how it interprets what it sees. Another important element in the Romantic movement was the engagement with nature (hence that chat with David Attenborough). Wordsworth was interested in exploring his own mind but also saw the need to attach such exploration to a wider and positive context - the beauty of the countryside and nature as a whole - to avoid being trapped by self-obsession. I don't recall the word 'spirituality' being mentioned but Friends will easily recognise this interior/exterior combination.

So, it was the second episode in which this was discussed that had a special resonance. What Weber called the 'iron cage of rationality' is co-existing with the world of feeling. There's a connection here with one of the WhatsApp group's favourite topics... their walks in the countryside, by the seaside, somewhere beautiful (and sometimes complete with photos). (By the way, I agree with you: three cheers for Lloyds Park!) It's interesting television and meaningful chat that sometimes surprise us by making connections that help our understanding and appreciation of the world around us to become deeper.

*Helen Johnson*

## What are Heavy?

*What are heavy? Sea-sand and sorrow,  
What are brief? Today and tomorrow,  
What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth,  
What are deep? The ocean and truth.*

This poem by Christina Rossetti I came across during lockdown. Feeling sad while reading; such troubling times for people and hard to see answers.

I then got onto positive thinking of how blessed and fortunate I am.

Happily able to meet friends, look at nature in a slower, more pleasing pace of life. Enjoy

conversations, delight in hearing news of friends and family.

Coming to Meeting last Sunday in our meeting house was a milestone! Actually in the meeting room.

The wearing of face covering and sitting far apart didn't enhance the experiences. But I well understand the importance of these restrictions and wish to express my thanks to all that made it possible.

Another learning curve, I trust in time it will feel a lot easier for us all.

Wishing friends a colourful peaceful autumn time.

*Margie Ashley*

### Our Meeting House Garden

We have made a start at restocking our front garden – the patch of grass and flower beds between the two buildings – by laying down two tons of topsoil and one of mulch. I didn't buy enough to go into the back garden, so that will have to wait a week or so.

Kate Orchard is researching a growing plan so that we buy a variety of leaves and flowers to go on the table in the meeting room all year round.

We are starting with the small winter-flowering plants that are ready to go down straight away: winter-flowering pansies and camelias, and lots of bulbs.

Last year at Yearly Meeting I spotted a brightly illustrated book entitled *God in the Garden* by Philip Eley. Along with a weekly List of Tasks he talks about a particular plant, gives a bible extract, a homily and a prayer.

Week 1 in October is devoted to the Himalayan Balsam which self-seeds all over the British countryside, rather like poppies. He describes how 'when the flowers are ready to disperse their seeds the seedpods spring open and throw seeds all around, or explode, expelling their seeds up to seven meters from the plant.'

*Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, oh ye of little faith. Luke 12:27, 28*

### Trespassers may not be forgiven

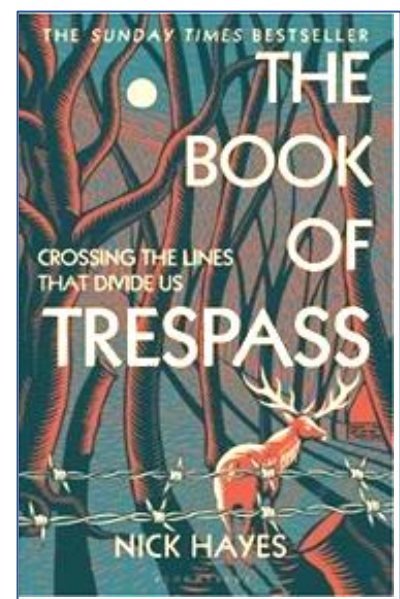
Review: *The Book of Trespass*, by Nick Hayes

Few things are healthier, more relaxing, and perhaps even prayerful, than sitting in the country sketching the view before you. It's been one of my favourite activities for as long as I can remember. Such is the perspective of artist and naturalist Nick Hayes, who lives in a tower block in east London but spends most of his time roaming round the most beautiful parts of the countryside and producing artworks from what he sees. Necessarily, this involves trespassing.

His *Book of Trespass* is full of artworks, in glorious black and white (scrapboard? lino-cut?), which alone would be entirely self-sufficient. The accompanying text comes as an informative and enlightening bonus, consisting as it does of alternating passages of wild-life and scenic observations with passages of social history that I for one had only ever been vaguely aware of.

In England, for example, 92 per cent of land and 97 percent of waterways are out of bounds. Half the country is owned by less than 1 per cent of the population: the Duke of Buccleuch's 270,700 acres of it are twice the size of Birmingham, Derby and Leicester combined. Public footpaths allow us barely 8 per cent of land we have the right to roam across - if 'roaming' is the right word for being obliged to stick to narrow strips of it.

History and wildlife are punctuated by matters of law. 'The first thing you should know', writes Hayes, 'is that the famous sign 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' is an out-and-out lie... Since 1694 the misdemeanour of trespass has resided in the province of civil, not criminal, law, and can only be brought to court if damages have been incurred. However, if you resist the owner's



command to leave... the police can be called, and if you resist them you can be done for a breach of the peace'. And if you think that's letting you off lightly, fairly recent (21st century) pieces of legislation have in fact succeeded in 'scaling it up into the criminal sphere'.

Hayes has done a lot of historical homework in tracing the attitudes and legislation that have overtaken us since William the Conqueror's Domesday Book first compiled registers of who owned what land. Indeed, he goes back to the year dot in examining the philosophical question of what natural right subsists in the private ownership of any land at all.

'There was a central paradox to these new regulations [The Statute of Cambridge, 1388] that seems like an early, medieval draft of *Catch-22*: if you owned land, you could move; if you were landless, you had to stay where you were'. Vagrants, such as tinkers, peddlers, and the like, could be refused charity if caught begging. Hence, says Hayes, the concept of the 'undeserving poor' that underlies the philosophy of the present government. (Quote: 'The British are among the worst idlers in the world. We work among the lowest hours, we retire early and our productivity is poor. Whereas Indian children aspire to be doctors or businessmen, the British are more interested in football and pop music - from *Britannia Unchained* (2010) by five prominent members of the Tories' Free Enterprise Group.)

Nick Hayes' central argument is that everyone should have access to the joy of nature and its mental and health benefits, and his vision is restricted by an elite circle of proprietors. By coincidence, the latest issue of *The Friend* has just dropped through my letterbox, with an article about George Cadbury who wrote: 'I have been brought to the conclusion that it is impossible to raise a nation, morally, physically, and spiritually, in such surroundings, and that the only effective way is to bring men out of the cities into the country and to give to every man his garden where he can come into touch with nature'.

Early Quakers included Diggers, Levellers, and other trespassers. Where are they now? In default of an answer, and in quest of the enjoyment of nature, I shall just have to go on trespassing.

**David Parlett**

Nick Hayes, *The Book of Trespass: Crossing the lines that divide us* (Bloomsbury Circus, 2020)

*The Piglet lived in a very grand house in the middle of a beech-tree, and the beech-tree was in the middle of the forest, and the Piglet lived in the middle of the house. Next to his house was a piece of broken board which had: "TRESPASSERS W" on it. When Christopher Robin asked the Piglet what it meant, he said it was his grandfather's name, and had been in the family for a long time. Christopher Robin said you couldn't be called Trespassers W, and Piglet said yes, you could, because his grandfather was, and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for Trespassers William. And his grandfather had had two names in case he lost one — Trespassers after an uncle, and William after Trespassers.*

*"I've got two names," said Christopher Robin carelessly.*

*"Well, there you are, that proves it," said Piglet".*

**A A Milne**

## Events

**Sunday 11:** Croydon Friends local business meeting (Zoom), 1pm

**Saturday 17 October – 14 November** (five consecutive Saturdays): Woodbrooke online: *The Keithian Controversy: Early Quakers and Jesus*, led by **Madeleine Pennington**. How did the early Quakers understand the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity? What is the significance of the historical Jesus to Quaker spirituality? These were the central issues in the Keithian controversy: a dispute which broke out among Philadelphian Quakers in the seventeenth century when George Keith – one of the most important Quaker leaders at the time – was accused of focusing too heavily on the historical Jesus in his preaching. The same issues have emerged in every major Quaker schism ever since. This course will introduce participants to George Keith, guide them through the main events and causes of the Keithian controversy, and consider the significance of the controversy for Quakerism today. The

course is comprised of Live speaker sessions, Live discussion sessions, Written and visual materials, A private discussion forum, and Individual Reflection. Live sessions are on Saturdays at 10:00-11:30. Cost: £54. Book at: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/item/the-keithian-controversy-early-quakers-and-jesus/>

**Sunday 18:** South London Area Committee meeting (Zoom)

**Sunday 25:** Fourth-Sunday discussion: Trust and transparency in the wider Quaker framework (led by elders), 1pm Zoom (to be confirmed).

### Collecting in October

04	Oasis Community housing
11	Friends House Moscow
18	Croydon Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Support Group
25	Praxis Community Projects
1/11	Croydon Nightwatch

**The deadline for the October edition is Sunday 25 October 2020**

**Please give, send or email contributions (no longer than 500 words, please) to**

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### Answer to a Child's Question

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,  
 The Linnet and Thrush say, 'I love and I love!'  
 In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong;  
 What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.  
 But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,  
 And singing, and loving—all come back together.  
 But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,  
 The green fields below him, the blue sky above,  
 That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he—  
 'I love my Love, and my Love loves me!'

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), chosen by Helen Johnson*