

south london aqm news

Croydon, Epsom, Purley, Streatham & Sutton local Quaker meetings

October 2010

Membership matters

At area meeting in September we agreed to recognise four possible routes to the acquisition of membership: (1) Visitation, as before, (2) Meeting for clearness, (3) Letter of endorsement from the elders and overseers of an applicant's local meeting, and (4) In exceptional cases, membership by invitation. The drafting group (Marian Collins, Ethel Livermore, David Parlett) has been asked to circulate the more detailed draft for final consideration at a later meeting.

In anticipation of this acceptance we were pleased, in June, to welcome into membership **Phyl Summers**, an attender of many years standing at Epsom meeting, on the basis of a letter of endorsement from Epsom elders and overseers.

At September area meeting we were pleased to accept a certificate of transfer from East Kent AQM for **Geoff Watts** and **Isobella Stewart**, a married couple who have been worshipping with Streatham Friends for some years.

We also agreed to ask for the transfer of membership **Anna Sharman** to Kingston & Wandsworth area meeting, **Christal ('Chris') Cook** and **Brenda Heales** to Hampshire & IOW, and **Lynne McAtamney** to Sussex West AQM.

In May we recorded with sadness the death of **Betty Morris** of Sutton meeting and asked Sutton Friends to prepare a minute of record. This was received in July, and will be read at October area meeting.

Razzamataz at Croydon

A substantial series of bookings at Croydon meeting house means that for the foreseeable future Croydon Friends will be hosting area meetings not in their own meeting house but in the Unitarian Church next door (with acknowledgement and thanks to their Unitarian friends), starting with our next AM on 20 November. Friends will still be able to park in the meeting house car park. If it is full it may be possible to use the Unitarians' car park (drive northwards past the meeting house, turn left at the lights and

then left again at the first opening.) However, we await confirmation on this point.

The booking has been made by Razzamataz Theatre Schools (<http://www.razzamataz.co.uk/>), who have "a passion for the performing arts" and whose dance, drama and singing classes for 4-18 year olds are all about fun, energy and enjoyment. They will be using several rooms of the meeting house and the Adult School Hall on Saturdays during school term times.

In brief...

- **Alison Brown's** first grandchild arrived on 1 August. His name is Charles Edward Sylvester and he weighed 7lb 14oz.
- **Shirley Kempton's** grandson Jake aged 16 has been selected to play striker in Wolverhampton Wanderers under 18 team. He is now living with a family in Wolverhampton.
- **Helen Drewery**, together with Tim Newell, has been honoured by being made fellows of Circles of Support. This is in acknowledgement of the work that they did in setting up this visionary organisation in the UK.
- In August, **Sheila Heard** did a sponsored run in aid of two children's charities. It took her an hour and four minutes and she raised £853.
- On Bank Holiday Monday, Sutton Friends again mounted a Quaker stall at the Carshalton Green Fair. Their stall was not as well placed as in previous years but there were a good number of enquirers.
- The **Sutton Quaker Steel Band** continues to thrive. They are accumulating a number of outside bookings over the next few months.
- **Fund-raising for Vasculitis** On a sunny afternoon in September at the home of Susan and Bill Northrop Epsom Friends held a tea party for raising awareness and money for the Vasculitis Foundation. Foundation representatives were there with leaflets concerning the family of diseases related to Vasculitis, and Friends were grateful to Chris Sharp in helping them to understand the illness. The event raised £125.
- On 26 September Croydon Friends hosted a "Sharing of Words and Music on a Biblical Theme" in anticipation of forthcoming study groups celebrating in 2011 the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible. Friends from other meetings attended and enjoyed a wide variety of readings, personal views and pieces of music based on or inspired by biblical themes.
- The Book Evening and book sale organised by **Patricia Steel** on Tuesday 17 August raised £35 for Sutton Meeting funds, together with the sale of garden produce at Meeting.

The Age of Stupid

The Epsom & Ewell Energy Group will be showing the film 'The Age of Stupid' on Thursday 11th November at 7.30 pm at W. S. Atkins, Woodcote Grove, Epsom. This is open to anyone. The film, which has been very favourably reviewed, is a drama-documentary-animation hybrid which stars Pete Postlethwaite as a man living alone in the devastated world of 2055, watching archive footage from the mid-to-late 2000s and asking "Why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance?". After the film there will be a discussion.

You are invited to an exhibition and sale of work by Patricia Piqué
on Friday/Saturday 15/16th October from 10.30 am to 5pm, and Sunday 17th from 2pm to 5pm (evenings by appointment -
tel: 01883 620360)
at Flat 17 Altamont, Westview Road, Warlingham, Surrey.
Watercolours, painting on silk, encaustic (wax) pictures, cards etc, Bargain Table. Also, Jacky Piqué's cards & children's books.
Tea & coffee free - do come and bring a friend.
Donation to Claridge House, Lingfield

At meeting for sufferings...

Anthea Underwood reports...

The detention of children of asylum seekers - In response to a letter from the Borders Agency (part of the Home Office) we are glad to hear that the present government is committed to ending the detention of children and are conducting a review. Quakers have sent their contribution to that review.

Quaker marriage - We ask the Church Government Advisory Group to reconsider their proposed use of the term 'spouse' and to consider why a couple should not be allowed to choose what terms to use in consultation with the registering officer.

Friends House development - Decisions have been taken to reconfigure the offices in Friends House to improve working conditions and to appoint architects to bring plans to improve the large meeting house.

Criminal Justice Project: Learning from Experience - We want personal narratives of a custodial or community sentence which affects many more people than the person who has been convicted. Their family, friends, the victim, the wider community. We want to know the practical and emotional effect - the worst thing about the experience, whether there was anything positive about it, and if something or someone could and did make it better. Ask anyone you know to contribute

with relevant information. and contacts for more information are: Proctor Harvey QPSWCCJG, Friends House, 020 7663 1036, *email* proctor@quaker.org.uk. Please send your narrative to <http://www.quaker.org.uk/learningexperience>.

Framework for action - Yearly Meeting at Canterbury in 2011 will be themed around these three queries:

1. How are we supporting each other to simple, joyful and spirit-led lives that sustain the world we live in?
2. To what extent do you see your meetings' response on this issue to be driven by guilt and fear, and to what extent by love and joy?
3. How has your meeting engaged with the priority as a faith community? How do our testimonies shape our response? Any responses to Sunniva Taylor 020 7663 1047 sunnivat@quaker.org.uk or Friends House.

Quaker responses to climate change - Where we see crisis we also see opportunity to make society as a communion of people living sustainably as part of a natural world. By leading simple lives in a low carbon society we draw nearer to the abundance of peace, freedom and true community. Please don't forget to give generously for all this Quaker work!

Consolidated accounts delayed

by Barbara Cairns, Clerk to AQM Trustees

The Area Meeting Trustees are concerned that we still do not have consolidated accounts for 2009. (The consolidated accounts amalgamate the accounts for the five Local Meetings and the Area Meeting Legacies Fund with the core accounts for Area Meeting, which were presented to Area Meeting in February.) Eventually it will be necessary for the Area Meeting to be registered with the Charity Commission, and then it will be a statutory requirement to produce consolidated accounts by the end of October. In the meantime the Quaker Stewardship Committee ask to see consolidated accounts within the same time frame.

The delay this year has been partly due to pressure of other concerns on our Treasurer but also because information has been supplied late and/or with errors by Local Meetings. The accounts cannot be finalised until the last piece of information is supplied.

The Trustees strongly recommend Local Meetings to keep separate bank accounts for Meeting monies and Premises monies, as this makes it easier to see what is happening. We also urge Local Meetings to provide information to the Area Meeting Treasurer in a standard form.

Struggling to pay the quota

Dear Friends - It should come as no surprise that the Area Meeting needs more money than before. This is because Six Weeks Meeting has doubled the quota that it levies on all Area Meetings that goes towards the pooled funds to pay for the upkeep of our Meeting Houses. Unfortunately, the Area Meeting's income has not increased to match so that we are struggling to pay the quota, quarter by quarter. In the first quarter, our net income (allowing for expenses) fell short of the quota instalment by

about £4,800. In the second quarter it fell short by about £2,400 – somewhat better. But the effect of this is that our reserves are running down. We started the year with about £17,500 and ended quarter 2 with about £10,300. Since then the reserves have built up again but they will fall to about £9,500, after paying the third quota instalment, even on an optimistic forecast.

John Drewery, Treasurer

Ed note: Quota may reduce in 2011 - see p.5

Are we a testimony short?

asks Margaret Onians

What is your attitude to money?

Are you lucky enough not to have to think about it much? Do you think it is contaminating? The root of all evil? Or does the evil come from just loving it above all things - which you don't have to do in order to earn or spend it for everyday purposes? Can anybody actually function without it in this world?

Personally I regret that it is not more obviously addressed by any of our testimonies except perhaps simplicity. The trouble is, Man cannot live by bread alone, but nobody ever said he could survive in the modern world without it – or without somebody else spending it on his behalf. Almost any work we want done costs.

So how well do we share our disposable resources to help provide for others? Nobody asks us to give away what we have not got to give. That would be very unfair, unkind and wrong. If on the other hand we are relatively blessed, how often do we review our commitments? Most people can find something for the Disasters Emergency Committee, when some cataclysmic event reminds us sharply of the needs of others. But I have also found that if I set up small standing orders I hardly notice them

going out, yet they can add up to useful amounts in ongoing income for the causes I want to support. This "ongoing income" aspect is important, as it allows charities to budget. It allows Treasurers (including our own at Sutton Meeting) to be sure they can meet the continuing demands on the organisation they work for.

At Friends House, there is never enough money to do all the work Friends want them to do. Our membership has halved over recent decades, yet Area Meeting through Six Weeks Meeting is still looking for ways to maintain the same number of Meeting Houses because each Meeting so much values "a home of our own", and the outreach opportunities such a base provides. Our own Sutton Meeting is quite well endowed with "tied" funds, limited in how they can be spent, but quite short of the general funds to meet general demands on it. Talk to the treasurer.

Having recently come into some money, I wonder if I will have the grace to give away more of what is superfluous to my real needs, and let my "wants" and "would likes" take more of a back seat. I wonder.

Mental health and Quakerism

by Isobel Lane

"At the risk of being unpopular I believe that it is not enough for Friends to refer to The Retreat [York] as the example of the good work that Friends are doing in the field of mental illness, after all, mental illness is part of what makes us human."

Those are the words of Terry Wisker, a fellow member of the Quaker Disability Equality Group, and are part of his response to my personal concern to somehow get a Mental Health/Illness Support and Information Group set up within Quakerism.

Quakers are actually involved in other mental health activities than The Retreat: The James Naylor Foundation is a Quaker inspired charity founded by Dr. Bob Johnson; It is chiefly concerned with a mental condition called 'Personality Disorder'; In 2009 a training weekend for elders and overseers

was held at Woodbrooke entitled 'Mental Health in our Meetings'; The Quaker Youth Work Conference 2010 is holding an event on 6 November at Friends' Meeting House called 'Young People and Mental Health. Quakers also made a submission on the Draft Mental Health Bill.

All these things are important but I believe that they do not go far enough to help those Friends with mental illness or their families. Terry Wisker (quoted above) spent some considerable time in hospital and no-one from his Meeting made any contact. Reading about that led to me writing an article for The Friend which was published in the April 23 edition this year. If anyone wrote to The Friend about it their letter was not published. Another Friend was worried about apparent indifference of the meeting to a

Friend who was ill. After area elders and overseers (including a retired consultant psychiatrist) held a study day on the topic attendees and members were advised to leave mental health issues to currently practising professionals. As Terry says "If a Friend had a debilitating physical illness would we say 'best not to get in touch, we really should leave it to the health professionals' I think not."

It seems clear that the overwhelming response to mental illness is fear, fear of the unknown and where it might lead. One way of reducing this fear and helping those who suffer due to others' fear is to inform, to speak truth. That is one of the things that I hope the potential Support and Information Group will do. The other is to provide friendly (and Friendly) support to any member, attendee and their family who may be affected by mental illness. It should not be the work of the group to interfere with the work of mental health professionals in any way. To me this a fundamental issue about responding to that of God in others, NOT to fear of their illness.

A Friend writing on the on-line Quaker Forum said that 'slowly the shame and embarrassment are weakening'; another Friend when I said that I wished that we could talk as openly about mental illness as we now can about cancer said 'you'll have to wait fifty years for that!' We do not have fifty years, we need to do whatever we can now.

PRECAUTION

You know why
he turned both of them out
don't you?

Well, Adam would only
have started up
a logging company
in the primordial forest,
felling the Tree of Life
for mahogany toilet seats.

And Eve?
She would have taken over
the virgin beauty
of the shore-line,
promoted herself
to Managing Director
of Paradise Holidays Incorporated,

and then
if not before
God would have been
turned out of Eden.

Cecily Taylor

It should not be forgotten that mental illness kills. The latest statistics published by Mind (a national mental health charity) show that more than 4,300 people die by suicide in England and Wales every year. Many more attempts are made. The distress involved is colossal.

I have contacted the clerk of The Friends Fellowship of Healing, who put my concern on the agenda of their September Meeting at Claridge House. Cherry Simpkin, Clerk of FFH, subsequently wrote: "I can tell you that the Committee were keen to do what they can to support you. You should be receiving a letter from our new Clerk, Hilary Painter, with some thoughts as to how you might take your concern forward."

Editorial footnote: The Retreat (York) is a specialist mental health care provider and works with the NHS to provide care for people with complex and challenging needs. Founded in 1792 by William Tuke, a Yorkshire Quaker, it remains to this day a Quaker organisation. It has the distinction of having been the first establishment in England where mental illness was regarded as something from which a person could recover, and patients were treated with sympathy, respect and dignity. The Retreat had a profound influence on public opinion, resulting ultimately in fundamental reform of the laws relating to mental illness and its treatment. For more information, see <http://www.theretreatyork.org.uk/abouttheretreat.php>

Do you know a group seeking a community worker but unable to afford one? Try an experienced community worker working as a volunteer on an expenses-only basis!

Dear Friends

I am a member of Petts Wood Meeting and was for several years clerk of Woolwich Meeting until it was laid down.

I recently found myself contemplating retirement. I felt that I should take advantage of my pensions to make myself available for voluntary work in my profession of community work. In April there was a meeting for clearness with Petts Wood Friends which enabled me to think through some of the issues; and as a result I am now pursuing my retirement (or semi-retirement) project.

I believe that the volunteer service which I am offering helps to fulfil the duty of local meetings as set out in QFP 4.38I: "to seek to exert a Christian influence in the neighbourhood both as a meeting and in co-operation with others." Personally, I have always felt that this should have come first rather than last in the 4.38 list. For further information please contact me on 020 8854 4899, email msj49@tiscali.co.uk

Yours in Friendship, Martin Jenkins

Is the quota rightly set ?

by Gordon Steel

On 7 October I attended the annual meeting between Six Weeks Meeting and AQM clerks and treasurers in place of the clerk of South London Area Meeting.

I found it a dispiriting occasion which only served to indicate the unsatisfactory state of the financial arrangements for funding meeting houses in the London area. Decision-making processes are poorly established between SWM and area meetings and there are wide differences among the seven area meetings in how they conduct their financial affairs. It is not surprising, therefore, that current attempts to draft a Memorandum of Understanding between SWM and area meetings have so far failed. These difficulties were focussed by the question: 'If we need to close one or more meeting houses in order to conserve funds, who should take these decisions?' SWM does not feel able to do this and area meetings may be unwilling to do so.

Much of the discussion centred around the SWM quota. This was doubled between 2009 and 2010 and we gathered that most area meetings have paid this increase in full. North West London AQM, however, had decided only to increase their payment to SWM by 10%, mainly because they felt that BYM was more in need of their support. John Drewery told us that our area meeting has so far been unable to pay the third quarter instalment of the 2010 quota in full. It has been said in the past,

and was reiterated here, that the quota is not a *demand* by SWM but a *request* and it seemed to be generally accepted that some area meetings may accede to this request better than others.

Some area meetings break down the quota among their local meetings. The rationale behind this is to make Friends more aware of the actual upkeep costs of their own meeting house. There was a general feeling that this is a good policy. An error was pointed out in the membership data on the basis of which the quota is being notionally allocated among local meetings. We were told that SWM office does not have the time to check these figures and it is up to each area meeting to send in correct and up-to-date membership data.

I was astonished to learn that during the past year SWM has found that its outgoings have been considerably less than had been budgeted for and that there was therefore no immediate need for the 2011 quota to be so much greater than that in 2009! Area meetings have struggled to meet the doubling of the quota during 2010 but it now seems that such a steep increase was unnecessary to meet the cost of work actually done.

One of the principal purposes of this consultative meeting was to come up with a recommendation for the 2011 quota. Trustees had suggested a figure of the 2009 level plus 3%. There was no agreement on this and the matter has now been left to the trustees.



Picture, left
Quaker Theatre Company

*On Wednesday 6 October the Quaker Theatre Company came to do a performance in Sutton meeting house, as part of their tour of 16 meetings. There was an audience of around 25 and a cast of four. The 50-minute show was based on a play *The Word* by Kaj Munk, a Lutheran pastor who was killed by the Germans in 1940. It was a powerful piece which addressed aspects of Christian belief from both humanistic and traditional standpoints.*

Next Issue

The next issue of the South London Area Meeting Newsletter is scheduled for February 2011 with a copy date of 31 January. Please send contributions to David Parlett, 1 Churchmore Road, London SW16 6UY, or (preferably) email dp@davpar.com