

KURT & ANN STRAUSS IN SUTTON MEETING

When Ann and Kurt Strauss left Sutton Meeting in February 1996, I am sure that some Friends said to one another: 'How can we go on without two such pillars of the Meeting?' Of course we did, and we realised that their move to Wimbledon was part of the pattern of service that has been the focus of their lives – they perceived a need in Wimbledon and they seized the opportunity and responded.

Quaker Meetings do seem to cultivate friends who are the salt of the earth – dedicated to the welfare of the Meeting and of the individuals within it, quietly and unobtrusively exercising spiritual and pastoral leadership. Kurt and Ann were shining examples of this in Sutton Meeting

I believe that Ann and Kurt came to Sutton in the mid 1960s and they were with us for around 30 years. We have fairly good archives and I have been through them and produced the following list of relevant entries:

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Kurt was helping to run the Young Friends group (24 young people aged 12-16 !) including the Cellar Club. (I see that he gave talks to the Young Friends on 'Friends in France', 'Taping a Christmas programme for Danish Friends', 'The Sikhs – who are they and what do they believe?')

In 1970 Sutton Friends moved into a newly-built meeting house in Cedar Road and Ann laboured with other Friends to make a garden, front and back. Ann is a great gardener and she continued to keep an eye on the meeting house gardens.

In February 1971 we recorded that Kurt Strauss has been organising financial support for families in Greece for the past year and in 1977 we started a new Monthly Meeting Newsletter with Kurt as its first editor. He did me out of business, because I had been editing the Sutton Meeting newsletter and we agreed to abolish that as support for the MM newsletter.

In September 1981 we had a visit from QPAC (the Quaker Peace Action Caravan). Kurt took over the main organisation of this, with a vigil and demonstration in Sutton High Street. Ten years later we decided to have a stall at the Carshalton Environmental Fair and who was it who arranged for the loan and erection of the QPS Quaker booth? – Kurt of course.

For 10 years from 1986 Kurt was convenor of our Premises Committee and we remember the meticulous way in which he looked after this committee, the wardens, and the premises of course. I myself have now inherited that task and I keep coming across reminders of the systems that Kurt set up to do things properly. He did most of the work involved in installing a hearing loop which some years later was replaced by one designed by experts from the RNID; I am told that this doesn't work as well as the original one!

So that is just a list of some of the things that have popped out of our archives. Far more important are the ways in which Kurt and Ann have affected us, the members of the Meeting. We recall Ann as quietly concerned for individuals in the Meeting, working as an overseer and convenor of overseers. She was PM clerk for three years from 1979. Kurt in his quiet but firm way kept us on the rails on many an occasion. We recall his deep concern for the role of the UK in Europe, pulling up any Friend who spoke of 'going to Europe'. We have a record of him travelling in 1988 to Czechoslovakia with a QPS East-West Committee and reporting this in *The Friend* under the title: *Long Speeches and Short Sausages*. Kurt has been a diligent writer for *The Friend*.

So I want to thank Ann and Kurt for their legacy in Sutton Meeting. It is a very real legacy, encouraging others to follow them in a life of quiet and dedicated service.

G. Gordon Steel
February 2006

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF SUTTON PM

- 1968 - 74+ Kurt helping to run the Young Friends group (24 young people aged 12-16) including the Cellar Club..
Talks by Kurt: 'Friends in France', 'Taping a Christmas programme for Danish Friends', 'The Sikhs – who are they and what do they believe?'
- July 1970 The gardens in our new FMH, 10 Cedar Road, constructed by a group led by Ann Strauss (Isabel Boag, Norman Dixon, Reg & Margaret Appleyard)
- Feb 1971 Kurt Strauss has been organising financial support for families in Greece for the past year. We agree to continue.
- Sept 1972 Ann Strauss is thanked for her care of the garden.
- Dec 1977 *Purley & Sutton Monthly Meeting News* starts publication, replacing *Sutton Friends Quarterly*. The editor is Kurt Strauss and the typist/compositor is Ann Barns.
- Sept 1981 QPAC visit to Sutton. Kurt the main organiser.
- April 1983 An audio induction loop system is fitted in the Meeting Room to help the hard of hearing. Kurt Strauss initiated and coordinated this project; the system may be unique in incorporating a 'Helmholtz coil' as advised by Jack Boag [there are two transmitting loops, one at ground level and the other high on the wall, thus achieving a more uniform field].
- 1988 Kurt writing in *The Friend: Long Speeches and Short Sausages*. about a QPS East-West Committee visit to Czechoslovakia (with photo).
- Aug 1991 Carshalton Green Fair. Quaker stall committee convened by Kurt. Ann and Kurt worked hard for this (have photos).
- Feb 1996 We said farewell to Ann and Kurt Strauss, now transferring to Wimbledon Meeting.