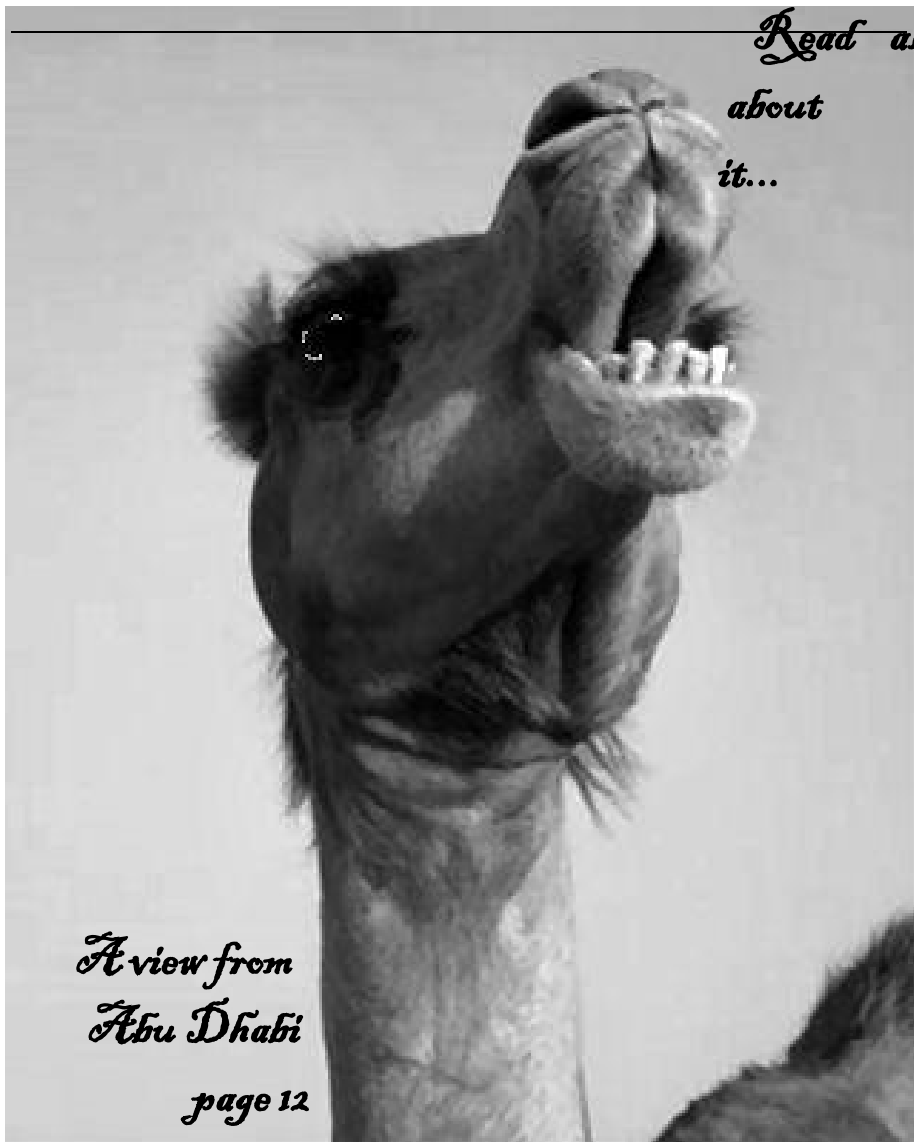


south london aqm news

Croydon, Epsom, Purley, Streatham & Sutton
local Quaker meetings – February 2009

*Read all
about
it...*

*A view from
Abu Dhabi
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In memoriam

Brynmor Roberts died of a heart attack after being taken back into hospital on Wednesday 28 January following his operation of the previous week. Brynmor had expressed the wish for a woodland burial next to his wife Pat, and at time of writing this is due to take place at Dorking Cemetery on Friday 13 February. A memorial meeting has yet to be arranged.

Mary Smith, wife of actor Nicholas Smith, died on 9 December after struggling with cancer for some years. Mary's was a familiar face at Sutton Meeting, having attended intermittently over a number of years. She was a tall, quiet, elegant woman with a serious demeanour but a friendly smile, and contributed greatly to Sutton Friends' hospitality arrangements.

Richard Crump died on 26 December in St. Leonards. Richard Crump was not in membership but attended Sutton Meeting over many years. He was a tall, bearded man with a burning concern for peace, indefatigable in his support of public demonstrations against war. A Friend once described Richard as 'the conscience of Sutton Meeting' in relation to speaking out against war.

Nora Hackney of Streatham meeting, died on 29 December at age 89 and her funeral was held after the manner of Friends. She and her husband Douglas (who survives her) joined Friends when living in Wallasey. After moving to Clapham they ran a wool-shop in Tooting, which Nora greatly enjoyed. Few will remember her, as neither she nor Douglas had attended meeting for some years; but by all accounts she was a remarkably positive and outgoing person.

The great consolation for the loss of the dead who are gone is to be found in the great necessity of thinking of the living who remain.
- Wilkie Collins, *The Dead Secret* (1857)

To hold in the Light

Mary Ochs of Streatham Meeting is, at time of writing, due be transferred from King's College Hospital to St Christopher's Hospice, where she will spend the short time left to her.

Our thoughts and prayers will be also with her daughter Cathie and grandchildren.

I don't do editorials. At least, not as a rule; so don't expect another one. But it would certainly be inappropriate to exercise my editorship for the first time without taking a moment to thank Gordon Steel for the four years he has faithfully devoted to this wonderful opportunity of maintaining the fellowship of our area meeting. It must be a bit of a wrench to leave it, but even if Gordon cannot find enough to occupy himself with now I'm sure the area meeting will. If I appear to do things a bit differently, I hope to be excused the charge of new-broomism-for-the-sake-of-it. Whatever we do, we are bound to do in our own style if we are to do it sincerely, and, as somebody once said, "Le style, c'est l'homme". (Can't remember who, but I guess he must have been either French or pretentious; probably both.) One thing I would like to do is put a picture on the front cover of each issue, if only because I'm a very visual person myself and easily get bored with pages of print. Please, therefore, feel free to send me any pictures that you think might jolly the cover up, even if not directly relevant to any of the contents. I should also like to ask local meetings to send me their own newsletters as a matter of course, so that I can pick out items that will (in the editor's humble opinion) be of interest to a wider readership. Many thanks to all who have contributed to this one.

– DP

News of Friends

Ken Aldous fell on the stairs and tore a ligament while preparing to set off to take his daughter, Anne, away for Christmas. After an operation, he has a full-length plaster and is making progress in maintaining his mobility.

Douglas Day fell ill in the middle of January and has been in hospital for investigations and treatment to relieve jaundice.

Ruth Stone was interviewed by a woman who is researching the living and working conditions of nurses in the 1950s and comparing with the present day. It was more common at that time for nurses to live in a 'nurses home', where they formed closer friendships than may now be the case.

Elizabeth and Robin Page have moved out of their house in Carshalton. Liz is very happy with her job in Glasgow, as an administrator for the Scottish Chamber Ensemble.

Carol Contant visited her son and family in Nanning, China, before Christmas, and had 'an amazing time there'. In the New Year she then spent a very happy time with her daughter and family who have now emigrated to sunny Florida.

Malin Andrews flew back to Sweden recently to attend a symposium in memory of Emilia Fogelklou (1878-1972), one of the first and most prominent women Quakers in Sweden. In 1999 Malin published a biography of Emilia under the title: *Whirlwind of Life*.

Stephen Cox has bought a canal boat which he has named *Verulam*. It is moored in central Birmingham and he has now transferred his membership to Central England Area Meeting.

Helen's appointment

Congratulations to Helen Drewery who has been appointed General Secretary of Quaker Peace and Social Witness, one of the two main departments at Friends House. Helen took over the post at the beginning of 2009 and replaces Kevin Franz, who left in December to take up a role as lead chaplain for mental health services in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Croydon, twinned with Albert and Jacob

Just as we were feeling that most of our young people were all now teenagers, apart from Joshua and Olivia Edgson, **Andy and Laura French** presented us with identical twins **Albert George** and **Jacob Louis**. They were introduced to us meeting within a few weeks by their devoted father, who assured us that they were totally different in temperament and that he and Laura could tell them apart with out any trouble at all. I looked at them with care, as did many others, and soon decided that I would need some help, like different clothes or something, for as far as I could see they were indistinguishable.

Andy has brought one or other to meeting on several weeks but we have always had to ask which it was. They are growing fast and no longer look premature. It won't be long before they are doubling the size of our children's classes!

Andy has also asked us to arrange a naming day for them and the date is now fixed as Saturday 14 March. I believe this will be a first one ever – so it seems they are making history for us at Croydon in every way.

Anthea Underwood

Why are we here?

Well, as the late Spike (Eccles) Milligan observed, everybody's got to be somewhere. Most of us have been in Purley & Sutton monthly meeting for most of our Quaker lives, apart from those Streatham and Croydon members (including me) who can still remember when they were part of Croydon & Southwark MM.

Our change of name at January business meeting may be seen as part of Quakers' increasing tendency to bring names and descriptions more into line with principles of clarity and straightforwardness. Until the term "monthly meeting" was replaced by the more transparent "area meeting" in 2007 some two-thirds of the 60-odd monthly meetings in Britain took their names from specific local meetings, such as Purley & Sutton, Dorking & Horsham, and Barking & Ratcliff, the remainder taking theirs from a whole region or area, such as East Kent, Cornwall, and North Wales.

A disadvantage of the specific approach is that it inevitably attaches some implication of anteriority, superiority or special significance to the eponymous localities. Another is that, whereas British regional names are known to all native Britons, and often well beyond our own shores, specific localities are not. To declare oneself a member of Purley & Sutton when participating in a national Quaker event held at, say, Woodbrooke, often proved meaningless to Friends from other parts of the country. So it was perhaps not surprising that when "monthly meeting" was changed to "area meeting" about half of all those previously named after specific localities adopted the regional approach. Thus did Devonshire House & Tottenham become North London aqm, and Dorking & Horsham West Weald aqm.

The choice of "South London" for Purley & Sutton, though perhaps not favoured with universal enthusiasm, is at least the shortest and neatest of several possibilities, siting us, as it does, fairly transparently between South East London aqm (formerly known as Southwark, Lewisham & Bromley), and a probable South West London when Kingston & Wandsworth come to consider the same question later this year.

For another answer to "Why are we here?", we might remind ourselves of Francis Howgill's words "We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us,

to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration" (Qfp 19.08). May it be ever thus, even in South London. – DP

Purley centenary invitation

Purley Meeting House will be 100 years old in April 2009. It is reminiscent of an early English Guildhall and is built entirely of brick and timber without any steel girders or other modern structural device. Make a note in your diaries to have afternoon tea with us on **Saturday April 25th**, when there will be an exhibition of paintings and photography by Purley Friends. –*Sylvia Battle*

Healthy outlook for Adult School Hall

Croydon Friends report that the NHS/Primary Care Trust is looking for a site in Central Croydon to set up a Health Centre and that one of the places under consideration is the Adult School Hall. They intend to lease the Hall from Croydon meeting and build a structure within the building to accommodate the Centre. At the moment they are carrying out a feasibility study, which will include consultations with Croydon Council Planning Department and English Heritage (who are responsible for the 'listing'), as well as architects and structural engineers, amongst others. We are waiting to hear the outcome of this study. – *Mary Jakeman*

Quakers show up well in the media

During October and November 2008 Quakers got good publicity in the national press and TV. The documentary fronted by Ian Hislop entitled *The Men who Would not Fight* was an excellent history of conscientious objection during the First World War and it dealt sympathetically both with those who undertook alternative service and the 'unconditionals'. Quakers comprised a small proportion of these but were well mentioned.

Then in November we had the very well-produced drama *Eddington and Einstein*. Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington was a Quaker and one of the leading British astrophysicists around the time of the First World War and his research provided important confirmation of the theories that Einstein was producing. The war trapped Einstein in Germany, where he was portrayed as out of sympathy with Nazism. The enormous British loss of life in the early stages of the war created violent anti-German feelings over here and

when Eddington showed interest in Einstein's work he was treated with hostility. So the drama nicely compared the opposition that both these very contrasting characters were up against in their search for scientific truth. Einstein was opposed to war (and to the subsequent development of nuclear weapons) and Eddington's Quaker pacifism was strongly brought out. A memorable touch was when at the end of the war Eddington's cousin said that she was going to Germany to help with the Friends' relief work.

And then later from across the Atlantic we heard that Barack Obama is sending his two daughters to a Friends' school in Washington. Columns in more than one mainline British newspaper wrote generously about the ethos and style of curriculum of Friends' schools. In an email to Jenny Steel, Nancy Taylor (one-time warden of Sutton Meeting House) said: "It's good that the Obamas chose Sidwell Friends School for their daughters. My sister attended Sidwell back in the days when it was considered Quaker. It's no longer attached to any Meeting and has morphed into an academically excellent day school in the Washington area. Many administration and diplomats' children go there, as did Jimmy Carter's daughter, I believe. I don't think the girls will pick up pacifist ideas there, but I think they will receive a global view of things, and a humane one. It's all to the good". The school website* shows it to come very strongly as a Quaker school with a strong Quaker emphasis: "The Quaker belief that there is 'that of God' in each of us shapes everything we do at Sidwell Friends School. It inspires us to show kindness and respect toward one another. It motivates us to recognize and nurture each person's unique gifts. It teaches us to apply our talents in service to others and to work courageously for peace".

The publicity that we have gained from these unplanned exposures in the media must have done more for us than any publicity stunt we could have designed.

G. Gordon Steel

* http://www.sidwell.edu/about_sfs/quakervalues.asp

I made a dvd recording of Einstein and Eddington. Please ask if you would like to borrow it.

- David Parlett

Our Purley past

Many of us no doubt saw the BBC 2 programme on 22 November entitled 'Einstein & Eddington'. But few may be aware that a Friend and member of Purley Meeting for about 15 years was Her-

bert Dingle, Emeritus Professor of the History of the Philosophy of Science at London University. He knew them both.

When he retired he moved to Downs Court Road, near to the Meeting House and also where a number of Friends of Purley Meeting lived. Just how well he knew Einstein and Eddington I am not sure as I was not a member of his circle at the Meeting being thirty years younger and when Purley Meeting consisted of about 40-50 Friends and attenders!

Herbert Dingle was invited to go to Russia when the first Sputnik took off and he vividly told us all about it on his return. He gave also a number of informal talks on the Bible and history, such as the parting of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape from Egypt and the sun standing still.

He was short in stature and always wore a dark suit and boots. He was a very sober looking man but when you got to know him he had a puckish wit. In his retirement he spent a lot of time on the controversy about Real Time and Terrestrial Time (if my memory serves aright) with another eminent philosopher Lord Samuel. Together they wrote a book, of which he gave a signed copy the Meeting House Library. He also presented a Concordance, still in use by the meeting in our Bible Study group. So we have a useful link to him even today. He died in 1978 aged 88, preceded by wife and son.

Ted Battle

And then there were 207...

The tabular statement of AM membership numbers prepared for Friends House in January show a decrease of 11 from 218 to 207. From largest to smallest, the local meeting totals are: Sutton 71, Streatham 46, Croydon 44, Purley 24, Epsom 22.

The loss of 11 members exactly matches the number of Friends whose membership has been terminated by AM on the advice of local overseers. Apart from these, we have gained six members, three by personal application and three by certificates of transfer from other meeting, and lost six - three by certificates of transfer to other meetings, two by resignation, and one by death. There were no marriages in 2008.

The proportion of men to women in membership is exactly one third, and it might be argued that men do less of the work, only 25% of them being elders, overseers and clerks.

At present we have no children in membership, and our two smallest meetings have no child attenders. Of adult attenders we

have just over 100 – almost exactly half the number of members. Many take an active part in the life of their meetings and would be welcome into membership if only they were to apply. I recommend meetings to consider the question of inreach and outreach from this point of view, and perhaps also from the viewpoint of imbalance of the sexes.

Susan Northrop, our registering officer, reports that no marriages after the manner of Friends took place in 2008.

– David Parlett, Membership Clerk

Obscenity of the death penalty

A longer version of this article appeared in a recent issue of The Friend.

In the case of *Herrera v Collins* in the early 90s the US Supreme Court concluded that “*Actual innocence is no reason to stop the execution of an innocent person if his rights to due process have not been abused*”.

After a death sentence has been passed a period of time is allowed for evidence not presented or objections not raised at the actual trial to be dealt with. It is usually in the region of 30 to 31 days. A man was executed in Virginia after his appeal was presented a day late. Even evidence of actual innocence falls at this barrier. It is a State not a Federal matter.

I joined Lifelines in 2000 and I wrote my first letter to Texas in June of that year. All of my family built up a strong relationship with Dennis until he was killed by Lethal Injection in February 2005. Dennis never forgot a family birthday Christmas or Anniversary. It was a deep friendship. I still read his letters when I feel the need for support.

I have described how lethal injection works. It is cold and calculated. I have sometimes thought of Capital Punishment as a human sacrifice to the great God Public opinion. I have dedicated myself to doing all I can to bring about the Abolition of the obscenity of the death penalty. I would ask your support and if possible the occasional collection for the work of lifelines; also new writers are always needed. You can learn more at www.lifelines-uk.org

It is purely a letter-writing organisation, not a campaigning one. I campaign because I feel driven.

– Bernard Crier

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

Pascal, Pensées, quoted in Ayala, Darwin's Gift, p.137

Recycled thanks

Many thanks to all those who have supported the recycled Greetings Card Scheme. This year you helped to raise £100 more than ever before, with the total amounting to £400 for Quaker Work at Home & Abroad. If you are able to help with the selling at Yearly Meeting Gathering, in York, it would be greatly appreciated. All kinds of used cards are welcome, also calendar pictures; please pass them on to me or the contact person at your Meeting. The

Isobel Lane has been in hospital for some time. She has been writing to Streatham Friends and is willing for extracts to be published in this Newsletter. Thank you, Isobel, and also to Ruth Hawley for the copy-typing.

more the merrier to give us a wide selection. - Elizabeth Heap

A room with a view

*ES3 Ward, The Maudsley Hospital,
26th November 2008*

Dear Friends: As they say, life goes on, though life here is a very different version from what most people consider normal. Psychiatric wards

are never very easy places to be in no matter how "therapeutic" they are meant to be. This one has twenty beds so is relatively big in my experience. Fortunately anyone whose behaviour is so disturbed that they prevent the ward from functioning properly is moved elsewhere. So far, apart from a walk in the park with a nurse, I haven't been able to go out apart from the weekly trip to St Thomas' for therapy, in a cab with a nurse, with the child locks on. I think that I'm happy to say that the thoughts that lead to that level of restriction have largely receded. That aside, I am scared of my continuing lack of tolerance of just about any input or stimulus of any kind. It seems to me that every time I go through one of these crises, although I get back to my version of "normal" life, it is with less strength than previously. I am hoping that this time I have a long enough stay in hospital to change that.

This ward contains people with all kinds of mental illness. There is someone who is manic and simply NEVER stops talking, which makes it impossible for me to stay in groups with her.

There are anorexics and people with various psychoses including at least one generated by the use of illegal drugs. The staff are pretty good; psychiatric nursing has come a long way over the past fifteen years. I can remember the days when if someone became very upset they were dragged off and injected. The staff then didn't seem to recognise that mental illness is always attached to a human being and there was a clear "them and us" division. That doesn't seem to exist any more thank goodness... I trust that the Meeting is thriving and that Area Meeting has agreed the proposals for Elders and Overseers.

Denmark Hill 17.12.08

Dear Friends: The population of the Ward continues to change with people occasionally being discharged, one or two absconding and new people being admitted. Both of those who have absconded have psychotic illness and will probably – if they are lucky – be brought back by police unless they are admitted to somewhere even more secure. The elder is a woman in her 50s who was desperate to get back to her flat so I hope that's where she is. The younger is a 26-year-old baby with absolutely no sense of responsibility of any kind. She will almost certainly be on the streets getting money to buy ganja (marijuana) with. She is extremely vulnerable so heaven knows what will happen to her. The best is that the police will find her and return her to hospital.

As for me, I am in my room listening to Tamas Vasary play Liszt Petrarch Sonnets, and writing to you. This afternoon we have a Christmas Party. Again, heaven knows but maybe it will be fun. Yesterday we had a very good guitarist/singer and on Monday, I think, there will be a drumming workshop, all because it's Christmas.

I have been in touch with Anne Hosking who is one of the Quakers on the hospital visiting list and who I know from Quaker Quest. Hopefully she will come and see me on Saturday afternoon. I've been to the Chapel here on a couple of Sunday mornings but it's far too Anglican for me. I miss Meeting for Worship.

Strange, I've always thought of "meeting" as a noun but of course it's a verb as well, in fact a gerund for those of you old enough to have done English Grammar GCE. Good grammar is a tool for communication, otherwise there can be misunderstanding which can lead to unnecessary conflict... How can there be openness, equality, clarity and truth unless we can understand one another?...

I had better stop blathering and sign off.

Have a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year everyone.
With love to you all, - Isobel

Camel's eye view

Frances Touch spent a week in January visiting relatives in Abu Dhabi and sent variations on this message to nearly everyone:

I am having a lovely time, wish you were here. I have been on a desert safari (outing) which involved exhilarating drives up and down sand dunes (not me driving), camel farm, sand-boarding down a dune, watching the sun go down over the dunes, camel ride, dates, delicious food, watching belly dance, henna hand patterns and smoking a shisha (only two puffs for me) by the fire looking at the stars in the night sky. I have been impressed by the Emirates Palace's opulence and walked round the gardens at the rear without being sent back in as I was not a guest and listened to a harp being played in the entrance foyer which was very relaxing. I have been taken to the fish souk, the Iranian souk and several shopping malls in Abu Dhabi and have bought dates. I have been taken to Dubai, been on a river trip on a dhow with a very clear and helpful commentary, have been taken to the gold souk and bought a case for my camera (not gold, not at the souk but at a huge shop where customer services seemed to be a couple of kilometres down the other end of the establishment). The sun is not too hot as it is winter but the wind can be cold after the sun has gone down. I have been looked after royally and have been treated to a dragon fruit tartlet with my tea. I have subsequently made a fruit salad with all sorts of fruits of which I had never previously heard, let alone seen or tasted.

*Love, kisses, cuddles and endearments from
Frances/Mum/Auntie/Best friend (delete as appropriate)*

Next issue of South London AQM News

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*Please send me contributions for the June newsletter by the
middle of May 2009 – ideally typed, printed or emailed
(preferably not hand-written).*

<p>Half the wrong conclusions at which mankind arrives, are reached by the abuse of metaphors.</p>

– Lord Palmerston, quoted in
A Reasonable Faith, by Three Friends (1884)

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