

Religious Society of Friends

Hardshaw and Mann

Area Newsletter

Spring 2016



Dear friends,

It feels far from Spring as I sit and write this while watching through the window the pouring rain we have become so used to this winter. But we have decided to make the newsletter a quarterly and this, written in early January, is the Spring edition.

I think we should start the year with a great big thank you to all the unseen heroes of our Meetings – the people who can always be relied upon to be there, to open up the Meeting House, to wash up after tea and biscuits, to cater when we have bring-and-share lunches, to welcome strangers and to share with them their experiences of faith and spirituality, and to willingly take on all the other little tasks which, though small, are very important. We need to thank also those employed by the Society who do such sterling work on our behalf. These are very different times from those of 20 or 30 years ago when I first became involved with Friends. We have to move with the times and not have too many regrets about losing what went before. We don't have the past and we don't have the future. There is only NOW that's real and we must try to make it the best NOW we can.

In Friendship,

Sheila Galligan

NB Please send any items for the Summer newsletter to me or Denise Graham by the end of April.

MINUTES OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE QUARTERLY MEETING HELD AT
LIVERPOOL 18&19 OF 3RD MONTH 1939

Extract Minute 7

We have rejoiced to welcome Carl Heath in our midst at this time of menacing problems and threatening clouds of war. It has been brought home to us that we are faced by terror and ruthlessness which would seek to crush our liberty of mind, of spirit, of society and of state.

Without our religion it would seem that there is little answer to this, but we must believe and seek to show that the "ocean of darkness" is not too great for the "ocean of light" to disperse.

Among the great problems before us we find the immense question of refugees which should not be regarded merely as numbers or masses, but should receive the best we can give of our thought and care, with imagination and insight into the varied and deeply needy aspects of the question.

The current problem of the reconciliation of Jew and Arab calls for greater study and far greater urge toward a larger conference and solution than any which merely concerns the British Empire. Are we paying sufficient attention to the place of India in the future of the East and Asiatic peoples, to the myriad open sores throughout that country. We must realise that much of our future may be closely bound up with the solution of India's problems.

We have been disturbed to hear how the Madras Conference revealed that many countries were closing their doors to the Christian way as they see it. People are looking for a unifying faith to abolish the conflict which results from the separation of the spiritual and material in life.

We need a new Christianity which shall absorb the whole man and his entire way of life.

Sent in by Ian Jones of Liverpool Meeting.

The North of England

Our beautiful Northern country drowning

Rivers raging roaring,

Weeping giants tears sweeping,

Stripping all from human and non human beings

Streams rearing leaping, sacrificial land,

Sacred spaces silently screaming

Earth fields and fells crucified

Seeds of life sleeping.

Elizabeth Rowland-Elliott

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Forgiving is rediscovering the shining path of peace that at first you thought others took away when they hurt you.

.....

You are here to enable the divine purpose of the universe to unfold. That is how important you are!

Eckhart Tolle

CHESS

'Fancy a game of chess?' 'I'm not very good.' 'That's ok, then, neither am I.' And so we'd play and one of us would win and one of us would lose. Does it really matter who?

Years ago, I was in the sixth form, I was at my mate, Mark's, house and we were playing chess. I wasn't very good and neither was he. He had to go sort something out and his younger brother asked if he could take over. Yes, of course. I sniggered and playfully humoured the youngster as I devoured his pieces...except it didn't turn out that way, as somehow he beat me. I felt humiliated. Simon loved it and shouted out his victory all over the house and repeated it every time I visited. Funny thing, too, it put me off playing chess for ages.

When I turned 40, I asked for a chess set for my birthday, one of the Viking warriors, discovered on Maes How on Orkney. It came with a beautiful wooden board. It stayed in its box for a long time till my youngest son grew old enough and interested enough to play. I'll teach him all I know, ha! And we played and you know how it is, you want your children to grow and progress and to learn how to win and to lose, yet, playing chess, despite many times starting out with the intention of letting him win, it seems I just couldn't do it. I could at football, at pool...even at badminton but not chess. Partly, it was just more difficult to conceal a losing strategy. It's not like I was any good at it...then, suddenly I would see a three or four move sequence multi-move and I was onto it. I won game after game but it did get closer. One day, my son would beat me and that would be ok, I told myself.

That day looked to have arrived when I was fighting for my life with only my king, my knight and a couple of pawns still standing. Joe was obliterating me and I was merely switching between the sides of the board, awaiting the final blow. Till he placed his Queen, corner to corner, next to my pawn. I looked up at him. He was oblivious to the move, doobydoobydoobyng to himself. I shook my head, starting to smile. He looked at me, uncertainly, un-expectantly. He followed my glance and I watched his brow furrow, his cheek crease while he realises his mistake. 'Can I take that one again?' 'Is your hand still on the piece? Is your hand? Er, no, it isn't, then, quite clearly, by the rules of the game, you can't.' I slowly reached across to pick up my pawn and dashed his queen to the floor. Victory was mine, snatched from! Except it wasn't, he reminded me recently. We played out a drawer yet it felt like a victory.

Thing was, after that, Joe didn't want to play chess with me again. We didn't play for ages. I lost my playing buddy.

Most weekday mornings, nowadays I settle in my chair in the study for 20-30 minutes of what I call 'breathing prayer'. It helps me centre down and prepare for the day. The chess set just happens to be set up in front of the chair. I couldn't help myself. I started playing myself. Just one move on each side each day...long games. And I noticed I began to take on myself as a challenge. Right brain against left. Left ear against right. One hand against the other. Who was I playing? What was this thing about winning? Did I want to beat myself?

And the pieces, the chess pieces, they didn't look so happy either. Some cast off to the side, others hunted down or bearing down on their enemies, they looked in need of a break, as all Vikings must. A feast, a celebration...introduce music and stories. Well, why not? And I looked again at the pieces and aligned the kings and queens to face one another. What if, instead of fighting, they were...dancing? What if all the pieces were clapping and singing and joining in the dance too? I brought the others in to the circle and waited. Immediately, the mood lightened and they seemed brighter.

I move pieces round each morning in the dance. They're still dancing now. And we can still play chess. I'm waiting for Joe to come round, so he can whoop my ass! And who cares? Meanwhile, the pawn is dancing with the queen, the king with the castle and everyone is joining in the dance. And I'm right there too...in the middle..



By Bernie Kennedy (Liverpool Meeting)

Do any Friends at St Helen's have memories of growing up in St Helens? Edith Cope who attended Southport meeting wrote a number of prize winning poems and shortly before she passed away, Barbara Quine helped her to publish these. One is entitled St Helens Glass has Class. Does this poem prompt any childhood memories?

ST HELENS GLASS HAS CLASS

Flecked air

Smeared windows, crusted curtains.

Cleanliness was not a virtue but a guerrilla campaign

With sudden flurries, dour entrenchments.

And on Mondays demented assaults.

The clatter of clogs

Clogging in

Clocking in, was a sullen battle sound rising to strident clangour

As hooters blared.

Yet inside the beleaguered houses

Crisp light sparkled from mirrors with triangular side facets,

Or a luminous sheen glimmered

From oval pools over mantelpieces.

Round mirrors mooned in halls and stairways,

Long mirrors in bedrooms

Flickered the gaslights.

On shelves the sideboard's glass animals pranced,

Brittle deer poised for flight.

Crystal horses for snow queens to mount,
Translucent ships with fragile spars and rigging
Sailing to enchantments too delicate to dust.
The parlours of dark terraces dewed with fantasies⁴
And corridors versailed with mirrors.

At the children's party
In the Congregational school room
Miss Edith and Miss Evelyn, the magnate's spinster sisters,
Presided over the tea urn.
In beige cardigans and Macclesfield silk dresses
They offered me a sandwich.
I bit and found fronds of peppery weed
Where I expected ham of jam.
So I tasted my first watercress butty.
Intrigued I went back
And was graciously offered a second.

I did not feel deprived or patronised
Then or now,
But still relish
The complexities of dirt and delicacy
And the sting of weed on bread.

Edith Cope.