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FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING (A QUAKER GROUP)

The Friends Fellowship of Healing is an informal group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). (*Registered Charity number 284459.*)

Since its foundation in 1935, it has sought to uphold the cause of a healing ministry, and seeks to be a channel to help people towards health and harmony of body, mind and spirit, which it believes is God's purpose for everyone.

It has prayer groups attached to many Meetings, and also postal groups to enable isolated people, and those who may be unable to join a local group, to co-operate with others in the service of healing prayer.

The Fellowship holds conferences, retreats and workshops held either in its residential centre (*Claridge House, Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH*) or elsewhere.

All members annually receive three issues of *Towards Wholeness*, the journal of the Fellowship, published in March, July and November.

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Donations for the work of the Fellowship are most welcome.

FFH / QSH website: www.quaker-healing.org.uk

Front Cover: Nesting coot by *Nigel Fogarty*

Back Cover: Aetna stream by *Nicholas Rawlence*

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THE ARTIST

*The artist in ancient times
inspired, entertained and educated
his or her fellow citizens.*

*Modern artists have an additional responsibility –
to encourage others to be artists.*

Why?

*Because technology is going to destroy the human soul
unless we realise that each of us must in some way
be a creator as well as a spectator or consumer.*

*Make your own music
write your own books
if you would keep your soul*

Pete Seeger

A National Quaker Day of Healing

(a day of continuous distant healing throughout the U.K.)

**Friends Fellowship of Healing to organise a National Day of Healing
on Sat. 18th. March 2017**

We hope to encourage all existing 'distant' healing groups and indeed all Quaker Meetings throughout the country to take part on this day.

On Saturday 18th. March 2017, we will ask Friends (in their own setting) to join with us in a continuous but focused Meeting for Worship for Healing, (in a manner similar to early Friends), meeting from 11.00am to 4.00pm. For that time, the whole of the Meeting House (or a Friend's house) would be designated as a House of Healing and Divine Stillness, with conversation at a low level away from the main gathering. This would be conducive to creating the right ambience for distant healing.

One room should be used for this extended Act of Worship for Healing, and a second room made available for rest and refreshments. Friends would be encouraged to stay for as long as they are able, and for reasons of personal comfort should also feel free to come and go, at any time, from the MfW to other parts of the Meeting House. Refreshments can be taken quietly at these times

The focus for healing might encompass a wide range of concerns, including:-

- All Life on our planet and the environment
- Societies and conflicts throughout the world
- Our town and city communities
- Our Quaker communities
- Family and Friends
- and not forgetting ourselves

The healing offered should not be specified other than asking that it should be for the highest good of the individual/concern in accordance with Divine Will. Individual Friends will focus on what's important for them. We hope to have posters/flyers available which will stress that God (the Source, Creator, Energy) is the only Healer, though with that of God within us, we are enabled to be channels for that healing. It might be helpful for Meetings to emphasise that the corporate spiritual energy of the Meeting can be experienced much more powerfully when gathered as a worshipping group, and that this can be focused through following the process of attunement, intention and release (letting go and letting God). To do this at a national level and on the same day would be a truly powerful statement of spiritual intent and action.

Each group/Meeting may wish to draw up a rota so that an appointed Elder or facilitator (someone familiar with distant healing) is responsible for the right ordering of the Meeting for each hour of the gathering. With new folk coming into the room, a simple explanation of the process may be given if needed by the nominated Elder and repeated when necessary. Confidentiality must be adhered to with names kept only within the room, not written down (unless the established practice is otherwise). Other concerns for healing could be noted as the day proceeds (optional) using sticky notes or a marker pen on a white board. Any ministry should be channelled as requests, prayer and intentions for the healing concern. Underpinning it all is our belief that healing, in all its many forms, is LOVE in ACTION. By our actions we can surround all our concerns with Divine Love.

At 4.00pm the Meeting would close with the nominated Elder initiating the shaking of hands and giving thanks for the healing that has been provided, emphasising that all the healing requested and channelled through us has been for the highest good of the individual or concern.

This could be a wonderful spiritual exercise in distant healing for the Religious Society of Friends, and provide a useful outreach opportunity for letting others find out about the Friends Fellowship of Healing. A potential increase in membership might be a consequence perhaps!

It should also be emphasised that for those prevented from participating on this day, they can still hold us all in the Light and that distant healing requests can always be made at

www.healinghelpline.eu.

*“May the joy of our coming together,
Find expression in the healing of our concerns.”*

Peter Wilson / David Mason / Stephen Feltham (FFH Committee Members)

Nothing that comes to you is negative. I mean nothing ... you will grow if you are sick, if you are in pain, if you experience loss ... Learn to accept it not as a curse or a punishment but as a gift to you with a very, very specific purpose.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

'We live our lives forever taking leave' (Rilke 'Duino Elegies')

My wife and I recently undertook a move from a house with garage and garden to a flat in sheltered housing. We had made many moves before, but we still found it hard not to get stressed out with all the legal and practical processes, the inevitable losses and anxiety about the future, and the seemingly endless uncertainties – 'The house isn't yours until you get in the bath!'

Moving home is reputed to be one of the most stressful of life events. Nevertheless, a move such as ours bears little comparison to the situation of the millions of people across the world today, the refugees, the displaced, the asylum seekers and the poor, who have no home at all to go to, except by the kindness of strangers, or making their own improvised shelter from donated or salvaged materials, or stranded in camps that have been 'temporary' for more than fifty years.

What, then, can all the fuss be about in changing houses – after all, it's only really just about things, isn't it? Or is it? Perhaps our anxieties and stress about the process of moving are shadowed by deeper uncertainties. Our earthly homes are not just a practical necessity. Phrases such as 'I'm coming home' or 'a long way from home', echo some of our deepest longings for a place, a home where we really are unfailingly safe and recognised and where we belong. However much we love our homes they cannot but fail to satisfy all such longings and questionings. Where do we really belong? What is our true home?

Religious teachers, saints and philosophers have given their answers to these questions. For some this world is seen as a place of trial where the faithful believer will be rewarded with paradise or a heavenly home after death. For some our true home is to be found in this life, through dedication to the path to enlightenment, in a search for inner peace, in a life of care or sacrifice for others, or in helping to build a better and fairer society. Such answers have provided hope, consolation, meaning and purpose to many through the ages.

Poets have tried to find words to express insights and visions of a true home which lies beyond the scope of words. Wordsworth, in his 'Intimations of Immortality', wrote how we come 'trailing clouds of glory ... From God, who is our home'. He felt he was nearer to that home in childhood. 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy', but, 'Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'. Nevertheless, he ends the poem with some affirmation of adult life.

*'We will not grieve but rather find
Strength in what remains behind ...
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.'*

The Scottish poet Edwin Muir, in his poem 'One Foot in Eden', also looked back to an idyllic Eden which had become irrevocably entwined with our world of pain and loss. He, too, concludes with his own affirmation of our life in this world.

*'But famished field and blackened tree
Bear flowers in Eden never known ...
What had Eden ever to say
Of hope and faith, pity and love
Until was buried all its day ...'*

The words heading this essay, '*We live our lives forever taking leave*', kept recurring to me throughout the move. They come from a cycle of ten poems, the *Duino Elegies*, by Rainer Maria Rilke. The elegies express his attempt to reconcile the vision of a better world with the often grim reality of this one.

Rilke began the *Duino Elegies* in 1912 with a desperate cry for an angel that would listen to him and give him some answers. '*Who if I called would hear me among the angelic orders?*' He only finished the sequence 10 years later. These were years filled with the terrible destruction and horrors of the First World War. He said later he spent the time 'trying not to understand' something that seemed so pointless, destroying all he loved in the countries at war, in Russia, France, Germany and Austria. After the war he wandered, as did so many others, trying to find a place where he could settle and continue writing, moving between temporary homes and sanatoria for the leukaemia from which he had suffered since childhood. At last he found an old tower, Muzot, and finally completed his elegies in 1922.

The angel, summoned in the opening lines, was the poet's connection to, and intermediary between, the torn and alien world around him and an existence clearer, more real, vital, beautiful and generous than ours. The glimpses of angelic transcendence in the early elegies are set against a general feeling of emptiness and bleakness about the human condition. He felt the angels' disdain for our trifling concerns. What seems to occupy human minds most of the time

seems tawdry and lacking truth or beauty. We are preoccupied with the past or the future, never fully in the present, uncertain of who we are or are meant to be. Even

*‘... the knowing brutes are aware
that we don’t feel very securely at home
Within our interpreted world.’*

We live divided from ourselves and our world.

*‘We’re not at one. We’ve no instinctive knowledge
like migratory birds. Outstript and late,
we force ourselves on winds and find no welcome
from ponds where we alight’.*

Perhaps children and lovers know the fullness of the present, but the wholeness is all too quickly dissipated.

Nevertheless in the last two elegies Rilke reached his own kind of resolution and affirmation of our being here. Impermanence, change and loss are inherent in our existence in time, bringing us pain and grief. But a constantly changing world is fundamental to the creation of the multiplicity and uniqueness of each life. It is a world that in some way needs us. We are here to experience, witness and share this unique time-bound existence. This world is our true home – for now.

*‘This here and now, so fleeting, seems to require us and strangely
Concerns us. Us, the most fleeting of all. Just once,
Everything, only for once
... and never again.
But this having been once, though only once,
having been once on earth – can it ever be cancelled?’*

In the final elegy a young man, one of the ‘youthfully dead’, of whom there had been so many in those years, is guided, not by an angel but by a ‘Lament’, a companion of humanity from ancient times who knows how humanity is steeped in sorrow and rage. She explains to him how we are ‘wasters of sorrows.’ Sorrow is not just a trial or a means of learning. It is an inherent part of life in an ever-changing world, something to respect with its own value, even beauty, in itself.

*'She shows him the tall
Tear trees, shows him the fields of flowering sadness,
shows him the pasturing herds of grief ...'*

So she takes him to the threshold of death –

'And there she embraces him weeping'.

He goes on alone,

'and never once does his step resound from the soundless fate'

While the message of the Lament seems to be one that only those near death can fully comprehend, in the last lines he also affirms it as a message of hope for the living.

*'And yet were they waking a symbol within us, the endlessly dead,
Look, they'd be pointing perhaps to the catkins, hanging
From empty hazels, or else they'd be meaning the rain
That falls on the dark earth in early spring'.*

*And we, who have always thought
of happiness climbing, would feel
the emotion that almost startles
when happiness falls'.*

The images of rising and falling pervading these lines suggest a wholeness present in every changing moment. Each moment is a moment of leave-taking, but also a beginning, a crossing of a threshold and a celebration of arrival; like the moment when we first cross the threshold of a new home and can say, 'Here we are. We have arrived'.

Through a time of uncertainty and uprooting and new thresholds, I found the words of these poets a source of inspiration and, in a way, of healing. Of course they leave many questions unanswered; Why is there so much misery in the world? How can humans be so cruel to each other? Why are pleasure and pain distributed so unequally? But words can connect us to an inner place of peace, a still centre in all the turmoil and suffering. Others, I feel sure, will have found their own sustaining words and other pathways to what words cannot adequately express, paths to our true home.

(Rilke Translations by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender)



In 2008 Elizabeth was one of the founders of The Kindlers. She travelled throughout BYM facilitating workshops with Kindlers-on-the-Road and co-edited the booklet Journeying the Heartlands. She died in September 2015 and this is the last of her writings.

Elizabeth was also a dear and valued member of FFH and a tutor healer for QSH.

As a child, sitting in a Quaker Meeting for Worship, I wondered why the adults all seemed to look so worried! I decided that they had many troubles on their minds which they'd brought into the silence, and through prayer would find help in solving them. I thought that if each was worshipping, their faces would look full of rapture, wonder and joy. I worshipped Jesus because I'd been told that he said "Suffer the children to come unto me!" and I wanted to run to his lap, as others did, and be held, as I imagined a grandfather would do, for I knew neither of my own who had died before I was born. So I saw worship as evoked by love. I felt all this without finding the words to describe it at that time, but I sensed that I was loved, by my family and by 'something' or 'somebody other'.

Now I have reached eighty and can reflect back on the journey of my experiences of that 'something' or 'somebody other' and see the personal spiritual practices that have nourished me on the way, then and now.

I ask myself: What alchemy can I bring about, using the clay that is myself? What experiments can I carry out and to what end? As a Quaker my goal is to walk with God in all I do. However I experience the Divine within me and without, I want to manifest this in my life for the good of all. My experience is that I get distracted from this goal by worldly matters and feel my clay-like composition weighting me down. I reason that if I adopt good practices I will be helped to rise, as if in an air balloon, above earthly preoccupations so as to view them from a distance, keeping them in proportion as part of my landscape, and not to be anchored by them. I am then free to explore and view new vistas of possibility.

A spiritual practice can be unceasing if we embody the Divine in all we do. Thomas Merton describes Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh entering a room and wrote that he 'knew him instantly as a holy man by his manner'. His life is his spiritual practice. Martin Laird writes in *Into the Silent Land* that 'union with Spirit is not something we are trying to acquire, as God is already the ground of our being'. But I question myself: Am I really realizing this?

A spiritual practice disposes us to allow something to take place, just as a gardener doesn't actually grow plants but facilitates their natural tendency to growth. So we can encourage our own spiritual growth through such practices.

Often we engage in spiritual practices, though may not have thought of them as such! For our personal relationships, our physical expressions, our creative undertakings are all manifestations of Spirit, not just things 'holy' or 'religious'. What matters, it seems to me, is that my act, from whatever religious tradition, affirms the sacred in my life. Each faith and ideology can enrich my understanding of my own faith.

I know that I need inspiration and motivation that touches my emotions and body, as well as my mind, in my learning, as I seek to experiment and grow. I can then celebrate differences in traditions while seeking areas of core connection for when I join in Meetings for Worship with Friends. These practices help the power that many call God to dwell in my heart so as to manifest this Spirit in all I do. Vitally they encourage me to live in the moment mindfully, with deeper attention.

On awaking I say to myself: "I AM ALIVE!" I am thankful for being alive! I am reminded of this from the photos and pictures and the text near my bed. I breathe in the possibility of the new day. If difficult tasks lie ahead I pray for strength to carry them out wisely. I am not alone but am 'held' in Spirit even though I am physically frail.

Times of quiet are vital to my day. I have a special chair to sit in, often in the morning before others are awake. I light a candle or incense to make this a special time. Occasionally I will go for a gentle walk and breathe in the joy of being able to do so. I smile at anyone I should chance to meet. I quieten my body and spirit without rushing into a new day.

Relaxation is vital at such times of quiet. Whether seated or lying I ease my body by tightening all my muscles one by one and then de-tensing, starting with my face and so through my body, ending with my feet, and then letting go. Physical stillness facilitates my interior stillness.

Stilling the mind seems much more difficult. The busy thoughts of my 'monkey mind' can distract me from being centred in Spirit. My thoughts whirl about. I have learned to watch only a little TV and other entertaining distractions that confuse me. Concentrating on my breath while having a relaxed body, gradually leads me to know the peace which passes all understanding. Thoughts slowly become as clouds across the sky-like nature of my mind, passing as on a breeze, from which I can choose not to attach myself

Slowing breathing helps. I breathe in for a count of 3, then out for a count of 3, then breathe in for a count of 4, then out for a count of 4, repeating this until I am at ease. This slowing down of breathing has a calming effect, helping to still my mind.

I follow Thich Nhat Hanh's guidance: Breathing in I calm my body, breathing out I smile. Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment. After 5-10 minutes my thoughts will have quietened down like a pond on which not even a ripple stirs.

Focusing is the essence of my practices. As I start the business of the day, I try to be attentive to each action as embodying the peace of who I really am in all I do. I am mind, body and spirit. Can I employ them in unity? My spiritual practices are part of each day. Especially are they part of the centring down, which is how I begin each Meeting for Worship on a Sunday.

Prayer then I find emerges from this readiness. It arises as I experience an instinctual 'welling up' that connects me to Spirit. I feel prayer is primitive to the human condition, even if one doesn't believe in God. I recognise that it is totally natural for me to pray for my own needs and anxieties, and the needs and distress of others. I long for forgiveness for what hurt I have done and what has been done to me. I offer gratitude for all the gifts and wonders that I have been blessed with. Prayer comes unbidden. I use a prayer word, a mantra, as my prompt, often repeating "joy", or "compassion" or "Be still and know that I am God" or "I and God are one". Prayer, I know, is a universal energy that connects us to the power of Spirit and to each other. We are not separate but socially made and sustained. Developing our love for all life helps my compassionate nature to grow. I feel for the suffering of others and pray for alleviation of their pain. I offer myself as a conduit for God's love. I have learned that my own pain will be eased as I connect with all life that suffers. I seem to gain as I give. I know that God's hands are my hands and that my prayers will nudge me into new action in the business of the day.

Shadows and darkness are nevertheless entangled with the brightness and light of my life. I have learned to recognise that I have a shadow side which contains lesser-known attributes within me that I have not yet fully acknowledged but which can slowly be revealed by the Light. Such attributes are deeply buried often from what I was told was 'bad' about me when a child. These shadows have often been painful even now to admit but yet seem to contain values that are needed by my consciousness. They exist in a form that makes it difficult to integrate them into my life, for I have propensities and desires which I have been reluctant to accept. But I have learned that the Light will heal this imbalance given time, recognition and understanding.

Waiting in the Light is perhaps the most precious of my practices. In my Sunday worship, out of centring and prayer, will come the fruit of the silence and stillness. I have evolved a prompt, an *aide de memoire*, to hold fast to the process of this practice, spelling out the word L-I-G-H-T as a five step journey, an exploration of my inner life. With the clarity of the inward Light I feel I can

discover the promptings of love and truth and may gain peace of mind. I wait in the Light between each of these steps or stages to relish the riches of silence.

- L** letting go, letting go of 'knowing', of 'worries', of 'preoccupations', evoking Love;
 - I** Insight from my inner leadings and the intuitions that may arise;
 - G** God or Grace of Spirit as it is recognised, the felt Gift of a 'sacred presence';
 - H** Holding on to what is experienced, revealed or healed, holding to the unforeseen;
 - T** thankfulness may follow, trusting in the blessing received, tasting of Truth.
- I want to rest in Spirit as one at home with a deep universal love.



MEDITATION on WAITING IN THE LIGHT

Elizabeth Brown

Each step is followed by 6/7 minutes of silence, altogether taking about 40 minutes.

This examen of *conscience* invites us to search our hearts to the depths.

This is part of the path to self-knowledge. We are thus drawn into the Divine Centre where we are known fully. 'And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'. (John 8:32)

BE STILL Sit comfortably. Relax. Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Wait in The Light.

Fox said: "Your teacher is within you. That which is pure in you... will guide you to God".

BE RECEPTIVE Rest in The Light. Trust The Light.

Fox said: "Awake from sleep and see where you are!"

BE COOL and a little detached. Let your questions be revealed by The Light, without answering them. Hold them in The Light and wait for clarity.

Fox said: God is not seen but in the eternal Light from which all wisdom comes".

OPEN yourself to what is being shown. Wait and trust The Light.

Fox said: The source of Light is the perfect Light of God and gives us understanding".

SUBMIT TO and welcome what is being shown. Continue to wait in The Light.

Fox said: "Feel the power of the Lord God in yourself that guides your mind up to God and gives you dominion over all weakness, to strengthen and heal you.

This is His grace”.

ALLOW yourself to be open to new possibilities. Accept and be thankful for your experience whatever it has been.

Fox said: Be not amazed at the weather... if the waves and storms be high, faith will keep you to swim above them, for they are but for a time but Truth is without time”.

WHEN you feel ready, open your eyes, stretch and bring your meditation to an end.



GATEWAYS TO HEALING

Michael Lewin

Allow yourself the privilege to slow right down and stop

Healing is really a process of facing our resistance and letting go, surrendering to what is

The body is very forgiving and it will heal itself, if given time

Give yourself permission to be mindfully present in the stilled, sacred moment of non-doing

Healing requires a deep level of humility in order to enter the core of our pain for a deeper listening

Resistance to change is holding us back. Healing asks that we change our attitude in order to change our lives

If we pay attention to the slow rhythmic breath of mindfulness we are starting on the journey into healing

Healing can only come and visit us if we make a welcoming, open space for its presence. Fully committed to receiving its gift

If the healing withdraws create a silent space to permit its return

Healing is a constant attending to our pain and hurt and all that triggers them

When the healing starts allow it to flow through your mind, body and spirit unimpeded in its course

Healing involves perseverance and commitment to getting well and is there a better time for this than right now?!

I wonder what caveman would have thought of human beings walking along with a small yappy animal on a long strip of leather and stopping to pick up the excrement that said animal deposited on a the grass in a blue thing, first putting it over their hand and then turning it inside out and tying into a knot. And next it's put in a red box on a post. Caveman would be staggered by so much that modern man does.

What about the other way round? How would I manage in his conditions? Not for very long I guess. I, modern Western woman, have become very accustomed to comfort and ease in so many ways; but I do wonder if caveman's soul was less troubled. Life would certainly have been much simpler: surviving the elements, keeping fed, avoiding being killed, procreating.

All such rumination sparked by seeing a man with a dog on a lead!

It's a gorgeous morning – bright sunshine and air washed clean by all the rain of yesterday. I'm sitting on a wooden bench near the gateway to St. Cyr church next to the canal at Stonehouse. Cyclists, walkers, dog-owners and children pass me and move along the pathway opposite which runs along the canal. Plenty to watch from here.

The distant hill is a joy to see. The thick tree cover at the top of it reminds me of the head of a poodle. The lower slopes are free of trees and have dark shadows crossing them as clouds scud by above. Everything is so clearly defined this morning. I look around and my eyes flit like a butterfly, resting on particular things that appeal to me, simply by-passing those which don't.

I love brick walls and there are many round here. I delight in the multi-coloured bricks, especially when they've been weather-worn as they have here. Further away I see gorgeous tall dark brown bulrushes edging the water, standing erect above the waving grasses and other foliage around them.

It's wonderful to be away from the roar of motorway traffic, though a chain-saw is loudly at work to take its place. How hard it is these days to find a place that isn't polluted by mechanical or electronic noise.

Even looking at lots of trees in the distance deepens my breathing. Maybe I'm picking up their oxygen? Scientifically no doubt I'd be laughed at for thinking

He who speaks does not know. He who knows does not speak.

So listen as much to the spaces between the words.

The Tao

such a thing but it feels like that to me. Mum used to say she'd like to die under a bush. I understand that sentiment. Her death could hardly have been further from that. I hope her soul found a bush somewhere.

There is so much to see when I take the time to look. It may only be mid-August but there are already signs of fruition, autumn is on its way. Blackberries are enormous this year; which is surprising given how dry it's been. Mind you, there is the canal close at hand, and briar roots do travel. Elderberries are beginning to ripen and hips are already shining red. Seed-heads are full; it's the season of bounty. I've just seen a stately heron standing on the path. What a fabulously balanced creature it is – a magnificent design! I got within about twenty yards of it before it took flight with its great wingspan and disappeared across the water to land amongst the rushes on the other side of the canal. That was a gift.

Why is being amongst natural surroundings so compelling and so healing for me? I think it's because it takes me simultaneously out of myself and into myself. My senses take me out of myself in response to my environment, and as they do that, I'm taken into the depths of myself where I feel alive and free. I lose my sense of having to be anybody or anything else in the eyes of the world, or even in the eyes of my own harsh inner critic. Yes, it's that wonderful feeling of freedom that I love so much. And working to express myself through words is a crucial part of the practice. For it is a practice; a spiritual practice through which I find my undamaged centre where I still feel hopeful and at peace. The more out of sorts I am, the more time I need for this practice, which is, for me, as vital as food and drink.

*For most of us there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
While the music lasts.*

The Dry Salvages – T.S. Eliot

CLARIDGE HOUSE *News and Programme*

Bursary assistance available, depending on individual personal circumstances. Please enquire when booking. For booking details – and other tariff, including daily rates and special breaks – please contact Roberta Monticone
Claridge House, Dormans Road, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH.
Email: welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk
Website: www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk Tel: 01342 832150



How things are going at Claridge House

Basically it's undergoing **major** renewal! For many years we have been offering rest and renewal to our guests and now in 2016 it's the House's turn.

As you may know Claridge House was set up as a separate charity in 1954 as a place for healing, rest and renewal. Originally it was a charitable trust but has recently become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Through good times, and not so good times, Claridge House has provided a sanctuary to those needing a place to just be in difficult and busy times in their lives. They came on retreat to begin with and then courses were offered. Over time Claridge House has gained many friends and loyal supporters who have kept it running. Many of those left generous legacies and gifts, and yet with erratic occupancy resulting in low levels of regular accommodation income the house struggled to survive. In 2015 things were beginning to look very serious for the future of Claridge House.

Following the example of Swarthmore Hall, and with advice from Friends House, the decision was taken to start up a Bed and Breakfast business to run in parallel with the courses and retreats. Unfortunately this was not a realistic possibility with the house in its existing condition and the trustees were faced with some hard decisions.

Prior to this decision there was an example of good things coming out of bad. Lattendales, another retreat centre set up by FFH, had run into financial problems and had had to close. As Claridge House had sold land in the past to help with the setting up of Lattendales, it was only right that some of the money from its sale was returned to Claridge House. Then, in addition to the Lattendales money, Claridge House benefitted from two generous legacies from guests who had been coming to the House for many years.

So the renewal began; first by converting a couple of rooms in 2015 and installing a new central heating system. Then in 2016 the house was closed for

more extensive refurbishment. All bedrooms bar one have been converted to ensuite, the bathroom at the front of the house has been transformed as has the garden. Very shortly the kitchen and the driveway will similarly be renewed. This has also all been possible thanks to the ongoing generous response to our appeal for funds. Foremost among these donations was one from Friends Fellowship of Healing thus maintaining the special relationship that has existed with Claridge House since its formation more than 60 years ago. Heartfelt thanks to FFH and everyone else who has donated – every single penny has helped.

Now the work on the House is proceeding very well AND on schedule, and we are optimistic that we will re-open for Retreats and B&B in August. The courses will be restarting in September. Also in September we will be holding celebrations to mark the reopening of the House on the weekend of the 16th to 18th. Please make a note of this in your diary, as we trustees are very excited about welcoming friends, old and new, to the renewed Claridge House.

We have now appointed Roberta Monticone as the new General Manager at Claridge House.

Roberta brings with her many years of experience in the hospitality industry and has a wealth of skills and expertise in running a residential centre. We are delighted to welcome her and she is also in the process of appointing our new House Manager who will join us next month.

Tony Franklin – on behalf of Claridge House Trustees

And a note from the new general manager...

This is a very exciting time for me. Having worked in hotel management for the last 10 years, I have now found the perfect job: Claridge House general manager.

It is a very exciting time for Claridge house too: rooms being updated, en suites created, a brand new staircase and kitchen; not to be forgotten as well is the amazing job that Katy, our gardener, is doing in the garden.

On top of it all, we are starting a new B&B venture. We have a brand new website and a new team of staff – me included.

So, there is a lot happening at the moment. I am thoroughly enjoying the buzz around Claridge House and strangely enough I am not stressed yet and despite working alongside a team of builders I can still feel the sense of peace (quiet, not so much right now) that Claridge House is embedded in; it really is a special place.

I have been here for less than one month, but I already feel at home and cannot wait to be able to welcome guests, old and new, and I am looking forward to meeting as many Friends of Claridge House as possible.

I can foresee a bright, successful future for Claridge House; our mission and values remain at the core of everything we do and will continue to do so. All of this hard work is not to change the house, but purely to make it a more comfortable place and to make sure that more and more people become aware of what we do and have the opportunity to take advantage of such a peaceful, quiet and nourishing environment, whether they are with us for a course, retreat or just a B&B stay.

Roberta Monticone

CLARIDGE HOUSE PROGRAMME

DAY RETREATS *Led by Lina Newstead, a British Wheel of Yoga Diploma Course Tutor, who runs private classes, meditation retreat weekends and longer yoga courses.*

Wednesday 7th September MEDITATING on spiritual texts

Meditating on spiritual texts from various traditions to see how they inspire us. £40

Wednesday 5th October MANDALA MEDITATION

Learn how to use Mandalas as a meditation tool. This will involve colouring and meditational practice. £40

Wednesday 7th December MEDITATION – soul food

Explore sacred food that links us to festive traditions, with meditation on that which nourishes us. £40

September 2nd - 4th HEALING ART

Enjoy a heightened sense of inner peace and wellbeing through drawing. This course is very calming, very creative and is a wonderful way to develop confidence and self-esteem. Discover the secrets used by professional artists and create a work of art far beyond your expectations. *Rosa Tuffney, BA(hons), PG Dip. Professional Artist / Art Therapist.* 10 places Depart 4pm Sunday £240

September 9th - 11th ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE – for beginners and refreshers

The Alexander Technique is a learned skill which improves health, balance and co-ordination and is medically proven as a long term solution to back pain (BMJ 2008). This gently-paced course uses explanation, lying down, guided activities, hands-on work and discussion to explore the principles involved. Please bring comfortable clothing. *Jill Payne, teaches the Alexander Technique in Beckenham.* £225

September 23rd - 25th YOGA RETREAT – to celebrate the Equinox!

The Autumnal Equinox, when the earth is poised in balance of light and dark, provides an auspicious opportunity to let go of what no longer serves us. We will do this using a series of yoga, meditation and visualisation techniques, simultaneously enjoying a weekend of thanksgiving, celebration and friendship.

Ceri Lee, has taught yoga classes for 15 years, also runs retreats and workshops across the UK and abroad. www.yoga-light.com **£265**

September 30th - October 2nd KNITTING TO SOOTHE THE SOUL

Knitting is not just a way of producing useful garments it is also a healing activity that can be combined with some meditation traditions. We will share the frustrations and rewards of knitting and discover the secrets of knitting without judgement.

Hilary Grundy, a lifelong Quaker who promotes knitting as therapy.

7 places Depart 4pm Sunday

£240

October 14th - 16th SINGING IN HARMONY

Harmony singing will draw on rich traditions of music and chanting from many eras and cultures. There will be fun warm-ups, simple songs and more complex part songs. Everything will be taught by ear in a fun, friendly, and relaxed atmosphere. No experience needed – just a love of singing.

Surya Cooper, an experienced Natural Voice Practitioner, who has run workshops, groups and courses for many years. **11 places**

£240

October 28th - 30th Gentle WRITING, Gentle movement

Enrich your relationship with others, yourself and the world around you using Transformative Life Writing. We will be exploring our stories with writing exercises, quiet contemplation, and gentle movement inspired by words. No previous experience required. *Alison Lock, a published poet, writer and trained facilitator for Life Writing Transformation. www.alisonlock.com and Ann Bettys, trained in contemporary dance and has a continuing love of dance.*

11 places Depart 2pm Sunday

£225

November 4th - 6th HEALING MEDITATION

The mind has never had such an overload of stimulation from all the media that is in our busy lives. Come and take time out to deeply relax the mind and allow it to rest and heal in a way that is conducive to raising the spirits and allowing sheer joy to be felt spontaneously. The techniques are from the Tibetan and Yoga tradition. *Lina Newstead, a 'British Wheel of Yoga' Diploma Course Tutor who runs private classes, meditation retreat weekends and longer Yoga courses.* **11 places Depart 4pm Sunday**

£240

QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS' NEWS and EVENTS

MORE NEW TUTORS FOR QSH

Lee and Martin Britten-Jones, both QSH healers, took part in a weekend in June at Great Yarmouth Meeting House and became tutors for the QSH training course. This is an exciting venture because they are going to deliver the QSH healing course to six people in the area. They intend to meet them regularly over weekends at Great Yarmouth Meeting house and it hoped there will be six new probationers in the new year. Cherry and I will give Lee and Martin support if needed

This may be a way how future courses QSH courses could be delivered but it is also hoped there will be a QSH course at Claridge House later next year.

Kay Horsfield



*If you think that Healing is all cobblers,
You could be right.
Try it to get re-souled.*

Stephen Feltham

THE QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS' NEWSLETTER.

Please send any contributions for the Quaker Spiritual Healers' Newsletter to:
Ed Warne – contact details on inside back cover.



LETTERS

Following the article 'Mental Furniture' (TW Spring 2016) Mary Callaway (Didsbury Meeting) has written to say what helped her at times of great sorrow.

The sentence “in the still hours of the night the despairing soul has to find within themselves the consolation that they need” really spoke to me. For months I lay awake for a couple of hours around 3a.m. – the graveyard shift. I’d find something that helped and the next night I’d be groping around in vain for it! I jotted ideas in a little notebook, then lost it. It was a comfort to remember that many friends all over the country were praying for me/us, holding us in the Light. That could be tangible sometimes if I could surrender into it.

REPORTS

Stockport and Disley Distant Healing Event

Stockport and Disley Healing groups, from E. Cheshire AM, held their second Distant Healing Event over four hours on Saturday 9th April, at the new Stockport Meeting House. Members of Cheshire Area Meeting were invited to spend some time with us, holding those they knew who were sick or troubled in the healing light.

Those who came were welcomed at the door and given an explanatory leaflet telling them what was happening. Chairs were arranged in a circle in the Meeting Room and an ‘elder’ was always present to give help or advice, if required.

Those who wished to mentioned names aloud and others brought their friends silently into the circle. Having a longer time available meant that more space could be left between mentioning one name and the next, giving the opportunity for everyone present to hold each concern in the light. In the Meeting Room, the atmosphere was peaceful and charged with healing energy, leaving us with a sense of a power beyond ourselves.

We look forward eagerly to the time when we can come together again for the same purpose and, next time, we hope to extend the invitation to a wider group.

Footnote: As the event covered the lunch period (11am-3pm), people were invited to bring lunch and tea, coffee and biscuits were provided. Everyone could stay for as long or as short a time as they wished – 10 minutes, half an hour or the entire time.

Leonora Dobson and Tricia Booth

THE SMASHING OF THE PIG

Stephen Feltham

A true tale – of Healing or of Happenstance?

The story I am about to tell is true. I know it to be so because it is mine – it happened to me. The times and the places are as true as far as a fading memory can relate but as in all stories, it is not the facts that give rise to questions, but our interpretations of them.

Involved as I am with Quaker healers and committed to the ministry of spiritual healing it comes very easily to ascribe to 'healing' the improvement in one's circumstance that others may put down to serendipity or happenstance. But there is always doubt isn't there? One may be 100% committed to a cause or a belief but one also has knowledge of other things, perhaps from a background of rationality where only logic and incisive reasoning can justify any course or event. But what if such scientific approaches fall short in demonstrating healing or happenstance? What then?



The background to my story is me, a businessman about two and a half decades ago. I had a growing business, about a dozen employees and had impressive contracts with large and small businesses, including the government and was developing an international reputation for delivering a positive outcome in my specialist field. It was because of this that my business took me overseas and in this particular instance I found myself in Hong Kong, on my third visit and I had taken Annie, my wife with me for a bit of a holiday. My business there had gone well and when finished we spent a couple of days vacationing and in the course of our holidaymaking found ourselves at a well-known travel location on the far side of Hong Kong island known as Stanley Market. It was full of the usual tourist tat but nonetheless was a great place to visit and, in a very much light-hearted mood and ambiance, Annie and I trod the narrow lanes of the market.

Now about that time I had been reading what became a very famous novel; *Tai-Pan* is a 1966 novel written by James Clavell about European and American traders who move into Hong Kong in 1842 following the end of the First Opium War. Clavell translates *Tai-Pan* as "Supreme Leader"; although "Big

Shot” might be more accurate. It was a thrilling novel and I was much inspired by it.

So it was that as Annie and I walked the lanes of Stanley Market we came across a jade carver. His speciality was to carve little figures atop a wax sealing impression tool. It was a simple square column with the Chinese animal for the year on the top and a blank surface at the bottom waiting for the initials of the purchaser to be carved upon it. I however, wanted something different to just my initials. Now I was born in 1947, the Chinese year of the pig and so, having chosen my basic seal, passed it to the carver and asked him to carve, with Chinese lettering the words “Tai Stephen”. The carver looked very much displeased and clearly indicated that he did not want to do it but, me being still in light-hearted mood, took up the refusal as a challenge and after a little argy-bargy, got my own way and I proudly went on my way with my wax sealing tool with my name upon it clearly stating that I was the number one Big Shot.

Our holiday finished and all was well. We returned home to ‘blighty’ and got on with our lives, but things began to change. A series of bad luck and unconnected events were experienced. In all honesty, even now I cannot fully explain why so much should have happened when it did, but it did. As a businessman I expected ups and downs and generally I foresaw it and mitigated any adverse impacts. I still had to run my projects and cater for my clients and looking back then and even now can honestly say that all that I planned to do I did do, and it worked out well. I cannot ascribe bad decisions or mistakes on my part to what was befalling me. To me, the easiest thing to do is to find fault with oneself for once that openness is achieved a way forward can be planned and implemented.

However, in this period, for about a year after my return from Hong Kong so much happened it was uncanny. The government stopped funding contracts (not just for me but for all business consultants), my wife became quite ill and required major abdominal surgery, my eldest daughter was the first to leave home and go to university, it was a time of keening parental concern and worry. The nation entered a period of severe recession and business started to dry up. My staff became very frightened and a few of them left and set up rival business (it happens, I had seen it with others so was not surprised when my turn came). My bank made some horrendous mistakes that caused extreme embarrassment and to top it all, the tax regime changed so that my current tax burden was based upon not only previous years’ earnings but anticipated future earnings as well, meaning I had to pay a lot of tax on money that I had not yet earned.

I found myself driving near Croydon one day and a particular piece of music struck a chord and I nearly crashed the car because of the amount of tears

running down my face. Patently I was in a bad place and could not see why.

It was one night, in the early hours of the morning when my wife was in hospital having surgery that I dialled The Samaritans for a chat. I was having visions of myself in a particular mode of suicide. I conveyed this to the Samaritan who became most worried and I ended up reassuring him that I was not considering such an act but nonetheless had visions of it. More pressure – I was now looking after him because of what I had said rather than just unburdening myself. Anyway, the moment passed and I remain continually grateful to them being there

The doctor was the next port of call and I can remember saying to him that I have so much to live for and have so many talents and things to be grateful for but was in a terrible mess with work and money and wife and kids and all and just could not cope. He put me on anti-depressants for a while and they may have helped for a couple of weeks but in my case I did not feel they were particularly beneficial (but they may have been).

It was one Sunday morning when I had gone to work to attend to some paper-work and whilst I was rummaging through my desk drawers found the old jade seal that I had brought back from Hong Kong. I don't know why but I knew what I had to do. I took my seal and the hammer from the office tool kit and took it to the stone step by the office doorway. Without ceremony I placed the pig seal on the step and brought the hammer down upon it. It smashed into many pieces but quirkily the pig snapped off, quite whole and I retain it to this day.

I don't know why I did it. I do know that the thoughts that rushed through my head in the nanosecond before my decision to do what I did were very many, but of all the thoughts, irrational though it seems now, I felt that I was taking charge of my situation and that what I needed to do was to have a gesture of some sort. To this day I question my motives, was I trying to break a spell (can I as a Quaker say that?); was I being grossly or primitively superstitious? Or was I in the spirit that recognises leadings and the mystery of the spirit and the divine, acting with extreme rationality and logic? Who knows?

It could be said that things carried on just as before. My business continued to struggle, my clients had their work discharged and I continued to make plans and see them through. All that I intended came about much the same as it did before I went to Hong Kong. But something else happened. The bad luck stopped. And so, instead of 'one step forward two steps back' my life gradually changed to what was fairly normal for any businessman, a few steps forward and the occasional step back, but generally speaking all in the right direction.

I have reflected many times over that two to three year period of my life in the

But why did things change after the smashing of the pig? When that little jade tool broke into so many tiny pieces and shards I felt within me a great emotional sigh, a release like the lancing of a blister or the lifting of an unbearable load. Yes, I really felt it but I can't, from the perspective of an engineer and a businessman explain it. But, as a member of the Friends Fellowship of Healing and the Quaker Spiritual Healers it is no big thing to accept that healing took place on my office doorstep back in the 1990s. It required no detailed study, no analysis and no justification for me to do. I knew what to do, I did it and I felt the better for it and things improved thereafter. Strange thing is though – I was not a Quaker then and had never heard of the Friends Fellowship of Healing but intuitively I knew then that my healing had to start within oneself. But I was not to appreciate that so succinctly for another decade.

Judy Clinton

My name is Ruth. I'm 63 years old, and live on the Isle of Man. I have suffered from agoraphobia since childhood. It's been a battle all the way. Every bit of progress is hard-won, and all of it can be lost with terrifying suddenness. Chronic depression and anxiety unavoidably come with the territory.

Agoraphobia is very much like alcoholism. Even an alcoholic who hasn't touched a drink for years is fully aware that they are still an alcoholic. Similarly, my agoraphobia never goes away. No matter how hard I work to extend my boundaries, I never experience the unconscious confidence of those who go out without a second thought. Essentially, I always have to be prepared to face panic on my own, wherever I go. I also have physical health problems, including chronic fatigue and frequent, severe migraines, so over the years finding the energy to battle against agoraphobia has become a lot more difficult.

Anyway, about two years ago, a friend saw an article about battery-assisted bikes in a local magazine. He drew it to my attention, as he knew I had health issues. I contacted the dealers, tried one out, loved it immediately, and placed an order without hesitation.

As soon as the bike arrived, it began to revolutionise my life. Slowly building up both my confidence and my fitness, I started to go out on it as often as possible, gradually going further, and facing my fears with its help. Before long, I was learning to plan routes, tackle lonely country lanes, and even sometimes go up into the mountains, when I was well enough. The sense of freedom, independence and joy brought by even the simplest, shortest, and most routine journey never wanes. Getting out on my bike also makes a huge difference to my chronic depression, so I use it as often as possible, whatever the weather. I travel by car only if absolutely necessary, and am known locally for my familiar appearance on a bright pink bike, wearing yellow, fluorescent over-trousers and jacket.

A few months ago, I heard on the news that a cycle route had opened all the way round Morecambe Bay, in the North of England. I longed to experience it for myself, but given both my agoraphobia, and my health problems, this seemed impossible. However, I slowly started to work on the idea, and to plan my trip.

Eventually, the big day arrived. I pushed the bike on to the ferry, watched whilst it was secured with rope, then settled in my seat. After a smooth four-hour crossing to Heysham, I untied my bike, wheeled it down the ramp on to the dock, and set off into unknown territory.

Quite by accident, I soon discovered that I could cycle through Morecambe on a traffic-free promenade, which was glorious. It took me almost all the way to Hest Bank, where I was made very welcome by my bed and breakfast host.

One of my main anxieties centred on being able to find the pub where I had booked to have dinner, so after a rest I set off to locate it, which wasn't as difficult as I had feared. I cycled back to my digs, then to the pub again, to make sure I could remember the way. This a technique I often use to help me build up my confidence. I was so relieved to manage this that I celebrated by taking a short tour of the area without a map, taking myself so much by surprise that I barely had time to be anxious. My head had been aching all day, but during the night it worsened, becoming a migraine. I soon realised I would need to rein in my plans for the next day, so as not to push myself and my anxieties too hard.

Accordingly, after breakfast, I set off slowly for a short, flat ride along a quiet canal tow-path to Carnforth. It wasn't far, but it felt as though I was going further and further away from any sort of security. Leaving the cycle track and finding my way into town was quite complicated, and I quickly became anxious about getting lost. This peaked at a busy crossroads, where I parked my bike and waited quietly for the anxiety to die down a bit, whilst looking around and trying to memorise the way back.

Suddenly, I remembered the little notebook I always carry on the bike for writing poetry, and it came into my mind that I could draw the junction, and make a few notes about the route. This felt like a really useful way forward. Having done so, I parked and locked the bike. All I wanted to do was go straight back to my room at the guest house, but as I set myself to look round the charity shops, my anxiety gradually diminished. Within an hour I was able to manage lunch and to think realistically about the afternoon.

Not wanting to push too hard on my boundaries, I decided to explore some of the local cycle paths, going as far as I dared without getting lost, then returning to a familiar point before trying a new one. Along the way, I stopped to chat with people who were passing, and to take photos. Eventually, I headed back to Hest Bank, making one last effort by going for a cup of tea at the edge of the sands, rather than straight back to my room.

On the final day, I slowly made my way back along the promenade to Heysham Village, pausing frequently to gaze at the bay, and at the mountains beyond it. The tide was in, and the quality of the light was stunning. Eventually I found my way up to the main road, and reached the ferry-port without any problems, although re-finding it had been a major concern throughout the weekend.

There was time to eat, drink, knit, read and rest, before boarding for a return crossing so smooth that I slept most of the way. So, after the best weekend of my life, I arrived home safely, promising myself that I would soon return to continue slowly exploring the beautiful area around Morecambe Bay.

Afterwards, I thought about what I had learned. Going away with my bike had forced me to make my own decisions about what I wanted to do, and which way I wanted to go. I'd had to act independently, take responsibility for myself and my needs, and deal with my emotions. Despite all my fears, I had survived. The decision to launch myself into the unknown had given me some wonderful experiences and memories. Nothing is ever easy with agoraphobia, but every bit of anxiety and fear was worth it for those wide views of the shining sands, with the distant mountains beckoning me from the far side of the bay.



The Eighth Day, Selected Writings, by *Christian Bobin*, translated by *Pauline Matarasso*. Darton Longman and Todd 2015. 208 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-23253171-8. £12.95

I wanted to dislike the writings of Christian Bobin, really I did. He's a poet, it's claimed, and if there is one thing I am extremely sceptical about it is poets who don't write poems but prose. All great poetry is driven by form and when form is absent, despite modernist and *zeitgeist* claims to the contrary, what we have is prose. As I say, I wanted to dislike Bobin's writings, but I found I couldn't – he is a true poet, although he writes in prose, and his work is massively interesting from both literary and theological points of view. And, as a sidebar, from a specifically Quaker perspective too, for Bobin has much to say about many Quaker central concerns, and especially silence and plumbing its depths. Contra GK Chesterton, a Catholic, for example, who claimed that "gratitude is the highest form of thought", for Bobin "Silence is the highest form of thought" and he explores it in an original and unique way, although apparently without trying to. Indeed, otiose seems a word made for him. Here is one of his comments on silence, which gives a flavour of his style: "Yesterday, thanks to a quick movement, I caught a bit of Christ's tunic. It was a patch of silence".

But there I go: doing a very un-Bobin like thing – contrasting and comparing. One joy of Bobin's work is that he doesn't seem to be arguing with anyone; instead he is moving through life and picking up one stone after another, examining each in turn, giving it its due consideration and attention, and then

moving on. These stones can be objects, they can be flowers or nature or living things (trees are models of acceptance for Bobin), or they can be his father's Alzheimer's or the death of the love of his life. There is a sense of rumination and getting to the heart of things; and alongside this, there goes a dismissal of contemporary illusions and delusions. Bobin is someone not taken in by the modern world: "It is because each of us strives *at any cost* to suffer as little as possible that life is hellish." Whoa! – surely, anyone with a spiritual notion in their smallest finger would see how that more or less defines and condemns Western spirituality – people want a religion that fits their preferences rather than a religion that is true, or more exactly that accords with the Tao, or the nature of reality. We in the modern world find that we are not comfortable with Christ or with death and so we relegate both to a backroom of the mind and lock its door; and yes, we find we rarely get there to examine its contents. The joy of Bobin's work is that he does this for us – death, especially, haunts his pages: "I was born into a world starting to close its ears to any talk of death: it has had its way, not realising that it had thus barred itself from hearing any talk of grace".

That should not surprise us: the title, *The Eighth Day*, is curious. The nearest we get to an explanation is: "What is strange in fact is that grace still gets to us, when we do all we can to render ourselves unreachable. What is strange is that – thanks to a wait, a look, or a laugh – we sometimes gain access to that eighth day of the week, which neither dawns nor dies in the context of time". As I understand it, the Eighth Day is the same as 'on the third day' – it is the Sunday on which Christ rose from the dead. On the sixth day the world was created, and Christ was crucified, and on the seventh day God rested, as Christ did in the tomb; but on the Eighth day the resurrection signified a new creation, a new order, and one which is independent of time and death. This, then, is what Bobin's work is constantly veering towards and alluding to: the magic of that Eighth Day which is strangely accessible to us now but in glimpses. As he says, "the unique concept of a presence we would never again lack, of a beauty that would never again be subject to the outrages of evening, evil and death." Bobin helps us locate that presence and also to celebrate its joy.

One notable aspect of Bobin's writing is his aphoristic style; he is pre-eminently quotable because his language is so pithy and meaning-laden. Let me end by sharing three wonderful observations from his writing.

"I like to lay my hand on the trunk of a tree I happen to be passing, not to assure myself that the tree exists – I have no doubt of that – but that I do." This reminds me of one of CS Lewis's wonderful *aperçus* where he reminds us that when Christ appears to his disciples after the resurrection and they are huddled together in a locked room, he seems to walk through the wall; this is not

because Christ is insubstantial and ghost-like; it is that the wall is insubstantial compared with the reality of Christ! Things are not what they seem, but the other way round. What, in short, is really real?

“One gram of light serves as a counterweight to kilograms of darkness”. Here we have such a hopeful and enlightening perception; there is no doubt that Bobin feels the full weight of darkness and evil in the world, and is himself of a somewhat melancholy disposition; yet for all that even tiny amounts of light are so powerful and such antidotes to darkness and evil. I see this as an encouragement to arms; to fight the good fight because every contribution carries more power than we can ever imagine.

Finally, and perhaps most poetically, on writing itself, Bobin declares: “Writing is like drawing a door on a wall too high to climb, then opening it”. That, surely, is a genius image; it speaks about the counterintuitive fact that all true writers understand. Essentially, one does not write to say what one means, but to discover what one truly knows. Bizarrely, the meaning seems to be not pre-existent in the mind, but created through the act of writing itself. I am sure, if I had space and time here, one might want to reflect on the ‘Word made flesh’ and how in some way human creativity mirrors – is in the image of – the divine process.

Suffice to say, I have become a big Bobin fan. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is remotely interested in the spiritual journey, which of course is one of healing too. This book will repay constant reading and re-reading many times over in terms of its insights and suggestions. And like true poetry, it will live in, if not haunt, your mind.

And one last, quick note – I am not qualified to comment on how well the original French of this book has been translated into English in terms of its accuracy and nuance, but I can say that I suspect that the translation is superb in that what one reads in English is so clear, powerful and effective, and I can only imagine that that derives from fidelity to the intention of the source; so full marks to Pauline Matarasso.

James Sale

Confucius was asked: 「有一言而可以終身行之者乎？」

“Is there one saying which may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life?”

子曰：「其恕乎！己所不欲，勿施於人。」

The Master said, “It is: ‘Put yourself in the other person’s place.’

Do not do to others what you do not want done to you.”

I Met a Monk by *Rose Elliot*. Watkins. 2015.
315 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78028-836-9. £10.99.

Written by Rose Elliot, (better known as a vegetarian cookbook author), this book is about Buddhist thinking, especially mindfulness and the importance of meditation. It is an eight-week course, with each chapter ending in a summary of the contents of the preceding text, as well as practices to follow. What makes it different from a straightforward self-help book is the way in which it is delivered.

Rose comes from a retreat centre background, which she had chosen to leave as a young person. She was dubious, to say the least, about inviting a monk into her home for a series of Buddhist sessions. It was in support of her husband's desire to do so that she embarked on something that was to change her life.

In a most interesting and often amusing way, Rose introduces the reader to her home; the monk himself; the diverse group of people who take part in the course; and what transpires during the times when they meet together. What I found refreshing about this book is that Rose gives voice through the various participants to the many doubts, concerns and objections that people might raise against Buddhist practices and thinking – a good few being her own. As the book progresses, Rose writes about the different changes and reactions that people have, including herself, as the group comes to build relationships, trusting in the monk and each other, working with the practices given to them, and growing as a result. I found myself keen to find out what happened next, as in a novel, and yet was learning factually myself, and even starting to work with the practices and thoughts that the monk taught.

By the end of the book Rose is a convert to mindfulness, and the other things that the monk had taught. And so she wrote the book. Poignantly, her husband, Robert, who was the catalyst for all of this, began to develop dementia as she was doing so. Rose writes how much the monk's teaching is helping her with this difficult challenge.

I found this a compellingly easy book to read and deceptively profound in its effect.

Judy Clinton

Keep on Seeking – Hand in Hand – Snakes and Ladders, all by *Ruth Kirk*. Privately published and obtainable free of charge from the author at Ripple Cottage, 6 Douglas Street, Castletown, Isle of Man IM9 1AY. Tel: 01624 824208. Email: rkirk@manx.net.

Sometimes, from Quakers, I have heard the expression 'I don't know how to

pray' despite the fact that we are led to believe that sitting in the silence of Meeting for Worship, and waiting on God, is the purest form of prayer there can be. But even so, many people find it difficult to settle down and let go enough for any meaningful experience to take place, usually because their minds are so cluttered with what's happening in their day-to-day lives; what's happening in the world; what the future, both personal and global, might hold and so on.

So, sometimes it helps to have a structure to fall back on, to use as a guide to further and deeper communion. Ruth is a member of FFH and has produced a series of three booklets which go a long way towards creating just such a structure. While being very Christian-based, each separate prayer is written after deep meditation on a short passage, or quote, from the Bible.

Here is one which I find speaks greatly to me...

Lord
Please keep me
In your arms today,
And hold me
Close to your heart.

But if I should wander
Away from your care,
Please search me out
In the wilderness,
And carry me home
On your shoulders.

Each booklet has a subtitle – **Keep on Seeking:** Reflections on the search for God. **Hand in Hand:** Reflections on a journey with God. **Snakes and Ladders:** Reflections on the ups and downs of spiritual life. They are beautifully produced and obtainable as a set or singly.

Rosalind Smith

For all of us who remember the past... how different we are!

A wife was curious when she found an old negative in a drawer and had it made into a print.

She was pleasantly surprised to see that it was of her at a much younger, slimmer time, taken many years ago on one of her first dates with her husband.

When she showed him the photo, his face lit up.

'Wow, look at that!' he said with appreciation, 'that's my old Ford!'

FFH PUBLICATIONS

Available from The Manager, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH. Tel: 01342 832150.

Please add postage. Cheques to be made out to 'Claridge House'.

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The Postal and Phone Link Groups give prayer support to people seeking reassurance and healing. Some members have joined these groups because they are physically isolated by handicap, age or geography. Others may already belong to a local healing group and are able to give additional commitment by also belonging to one of the postal or phone link groups, or are simply committed to the power of prayer.

All are welcome to join. If you would like to help in this way, please write to one of the Postal Co-ordinators (*Robin Goodman & Muriel Robertson – contact details on the inside back cover*) with a few details about yourself. Your letter will be passed on to one of the group secretaries who will then contact you directly and give you the names of two or three people to uphold in prayer regularly.

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IF YOU ARE THINKING OF MAKING A WILL...

Have you considered leaving something to the FFH?

A specimen form of words could be:

"I give and bequeath (*state what...*) to the Friends Fellowship of Healing (being a Charity registered under the Charities Act, No. 284459), to the registered address of the Charity as recorded with the Charity Commission at the time that this bequest comes into effect, AND I DECLARE that the receipt of this legacy by the then proper officer for the Fellowship, shall be a complete discharge to my Trustee(s) for that legacy."

