



ACT TOGETHER

Ashram Community Trust

Issue 82

Autumn 2016

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity – Charitable Co. No: 1099164



Contents

Page 1. I wish some heavy rain.....	Arwa Abu Haikal
Page 1. Update from Tel Rumeida	Feriyal Abu Haikal
Page 2. Update from Hebron.....	Dave Havard
Page 3. Introducing Liz and John Hamblett.....	John Hamblett
Page 4. My time at Christian Aid.....	Pat Hamilton
Page 6. Teesside's Fair Food Fund.....	Jenny Medhurst
Page 7. Rozina's Story.....	Traidcraft
Page 8. Ashram Holiday	Linda Marshall
Page 11. Sam's wedding.....	Peter Marshall
Page 12. We Are Ashram.....	Liz Urban
Page 13. Sheffield Reading List.....	Sarah Clayton
Page 13. Frank's summer.....	Frank Medhurst
Page 14. Roots and Shoots Launch.....	John Vincent
Page 15. Dates and contact details	

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Update from Tel Rumeida, Hebron

23rd Sep 2016 by *Feriyal Abu Haikal (Arwa's mother)*- translated from Arabic

I wish some heavy rain

Poem by Arwa Abu Haikal, from the Old City of Hebron

I wish some heavy rain
to wash the blood stain;
to rest and calm my fears
and Tal Rumeida's pain.
My dream is peace and justice
and ending that chain
of murdering, killing, shooting.
Can you tell me what we gain?
Hatred breeds more hatred.
Love can end the pain.
I dream of sunshine coming to meet the rain;
to spread that love around despite what has remained.
Do you know what has remained?
Barriers, borders, walls;
killing, shooting and drones.
And that dream again
occupying my brain;
the dream of heavy rain
washing the blood stain:
ending occupation
and feeling life again.



23/09/2016 16:00

Written after the fatal shooting of 18yr old Hadil; Hashlamoun at a local checkpoint (Spring 2016 Act Together)

Tel Rumeida is mourning under the heavy pressures of the occupation to Judaize the area. May Allah give rest to all those who have been killed. Israeli soldiers from the Civil Administration came in a patrol to register the ID numbers of all the residents of Tel Rumeida on Thursday 22 Sep. This is a wider area than was included in the previous closed military zone and now covers the whole of Tel Rumeida.

They asked the Palestinians they met to bring all the IDs of those living in each house. We sent copies of the IDs of all the family including the children who live outside the area but come in to visit. Last night in the night soldiers knocked on the doors and asked for ID's to register us. When we said we already sent all the ID's they said they only want to know who actually lives in the house. They said that we are allowed to go in and out the checkpoint. We asked about our children coming in to visit us he said YOU have to go visit them.

The Israelis want to establish new fences and 2 new checkpoints permanently staffed to replace the old unmanned concrete blocks. (Which we wanted removed anyway because they were preventing anyone from driving or making

deliveries in the area, even ambulances.)

Soldiers say the new restrictions were triggered by the 2 incidents on Friday 16 Sep when Mohammad al Rajabi 15 years old was killed at Jilber checkpoint and on 17 Sep when Hatem al Shalwde (25yrs) was killed at the concrete blocks. Since that date we are all in the new closed military zone and no one is allowed in or out. New procedures added to the closure have been enforced on the whole area of Tel Rumeida and Shuhade Street in order to empty the area of it's residents.

From Dave Havard

29 September 2016

The wave of lone wolf attacks by Palestinian youth which began last October has continued for a full year now. It started to slow down after 6 months but there have been 2 recent surges. Fuelled by despair large numbers of young people have been taking knives to checkpoints and getting themselves shot by Israeli soldiers. In some cases they have attacked the soldiers. 32 Israelis have been killed and 230 Palestinians. Some Palestinian car drivers have been killed because they were suspected of attempting car rammings. In some cases there was no knife at all and in many cases there was no serious threat to anyone and people could have been neutralised and arrested rather than killed.

In most cases immediate medical care has been denied to Palestinians. It came out that it is actually official policy of Magen David, the Israeli ambulance service to treat light injuries to Israelis before serious injuries to Palestinians.

Some call this the "Knife Intafada" but it not really an intafada or popular uprising at all. People are sympathetic to those who get killed but there is very little support for attacking Israelis. Most people recognise that it is futile and just makes the situation worse for Palestinians. There are very few demonstrations happening although there are a large number of gatherings in support of the hunger strikers who are protesting

administrative detention; indefinite time in jail without charges or convictions.

In this time Israel has been increasing settlement expansion, land thefts and house demolitions. In response to the attacks Israel has adopted punitive measures which seem calculated to inflame the situation and often amount to collective punishment of Palestinian communities. Many houses of suspected "terrorists" have been demolished leaving whole families homeless even though they had no prior knowledge of the attack. There have been serious restrictions on Palestinian movements including extra checkpoints. Large numbers of Palestinians have been prevented from travelling to work in Israel.

Most Palestinians have lost hope that any solution is possible or that there is anything they can do which will improve the situation. There is a serious lack of leadership in both Israel and Palestine and no one is offering peace proposals.

Please pray for Israelis and Palestinians most of whom just want to live in peace and particularly for the beleaguered peace activists who are getting attacked from all sides.

God bless you.

Deacon Dave Havard



Introducing Liz and John Hamblett

After selling our French home, we have re-located, recently, to Scarborough. We had arrived in France after having taken early retirement. We owned a house there for eight years. However, we spent two of those years living in community with the London Catholic Worker. We will return to this matter, presently. First, a word or two of a biographical kind.

Before escaping to rural France John had worked for 18 years as a lecturer at Leeds Metropolitan University. This late, academic flowering resulted from John entering higher education as a mature student at the age of 29. Prior to that, he had worked for York City Parks Department for 6 years as an assistant gardener. This should be seen as a period of extended convalescence, necessitated by a 2 year stretch (1978-1980) as a freelance feature writer at the New Musical Express, then operating out of an anonymous second floor office on Carnaby Street.

In addition to raising four children Liz, for her part, had spent most of her adult life working as a doctor; more specifically, she worked in psycho-geriatrics, and general practice before training as a homeopathic physician. More latterly, and for a complicated set of reasons, Liz made a sideways career move and bought a hotel in Hebden Bridge. This was a singular stroke of luck for Liz as that same hotel bar is where John might be found, most Wednesday evenings, tutoring the wayward in the ways of righteousness.

Not long after that meeting we were married. And, not long after that we were joined in our family home by Liz' parents. Two years later, Liz' father had died, and her mother, requiring 24 hour health care, had been transferred to a nursing home. That was when we decided to make our move to France.

Liz was not in the best of health by the time we arrived in France. In time she developed a very serious illness. When she moved, finally, into a period of recuperation we determined to do something radical and different with our lives. And that is how we arrived at the London Catholic Worker (LCW, hereafter). Initially we signed up for a 6 month tour of duty, but we ended up staying for 2 years.

The Catholic Worker was founded in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, in 1933. Before her conversion to Christianity, Dorothy was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies), writing for the left-wing journals supportive of the Syndicalist and Anarchist cause. After her conversion she struggled to find an outlet for



her journalism; until, that is, she met Peter Maurin. After emigrating to Canada with nothing but the clothes he stood up in, he worked his way down to New York. A French peasant, the product of a seminary education, it was he who persuaded Day to start up the Catholic Worker as a weekly newspaper and to open the first House of Hospitality for the victims of the Great Depression. Over time the international Catholic Worker movement has developed as a loose confederation of communities defined as Christian, Pacifist, and Anarchist committed to Community, Hospitality and Resistance.

When we arrived in London the LCW had two community houses; the main house, a complex comprising a de-commissioned presbytery, church and church hall in Haringay; and a small house on the edge of a social housing project in Hackney. Our first six months were spent in the Hackney house where we lived alongside 5 destitute refugees. And, we ran the LCW community cafe that was located in the crypt of a church just around the corner.

After 6 months, the community decided to close down the Hackney house, so we moved up to Haringay. The church hall had been turned into a night shelter, housing up to 30 male refugees every night. Most of our work, there, concerned running the shelter and supporting the refugees. However, in addition to providing hospitality to refugees the LCW has a commitment to peace-making and war-resistance. During our time there, this work centered on advocating on behalf of, and organizing support for the whistleblowers Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, and developing the anti-drones campaign.

After two years we needed a rest, so we said our goodbyes and returned to France. We spent another three years in France before deciding on our return to the UK. That decision was neither straightforward nor easy. One key component of our reasoning, however, concerned the degree of detachment we experienced from what might be described, in a broad sense, as the 'political'. It would be a wonderful thing to be able to say in a straightforward and systematic way what that notion of 'the political' means to us, and how we envisage it developing within the Ashram Community as praxis. Sadly, we have nothing of that kind to offer. At best we have pieces of the open-ended, uneven conversation that has emerged as the result of our shared life-experience. It is a conversation shaped by the co-ordinates of a search; a search for the place where a non-reformist, radical politics, a counter-cultural aesthetics and, what Tomas Halik refers to as a 'small faith' might find room to experiment with new ways of living in community. *John Hamblett*

My Time with Christian Aid

In February 1987, Michael Taylor, then Director of Christian Aid, came to speak at a Christian Aid Day in Sheffield. He talked of Strategy, Partnership and the Gospel, just before the adoption of Christian Aid's Statement of Commitment "To Strengthen the Poor". He said that the Poor are people who are not in a position to decide for themselves. Other people make decisions for them. Christian Aid's strategy is to correct that imbalance.

I was inspired! I applied to be Michael's personal assistant (PA) and got an interview but I fluffed it. However, as the Christian Aid organizer for the East Sheffield Council of Churches I persuaded Michael to come and speak and take part in a community festival in March 1989, which we called "Eastenders in a Rich World". It was a great day.

From being Churches Together organizer in East Sheffield and also in East London, I joined the Christian Aid staff in August 1992 as maternity leave cover for the personal assistant (PA) of the Head of the Education Sector. In 1993 the Head of the Asia Middle East and Group gave me a permanent position as his PA. The Group was split up in 1995 and I was appointed Team Administrator of the South Asia Team, which a few years later merged with the South East Asia Team to become the Asia Team and I continued as Team Administrator. In 2005 we were reunited with the Middle East team as the Asia and Middle East Division, My role in this was as Field Support Officer and then as Division Support Officer until I retired in 2014.

As Support Officer I was the administrative link between the London office and field offices, first in South Asia (India and Bangladesh) and then in South East Asia (Philippines and Burma). My main

responsibilities were to process the approval and transfer of grants to Christian Aid's partner organisations, and to monitor team budgets. The role evolved over the years as Christian Aid became more decentralized and as our grant management system became more sophisticated.

It was great to be part of the Asia and Middle East teams in London and also across the region. I worked very closely with admin colleagues in Delhi, Dhaka, Manila and Yangon.

The highlights of my working life must be my three visits to India and two to Bangladesh. The first in 1999 was primarily a holiday with

my husband Ian, to celebrate my 50th birthday in the land of my birth. My parents were missionaries with USPG, my father an Anglican priest and my mother a teacher, who met and married in India. I spent the first 12 years of my life in India, and then I returned as a volunteer for a year when I was 25 years old. At that time I did some



The Christian Aid Asia team

voluntary work in the office of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) hospital in Pachod, Maharashtra (some 100 miles from Ahmednagar where I grew up) Since then this hospital has developed into a major rural health development project, the Ashish Gram Rachna Trust (AGRT), which was funded by Christian Aid for 25 years. Ian and I visited AGRT during our time in India and saw some of its amazing work. For instance, AGRT worked with groups of adolescent girls, teaching them life-skills, about health, how to look after themselves and their families. One achievement has been to increase the average age of marriage from 14 to 16. Each of the 60 villages where AGRT worked at that time had a community volunteer who went round all the houses assessing the needs of adolescent girls amongst others. They were

part of a huge network of care within this rural community. We also visited SKVIS, a Christian Aid partner in West Bengal, which gives women employment opportunities as portrayed in the picture.

The aim of my other two visits was primarily to train Asian colleagues in Christian Aid grant administration systems. This eventually led to the complete decentralization of Christian Aid's work with Asian partners to the regional office in Delhi. During one of these there we had a meeting of the Asia team, bringing together all staff members from London, Delhi, Manila, Dhaka and Colombo (see photo)

It was sadly not possible for me to visit the Philippines or Burma offices, but I still enjoyed a close working relationship with colleagues there. Skype was a great way of staying in close contact!

I have continued to be a Christian Aid volunteer in the five different church situations we found ourselves in during my 21 years as a staff member. We moved three times in London, and then I commuted daily from Folkestone to London for 5 years, and weekly from Manchester for the final 3 years.

I feel very lucky to have worked with an organization that commits itself "in penitence and hope to strengthen the poor against injustice".

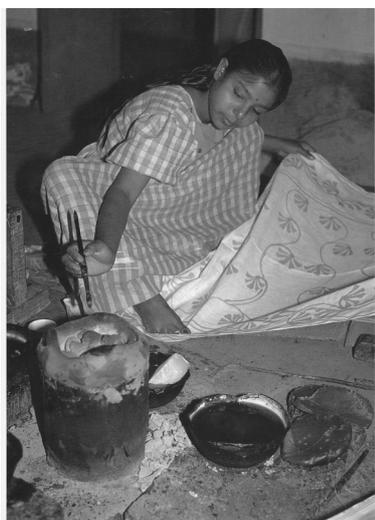
Pat Hamilton



SKVIS Literacy class



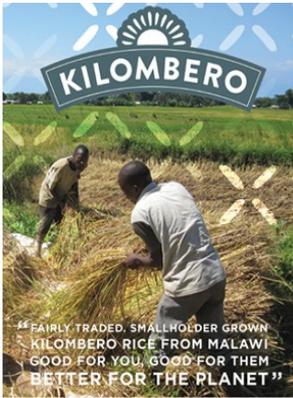
Pat, back left, at the opening of Sparkbrook Ashram House, Birmingham, Sep 1977



SKVIS - batik work on silk scarves, some exported to Traidcraft



SKVIS -An interest free loan enabled. Suniti to buy a boat to catch more fish



Fair Food Fund

A win – win – win idea

Buy from struggling farmers in poor countries, help destitute people seeking asylum, and support your local Fairtrader

If you are concerned that a number of the people seeking safety in Teesside are in desperate need

and you want the small-holder farmers who grow much of the food we eat to be able to feed their own families, then the new Fair Food Fund may interest you.

It buys Fairtrade food and donates it to the Mary Thompson Fund (MTF) which provides weekly food parcels to destitute people seeking asylum in the Tees Valley.

It was hoped that if just 60 people donated £20, £100 food to be given every month. Amazingly half that total has already been raised and three monthly deliveries of Malawian rice have been made.

What is the Mary Thompson Fund (MTF) and who does it help?

It is a local charity and a hardship fund which helps those seeking asylum in the Tees Valley with critical and emergency needs.

When an asylum claim is rejected and an appeal is being prepared, asylum seekers without children are denied support, accommodation, and the right to work, and may be left completely destitute.

Currently the MTF offers 70-80 such people a weekly £3 bag of staple foods and a cash payment of £5 (£10 for those with health problems)

The Fund also helps fund travel to Border Agency and Biometric appointments in Liverpool, North Shields and Durham, school trips, school uniforms and hospital visits.

The story behind the Fairtrade rice the Fund is donating.

The Fund is currently supplying the MTF with Fairtrade Kilombero rice from Malawi, the poorest country in the world. The rice won a Great Taste Gold

award last year, and those receiving it in their food parcels love it not just for its taste but the story behind it.

It is especially good news for the Malawian rice farmers who grow it – because they sell it on Fairtrade terms they have been able to buy ox carts to save them carrying 50Kg sacks of rice on their heads up to 60 miles to market! They've also now got tarpaulins which help to reduce the labour and the waste when they thresh the rice, and they have better quality, more productive seed, They still have to hoe, harvest and thresh by hand in the fierce sun, and cope with droughts and floods as the climate changes, but they now have hope.



The Fund's rice purchases have an extra benefit in a country where secondary education isn't free, and only 1 in 3 families can afford to send a child to secondary school. Selling 90Kg of rice a year enables a farmer to afford to educate a child. Education is the best route out of poverty.

So the Fund both helps those who have come to Teesside to find a place of safety and have no means of support, AND enables poor farmers in Malawi to work their way out of poverty and give their children a brighter future.

If you would like to support the Fund please contact Jenny Medhurst e: medhurst@phonecoop.coop t: 01740 630475.

If you would like to make a payment by bank transfer, the details are: Name

of account: North-South Trading
Sort Code 30-98-13
Account Number 00459802
Reference: Fair Food Fund



The Teesside Fair Food Fund's success!

Inspired by a local supporter the Fund has already raised £600, which will provide 245 1Kg bags of rice, and send two more children to secondary school! And the food parcel volunteers make sure they have always a spare packet of rice for a Malawian lady with severe depression, as eating the rice brings her back the flavours and memories of home.



Rozina's Story

In shocking, powerful language Rozina describes what it means to live in absolute poverty, and how growing tea is giving her 'hope for an incredible tomorrow'

'From my childhood I knew that poor people had only one dream which is to be able to eat three times a day. I dreamt the same. I thought I would get to eat if I could get married to someone. I got married when I was thirteen. My mother-in-law had five sons including my husband. My father-in-law died when my youngest brother-in-law was just five. My in-laws were in terrible poverty; a kind of poverty which is not describable in words. When the men of the house were seated for dinner, my heart kept on trembling and I was worried they would ask us to get one more spoonful of rice. I would have to disclose that there was no more rice in the pot. When my husband used to ask me if I had had my dinner or not, I reluctantly nodded my head so he would not know that my mother-in-law and I ate only once a day.

I had only one sari that I had to wash at night when everyone went to sleep. Sometimes I wore the wet sari while sleeping. Even after working in people's houses my mother-in-law and my husband could not manage to bring food back to our home. Our bamboo hut could not stop the winter's cold breezes from coming inside. There were no beds and we kept freezing on the mud floor. In the rainy season we got wet sitting inside our only shelter and all of us remained quiet about that situation. Poor people cannot dream about having a place where cold breezes or rain are for rich people's amusement. For us it is acute suffering.

Our dream was limited to eating something good like vegetables instead of rice and salt. Many years of festivals had passed. I did not have anything to wear outside so going to visit my mother's place hardly ever happened. I continued to sew and fix the holes in my husband's lungi and never dared to ask him for a new sari. After enduring such suffering one of my brothers-in-law continued his studies. As he was getting education I understood that I had to clean his shirt with the only soap we had so I used it for washing his clothes. None of us washed out clothes with soap. He was studying therefore he had to eat more; I often kept my food for him. We continued to fight against cruel poverty. I had never imagined we had to lose a life in that battle.

My youngest brother-in-law Faruk (10) had fallen ill. He used to be with me all the time. I had brought him up as my mother-in-law was always outside for work. We had no money for his treatment. He used to ask for better food, often saying, 'Bhabi (sister-in-law), I want to have a sweet.' I used to weep while sitting on the corner of his bed. He left us with an empty stomach. I could not give him food or medicine. It still haunts me all the time. Without treatment Faruk went away for stomach pain but poverty did not. There was no house, nor ducks nor hens; we had no cows or any furniture. We were fighting against poverty with empty hands.

After that I got pregnant with our eldest daughter. I often went to sleep after starving a whole day. My husband used to give me courage saying that one day our days would change. He said that one day we would see the rare face of happiness. I left my daughter home with my mother-in-law and both my husband and I started working as labourers in tea gardens. Together we could earn 100 – 130 taka a day (around £1.15).

We got to know that there is profit in tea planting. I heard about Traidcraft. My husband and I decided to use our land for growing

tea plants. Our soil is very good for tea planting. If we can dedicate 1-1.5 years of growing tea in the garden, it will give us leaves for 80-100 years. I received six training sessions from Traidcraft. The wheel of our life then started turning.



After 1.5 years we are now able to see the face of happiness. Now we have electricity. We built a house for 30 thousand taka and we built a kitchen. I have hens and ducks and five cows. Everything has changed miraculously. The tea plant is a miracle in our life. Now we have beds to sleep in. My mother-in-law has a separate room and I made furniture for the house. I bought a tea pot and nicely decorated the room. Now I can buy a sari when I wish. We are providing all expenses for my two brothers-in-law. My daughter is going to school. I bought a new gold earring and my mother-in-law and I now eat meat most days.

We used to earn 3000 taka monthly; now we can earn ten times that. We now earn 30,000 taka each month and sometimes more. We bought new land. I had never played with any toys in my life, but now during Eid I bought toys for my children. Everything now seems like a sweet dream which is actually our reality. In my yard happiness now resides. I have a lot of dreams for the future. We have to fulfil the educational needs of our children. We also have to finish my brother-in-law's education. We will construct a building. When money comes, dreams come as well.

My husband says that I am a big dreamer. Yes, I like to dream. Dreaming is hope; hope for an incredible tomorrow. I want to buy a red refrigerator so I can give everyone cold water in the summer. I want to buy a Television so they can watch cartoons which I never could watch in my childhood. My self-esteem and willpower have multiplied many times now. I am confident about my success and inspire to do more. I am one of the elected women members of our small tea growers association. I not only dream about myself or my family, I also think about my locality for my community. I want more people to be self-sufficient so no one goes to sleep with an empty stomach.

Now people look at me with respect. They say though I had neither education nor experience I become one of their heroes. That makes me very proud. And this makes me responsible for them too. I want to educate my children and believe one day they will come forward to change the hope of the hopeless. My dream has come true, poverty has to be defeated."



Ashram Holiday 2016



Hills, woodland, stiles, sheep, buzzards, courgettes, WiFi, phone signal, castles, old churches, A.E. Houseman, Monteverdi – these are some of the words that come to mind as I look back on this year's Ashram Holiday, arranged for us, as ever, by David Dale.

Eleven members and associates of the Community gathered in the Big Barn at Craven Arms in Shropshire on Saturday 13th August, looking forward to getting to know each other and the local area better in the week ahead. We might have been fourteen, but one guest from Nottingham was unwell, and John and Grace had just moved house and were due to travel to Los Angeles later in the month, so didn't manage to fit in a holiday between these other two events.

By now you're no doubt thinking, surely Craven Arms is a pub, so how have they managed to get a barn inside it? Well yes, there is a pub, but it's in a small town which is named after it, and there was indeed a large barn on the outskirts of the town, large barns being one of the specialities of the area. Fortunately for us the Big Barn had been more or less rebuilt as a very commodious holiday let, with not a cow or a bale of straw to be seen inside the property, though with some very creaky beams and floorboards. The town itself had developed with the coming of the railway – it used to have four lines converging on it, all, I think, mainly involved in the transport of *sheep*, which saved them and their shepherds walking miles and miles to market.

Moving on from Victorian times to 1966, a keen young walker recorded the following in his *Hikes log book* for Tuesday 23 August:

“Craven Arms has nothing to recommend it, being merely a town made important by the railway & road systems as an agricultural centre and rather ugly. Unfortunately we arrived shortly after the shops

closed for lunch, and we had to wait as we needed food for our own lunch. Luckily we found a seat in a recreation ground with a view facing away from the town.” Fortunately, when the now Reverend Ian Parker arrived at the Big Barn almost exactly fifty years later his first comment was that Craven Arms had been considerably smartened up since his last visit. I suspect that the company called “Euro Quality Lamb Ltd” which rather dominated the view as we walked along the main road from the station towards our holiday home, did not exist in that form in 1966, though the name seemed rather poignant in view of the recent referendum result.

One advantage of the Ashram Holiday is that there is a mixed group of people, and usually several vehicles, so that different people can do different things together each day, though this does make it hard for one person to write an all-encompassing report for the archives, so any guests who feel their activities have not been adequately recorded should feel free to circulate any corrections and clarifications by email. As for vehicles, there were, I think, four cars, one van, two bicycles and one recumbent tricycle at our disposal. Those of us that attended the Methodist Church down in Craven Arms on the Sunday morning didn't need transport, but Ian, true to form, went south by car to Ludlow, with Cerys, to the Quaker Meeting, and Claire got up early to drive in the opposite direction to attend mass at the Catholic Church in Church Stretton.

Sunday afternoon gave three of us our first encounter with the Shropshire *hills* and *woodland*. There is a 'Folly' on the highest point of Wenlock Edge, less than three miles from the Big Barn, a tower, according to the walk book, “visible for miles around”. That may well be the case, but it was by no means visible to three Ashram walkers from within the woodland that surrounded it, possibly because we took a completely wrong turning at some stage, ran out of anything like a path and struggled through brambles on a very steep hillside. But having abandoned our attempt to reach our destination, we did get back to the Barn for a meal prepared for us by Ian. (I will resist the temptation to make any amusing allusion to folly in its more common meaning at this point.) The diners at this meal, and all the other evening meals, were treated by Ian and David in turn to readings from the local poet *A.E. Houseman*.

This takes us to fairly late on Sunday evening, once we had taken the plates etc from the dishwasher, found them still stained, and decided that it would be quicker in future to do the job by

hand. I understand one or two of the group then settled down in front of a television screen till the early hours to watch stuff that was happening in Rio, for some reason.



Monday was mine and Peter's cooking day; it also enables me to cover three more of the key words listed at the beginning of these ramblings. Let's start with the *courgette* crisis. I needed some for the recipe I had planned for the main course, but had not found any in the local supermarket close to the Methodist Church on Sunday morning. However, Peter had visited the *medieval church* at nearby Stokesay that same morning, where there were runner beans and courgettes in the porch, with the invitation to take what you wanted, for a donation. He had taken a good helping of runner beans, unaware that we had not yet been able to source the courgettes in Craven Arms. On Monday morning Chris took a walk to that same church – only about a mile away – and reported that there were still plenty of courgettes in the porch, so when David offered to give us a lift to do the shopping we asked him to make a slight detour to the source of ethically-offered courgettes. Well you've no doubt guessed by now that when we got there we found just one courgette in the porch, about the size of my index finger. Of course, when we finally got to the supermarket, they had restocked for the week and an excess of courgettes was bought, just in case.

Once the major meal preparation work had been done, Peter and I along with Chris, David and Cerys set off on foot for Stokesay *Castle*, right next to the church with the greengrocer's porch. Apparently Stokesay is not really a castle, rather a 'fortified manor house'. Either way, it is very well preserved/restored, with a good commentary on a

hand-held electronic device of some kind included in the entrance fee. Whether a real *castle* or just a manor house, its purpose was in part to keep out the Welsh, as was the case with all the other *castles* round here. Judging by our party of eleven in total, which included two Jones, one Jenkins and one Brangwyn, this policy has not been entirely successful.

And so to Tuesday, when four of us embarked upon a walk from Church Stretton, attracted in my case by the heading in the walk book: "If you like proper pointy *hills*, the enticing Strettons will make your day". Having always lived in entirely flat places, that is exactly what I imagine hills to be. Having always lived in entirely flat places, I had no idea how exhausting an ascent of 1,060ft would be, or how scary the equivalent descent. Church Stretton is of course on a geological fault – readers of previous holiday accounts will recall that the locations are especially chosen by David for their geological interest – and the views from the top of the hills were pretty extensive as well. This walk, like most of the others, involved plenty of *stiles*, which in Shropshire are rather challenging as they generally have only one step, quite low down, leaving you to lift your legs over the fence like a ballet dancer or an Olympic gymnast. Maybe people in Shropshire have longer legs than the rest of us?

Two of the group absented themselves from Tuesday to Wednesday, driving all the way back up to Leeds with a recumbent tricycle in the van, so that Frank could help launch a bike ride to London from the constituency of the recently murdered MP Jo Cox, who had been impressed with Frank's anti-Brexit letter that appeared in the Guardian shortly before she died. Not the most relaxing middle-of-the-holiday activity, I'm sure, but certainly not an opportunity to be missed.

Ludlow was the magnet for most of the group on the Wednesday, travelling there by bike (not Frank) and assorted cars. There is a proper *castle* here, though somewhat the worse for wear (built by the Normans to repel a Welsh invasion), a substantial parish church with magnificent medieval glass and an enticing gift shop, a river with four weirs and some venerable bridges, a lot of one-way streets, making it difficult to find the car parks, and a vast number of well-preserved ancient buildings – houses, schools, pubs, shops,

market halls (the town guide leaflet gave a route around the town with some 75 points of interest to note en route), and a Budgens supermarket where vegan wine could be purchased. What more could you want?

By Thursday, three members of the group were suffering from Nottingham withdrawal symptoms and needed to return home to tend their allotments or support a friend, but at least three of the remainers felt ready for another longer walk. On previous excursions we had encountered very few other walkers and this one looked like being similar till we sat on a hillside to eat our sandwiches and two pairs of walkers crossed on the path below at the same time as three *buzzards* circled overhead and two very loud military planes shot across the sky above. But after that we returned to *woodland* and *stiles* and pheasants and views of Stokesay (*not quite*) Castle, and eventually to Jenny's nut roast with *courgettes* for supper.

You may have noticed that there has so far been no mention of the weather. That's because it was basically fine and sunny every day, as it should be on holiday. However, there was a rumour that it would change on Friday so plans were made accordingly. Ian and I visited the local museum of nostalgia, the 'Land of Lost Content', a somewhat chaotic private collection of thousands of 20C objects to remind those of us of more mature years how life used to be. My favourite was the poster telling us how to find out the address of the local CAB – just ask a policeman, a postman or an air-raid warden.



*The National Museum of Popular Culture -
The Land of Lost Content*

While Ian and I were still checking on which of the museum exhibits we still had in use (such as Kilner bottling jars, Sunbeam food-mixer, fountain pen, on my side) others were taken by David on a ride round the Corve Valley to check out four medieval churches with quite disparate history and architecture, by all accounts.

Back at the Barn, the remaining task was to invent a dish for dinner that would use up all the left-overs, so that four of us could then set off for Ludlow, where I had discovered on our previous visit that there was to be a performance of the *Monteverdi Vespers* at the parish church at 6 o'clock – what a wonderful way to end a holiday! I'm not sure what the others did, except that Peter Marshall got lost in some *woodland* again, but was back in time to join the rest of us in sampling, and indeed finishing off, the delights of the 'Craven Arms Vegetable Mélange'©.

If anyone has read this far they may have noticed that two of the keywords listed in the first paragraph have not yet been used. That's because there wasn't any – *phone signal* or *WiFi*. Even for someone who keeps her phone turned off at all times it was slightly scary, being lost in the woods on the first day and realising that the only option in a genuine emergency would be to shout loudly. But as for *WiFi*, Google would have been superfluous in any case for looking up information about the area, when choosing where to go and what to do, given the veritable library of books, maps and leaflets that David had brought with him and laid out on the table in the entrance hall for our convenience. He has certainly got a job for life in Ashram Holiday Organisation, and for that we are immensely grateful.

Linda Marshall, with Peter's photos





Raihanah and Sam Marshall's wedding ,
in front of the Pepys Library,
Magdalene College, Cambridge July
31st 2016 -
and then afterwards punting down the
Cam with some familiar faces



WE ARE ASHRAM

A communal quiz completed on Saturday evening at the May 2016 weekend.
Find someone who...

- 1 ...has been on an **Ashram** Holiday
Grace, John, David, Josie, Linda, Ian, Jenny, Helen, Chris, Ruth, Sandra
- 2 ...lives in a place beginning with the letter **S**
Grace, Josie, David, Jenny, John, Chris, Linda
- 3 ...has moved **home** in the past 5 years
Ian, Neville, Helen, Sandra, Paul
- 4 ...travelled by **rail** to get here
Anne, Linda, Paul, Liz
- 5 ...has been a resident of an **Ashram** community
Jenny, Chris, Liz
- 6 ...has experience of **meditation**
Liz, Anne, Neville
- 7 ...**cooked** food for Friday's bring and share meal
Anne, Grace, Jenny, Chris, Linda, Liz
- 8 ...has visited the **Othona** community (in Essex or Dorset)
Linda, Grace, David, Ian, Chris, John, Liz
- 9 ...had **marmalade** for breakfast today
Sandra, John, Linda, Paul, Jenny
- 10 ...has or is studying for a **Masters** degree
Josie, Linda, David, John, Liz, Helen
- 11 ...has worshipped at an **URC**
Linda, Josie, David
- 12 ...has eaten **nettles**
Jenny, Liz, Sandra
- 13 ...has been to **Iona**
Chris, Ruth, Grace, Helen, Paul, John, David, Josie, Ian, Anne, Jenny, Sandra
- 14 ...has been to **Taize**
Paul, Sandra, John, Grace, David, Ian, Liz, Helen
- 15 ...left home before 10.0am **yesterday** to get here
Linda, Paul

The final question was to identify what was spelled out by the first letter of the underlined words.

Multi-faith group meeting in Burngreave

Once a month a group meets at the Burngreave Ashram and Multifaith library to share ideas and thoughts from a variety of faith traditions and to enjoy a shared lunch.

Our day starts with a sharing of books, art or poetry that have appealed to us, then we have a short meditation and after lunch a presentation on an aspect of faith or philosophy.

In May John brought *Sheffield* in the Pevsner Architectural guides series, an update on the classic books by Nicholas Pevsner. A street by street guide to notable buildings; essential for walking any city neighbourhood. John talked about using the book in a local psycho-geography project; linking our locality to the holy city of Jerusalem.

The next book discussed was presented by Sara, *The Dalai Lama's cat; a novel.* by David Michie. A delightful tale of a street kitten rescued by the Dalai Lama and taken to live in the monastery. Precepts and truths of Buddhism are presented through the cat's eyes, as learnt by her listening and experience at the feet of the masters and monks.

A practical book, *How to live longer* by Vernon Coleman was discussed by Grace. It contains striking advice on health, what to eat, exercise, how to avoid cancer, how to reach 100 in good health. The author

has strong views on the adverse affects of medicine and the stress of modern life.

Another biography, this time of Florence Nightingale continued the theme of inspiring people. Manju, herself a nurse, spoke of Miss Nightingale's influence on nursing education, social reform and improvements in attitudes to women.

A book of poetry followed, *A Treasury of favourite poems*, edited by Louis Untermeyer. A book that Pradip returns to regularly. He focussed today on the work of William Blake and read a couple of his poems.

Debjani brought *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. An inspiring autobiography by a charismatic Hindu swami. As well as his own life and teachings he presents many of the "saints" whom he met and inspired him.

I'll include *Anam Cara; spiritual wisdom from the Celtic world* by John O'Donohue which Chris used for the day's meditation. He read a short section on the body as the home of your soul on earth. The body, through which the soul experiences place.

Sarah Clayton



Interviewed by Jon Snow for C4 News, on the Quayside, Newcastle about his views on the referendum after his letter to the Guardian 'went viral'

Frank's summer 2016

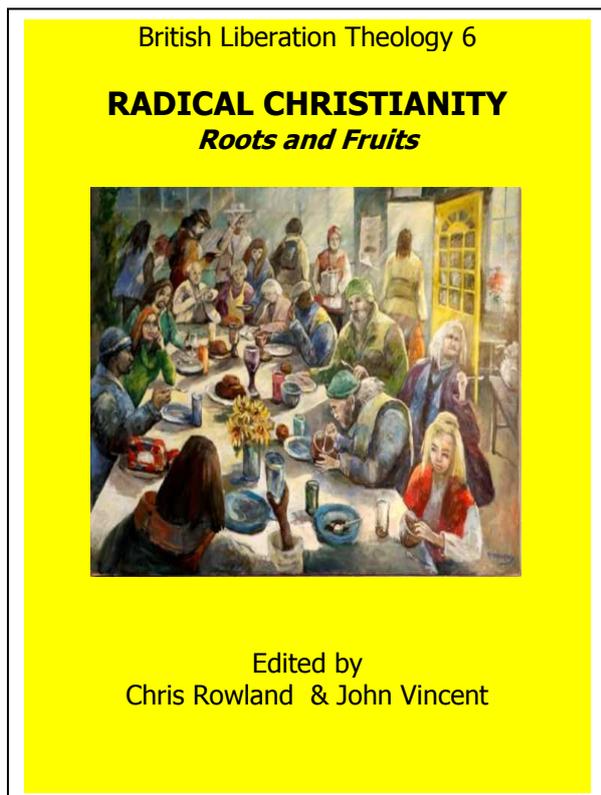
Re-tweeting Frank's Referendum letter was one of the last things Jo Cox did before she was murdered. So when a friend organised a cycle ride from her constituency to the House of Commons, Frank was asked to help to start it with a wonderful crowd of cyclists of different abilities, gender, and faiths.



Radical Christianity: Roots and Fruits

With this issue of ACT Together, all members and associates will receive their free copy of a new publication, from UTU in association with the Ashram Community.

It is.....



Front cover picture is a photograph of a painting by Ros Norsworthy, *Christ in Burngreave: The Lord's Supper at Burngreave Ashram Free Meal*. Reproduced with grateful thanks to the artist



Photos show book launch and some of the book Authors, Ros Norsworthy, John Vincent, Keith Hebden (UTU Director), Ian Duffield, (back row) Grace Vincent, and Nirmal Fernandez.

Contributors and Chapters are:

Part One: Roots

Keith Hebden:
Rooted in God

John Vincent:
Jesus the Radical

Christopher Rowland:
Jesus and Radicalism

Ian Wallis:
Maintaining the Radicality of Jesus

Part Two: Fruits

Nirmal Fernando:
Radical Christianity as Intentional Community

Grace Vincent:
Radical Christianity in Gospel Projects

Chris Howson:
Radical Christianity in Politics

Ian Lucraft:
Radical Christianity in the Local Church

Ian Duffield
Radical Christianity in Research



Members and Associates

We invite anyone interested to request details about becoming a Member or Associate from the membership secretary, Sandra Dutson: smdutson@btinternet.com
Members and Associates are listed in the 7-day cycle Community Prayers

Projects and Commitments

Ashram Press – Radical Christianity, Gospel Study, Discipleship, Community Study and Research- projects on Community and related issues
Homeless and Asylum Seekers - Residence and Community for people in need
Multi-faith - mutual activities and projects open to all faiths

DATES

2017

25 Feb General Meeting Sheffield
13-16 April Inner City Retreat
5-7 May Community Weekend, Middleton
6 May 50th Anniversary
8 July General meeting
10-12 July Summer School with UTU
August Community Holiday
29Sept-1Oct Community Weekend, Unstone

New Roots Shop, Basement Speakeasy and Residents' flat
347 Glossop Rd Sheffield S10 2HP
Tel: 0114 272 1971

Community Houses: 77 and 79 Rock St
Sheffield S3 9JB – Tel: 0114 272 7144

6 Andover Street Sheffield S3 9EG
Tel: 0791 092 2462 (Tamara)
27/29 Hallcar Street, Sheffield S4 7JY

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Ashram Press: As above
See Website www.ashram.org.uk for publications

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity
Registered Charity No: 1099164
Charitable Company No: 477991
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Act Together editor: Jenny Medhurst
medhurst@phonecoop.coop

Articles for the Spring 2017 edition needed by the March 31st.

HOUSES AND PROJECTS

Burngreave Ashram Centre, Interfaith Chapel and Library
Burngreave Ashram: 80-86 Spital Hill Sheffield
S4 7LG – Tel: 0114 270 0972

BRANCHES

All Members and Associates are attached to one of five Regional Branches. Please contact Secretaries if you would like to know more about meeting or events. The Branch Secretaries are the local contact points for the Community.

Secretaries

Midlands – Chris & Lorraine Smedley
Tel: 0115 9288430 – Monthly Meetings

London – Linda Marshall –01784 456 474
Saturday Meetings – Monthly

North-West – Josie Smith – 01706 841 532
Meetings as arranged.

Sheffield – Grace Vincent – 0114 243 6688
Gatherings - second and fourth Mons, 5.30 – 7:30pm

North-East – Jenny Medhurst Tel: 01740
630475 – Meetings as arranged