



a group of men who pioneered the creation of the Bridge Park community leisure, training and business centre in north-east London. It looked at the group twenty years on and their personal journeys. Lawrence Fearon, National Co-Ordinator of *Hope in the Cities* was a member of that group. The article included news of Fearon's current work to build "trust-based partnerships" through "honest conversation dialogues" where participants "understand different environments and take collective responsibility, rather than just blaming others".

Hope in the Cities UK is the subject of the next Greencoat Forum. Entitled "**Building Sustainable Communities**", it will take place on **Tuesday May 13** at 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1. (6.30 pm refreshments, programme at 7.15 pm)

SCHOOLS' PROGRAMME

Many have been encouraged by the bold outreach of the IC Schools' Programme in Britain.

Chris Lancaster, Nigel Heywood and Laura Trevelyan recently showed the FLT film *The Cross and the Bodhi Tree* to an Oxford school audience.

The teacher responsible for the occasion wrote to say he had asked for comments from the students

[an RE class]: "All the questionnaire forms we received rated the session as 'Excellent' or 'Good'. One student said, 'I found this lecture informative, very enjoyable...so thought-provoking. We were all knackered as it was so deep. It has made everyone think about faith, other faiths and your inner self. Please bring them back. It will touch the hearts of many.'"

Alan and David Channer

Thought for Easter

"Humanity is at the crossroads. We must reach a final decision for ourselves and for our nations. Do we choose the road of selfishness that leads to uncontrollable violence and darkness? Or will it be the road of the Cross to a sound world, where we learn how to live together, where the ancient virtues of justice, understanding and peace rule under God over a sane humanity?"

*Frank Buchman, Interlaken,
September 6 1938.*

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TO KNOW EACH OTHER'S MINDS

Peter and Jean Everington were invited to Egypt by IC friends and stayed for three weeks, returning on March 8. Dick and Randy Ruffin were invited from USA, and came on Feb 27 for five days on their way to Lebanon. Peter writes:

At a time of violent conflict, it is a help sometimes to see the long perspective. One day Jean and I visited St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai. It was founded by the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century on the supposed site of the burning bush where God spoke to Moses, and at the foot of the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Down the centuries, through the turmoil of invasions and struggles for power, it has been protected by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Another day was spent with a family at a farm outside Cairo. From the roof of their villa you look across a forest of mango trees and date palms to the Great Pyramids. The Pyramids were in place 1500 years before Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, was sold into captivity in Egypt by his brothers. His rise to prime minister and his pardon of his brothers is one of the world's foundation stories of forgiveness.

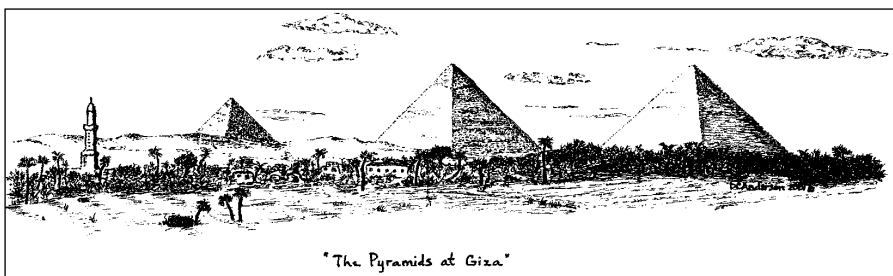
Near the Cairo Metro station

Mar Girgis (St George) stands an ancient Coptic church built over the site where a refugee family, Mary and Joseph and the child Jesus, found asylum.

It was a Muslim Egyptian statesman, President Anwar Sadat, who made one of the great moves of reconciliation in modern history in going to Jerusalem to make peace with the Israelis. He paid for it with his life, as did Israeli Prime Minister Rabin later after a parallel act of courage.

With the Ruffins we visited Mrs Jehan Sadat in her home for morning coffee. She told us something of the process that led her husband to that decision. As a fiery young patriot during World War II he was imprisoned by the British in Upper Egypt. There he first developed the habit of studious reading and an independent search for truth.

Another man in prison with Sadat was Abdel Moghny Said, who later became one of the pioneers of MRA in Egypt. His



daughter Dr Nagia Said and her cousin Dr Latifa Fahmy were among our hosts throughout our stay. They took us on from Mrs Sadat's to a lunch at the Diplomatic Club. A Coptic woman, formerly Egypt's Minister for the Environment, came to talk with us over drinks. She is newly appointed as the Arab League's representative to the Sudan peace process. Over lunch, sitting at a large round table, we heard from the diplomat who has just retired after 21 years as Egypt's Ambassador to Israel. Also present was the Adviser on Interfaith Dialogue to the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the ancient mosque and university. He was recently back from the inauguration of the Archbishop of Canterbury in UK.

Agenda

The agenda of our visit to Egypt was to know each other's minds, and to see how as an IC fellowship across the world we can better live the life, and bring the message wherever it is needed. Dick and Randy won respect by

their account of how they and their friends have tackled the race issue in USA over the last 25 years.

Nearly everyone asked what we thought about the situation with Iraq and Israel/Palestine, as a prelude to telling us what they thought. We each answered according to conscience, admitting perplexity and asking questions of our own. Sometimes there was agreement, and at others a challenge to maintain courtesy in disagreement.

Accusation

One meeting started on a note of political accusation, and I reacted with silent fury. Then an elderly woman from Alexandria broke in: "No! MRA means God has a plan, and each of us can find our part through the absolutes and a change in our lives." A three-minute burst along these lines stunned us all into a state of grace.

Another time when the discussion got stuck on who is most to blame, a Sudanese quietly observed, "All of our countries

A PURPOSE FOR LIFE

Development agriculturalist **Paul Craig** is Managing Director of Agrisystems Ltd, a company dedicated to "challenging the causes of poverty" in many parts of the world. He was speaking on March 18, at the Greencoat Forum entitled "A Purpose for Life". He used personal stories and a video clip to illustrate that "technology is important but unless it is backed by sound relationships between people it is not going to yield its full potential".

Lifting the "iron curtain"

Craig used examples from both his personal and professional life. He told of how honesty and apology had lifted an "iron curtain" between him and his father and restored their friendship. He also applied this principle to his working life and told of how, when in Africa he had blamed a Zambian employee for a faulty roof in front of a senior inspector. It took him three days to summon up the courage to apologise to his subordinate, who accepted both his own responsibility and Craig's apology, so that despite his fears the department was strengthened rather than undermined by this experience.

Paul and his wife Marguerite spoke of their practice of seeking to "find God's plan" when faced

with difficult choices. On one occasion they had "to get rid of their personal preference" in choosing between two job offers in different parts of the world. Their decision was to go to West Africa where they spent four years in tough conditions but "never once regretted the decision".

Craig emphasised that global crop yields, individual protein and calorie consumption, and life expectancy have all increased significantly in the last 25 years alongside global population growth. Despite these gains there is still serious deprivation in developing countries, especially Africa, such as income poverty, the illiteracy of over 850 million people and HIV/AIDS affecting 34 million people worldwide.

Declaring himself to be a free marketer, Craig said that protectionism in the EU and America "does not help world development." "Europe," he said "is two-faced: the major donor of development aid but also the originator of the most restrictive tariff barriers."

A lively question and answer session followed with members of the audience joining in a thought-provoking and stimulating discussion.

NEXT GREENCOAT FORUM

In the society section of *The Guardian* on March 5 an article entitled "Street Academy". featured



Michael Henderson speaking in the Council Chamber of Warrington Town Hall, invited by W.I.R.E., in the presence of the Mayor, Councillors and other invited guests from the region.

parishioners, joined by local Muslims in New York, raised the money to rebuild the mosque.

The bishop had said, "My hope is that people here in the US and in Afghanistan will see that religion can strengthen rather than impoverish the human community..." Henderson underlined that the stories he tells in his book are about "men and women who did not apportion blame, but accepted responsibility and built bridges with the other"

Gerald Henderson

COMPASSION BECOMES US

I am appalled at the way we are treating the asylum-seekers in Britain; the way the authorities and some of the media are lumping them all together as scroungers, no-gooders and criminals; the way we are hardening our minds and

hearts to people in real need.

What would we feel if we were thrown into prison for criticising our government? What would we feel if our farm had been torched, our animals incinerated, a family member shot in front of our eyes? What would we feel if we were in danger of being forced into prostitution by returning to our own country?

These are the experiences of asylum seekers I know. The many that I and my colleagues have met through giving voluntary support have fled their countries because of danger and dire need.

I believe we are meant to be the compassionate, welcoming country that we have been in the past. This would be to our benefit as well as theirs.

Judith Henderson

In the Debate section of 'The Times' on February 24

have made mistakes. The point now is to find what is right". This led to a time of silent prayer together.

An Egyptian called Mohammed Hassouna was a Cambridge freshman in 1955 and so was I. Each of us had just taken our first steps with MRA. A year later Britain invaded Egypt. My faith was shaken. And what could I say to an Egyptian? One morning in a quiet time came the thought to change my studies to Arabic and help rebuild bridges of trust. During eight years of teaching in Sudan I visited Mohammed in Egypt and we have kept touch since. To be met by him at Cairo Airport in February 2003 was a sign of the continuity of God's plan, and a spur to follow any initiatives open to us today.

LEARNING TO SPEAK THE OTHER SIDE'S LANGUAGE

Ruth Hume is a familiar face in Irish Language classes in Belfast. She has been studying the language for a long time. I first met Ruth at a class at Cunmann Chluain Ard, the long-established Irish Language club in a small street in West Belfast.

Quiet and good humoured, Ruth fitted in well with the other students. But in one respect she was unusual – she lives in a middle-class Protestant area on the

North
Down
coast.
Others
from her
back-
ground
would
certainly
be afraid
to set
foot in a
West Belfast club.



Ruth Hume

Ruth was born in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. Her parents were independent-minded and non-sectarian, but RUTH GREW UP WITH LITTLE CONTACT WITH THE Catholic community. She knew little of the injustices meted out against them, and took the Unionist position for granted.

The onset of the troubles made Ruth want to do something to help. "I was not anti-Catholic", she says, "but the Catholic people in our divided society were strangers to me. I asked myself; "Who are the strangers in this country historically? They were my people! I was ignorant about my country's history, and had to do something about it. I decided to learn Irish to cross the divide".

While she was attending a course run by Glór na nGael in the 1980s, the then Northern Ireland Secretary, Douglas Hurd, banned government grants to the group. Ruth and two other

Protestants immediately wrote to the media and the Northern Ireland Office to say that their course was non-political and welcomed everybody. Many others weighed in, and the policy was changed."

Ruth's experience of Irish classes has been happy. "I have always been given a generous and friendly welcome, and have really enjoyed the new friends and good company. I hope that through learning Irish I can show my respect for the people and the culture of Ireland - which is, of course, my country too!"

Liz Curtis

Extract from Irish Post February 8 2003

THROUGH CRISIS TO GROWTH

Pierre Spoerri from Switzerland was visiting London recently. The following notes are from an informal reflection he gave to friends:

The main theme going through my mind and heart these weeks and months has been "through crisis to growth". Nobody can deny that in all fields we are going through a period of transition and crisis - in the world, the work of MRA/IC and in ourselves. For some the aspect of personal crisis is more acute, for others less. In neutral and rich Switzerland, even if nobody asks us to take sides, we are facing this

crisis. And as MRA/IC I THINK WE ALL FEEL THE GAP BETWEEN THE EXPECTANCIES THAT PEOPLE and nations put in us and the strength, ability, vision that we seem able to generate. This is the crisis that I mean, a crisis that is meant also to lead to growth...

I was reminded of the years before World War II and of Frank Buchman. In one of his speeches of that period, Buchman said, "Ideas quick and powerful to reconcile nations, to conquer all hearts and wills, to inspire a world-wide renaissance, are instantly available, immediately applicable." In Geneva, in the middle of the crisis of 1938, he addressed delegates to the League of Nations and said to them, "The great people of history are those who can articulate and translate into action the answer to war, the people who will confess their own shortcomings instead of spotlighting those of others."

Bhav Patel writes of some recent experiences:

At New Year, I fell off a roof and broke a bone in my back. It was a combination of darkness, tiredness and alcohol. I escaped any serious damage, it could have been a lot worse and was told to spend three months resting.

I had many New Year's resolutions planned: more time in med-

itation and prayer, finding a spiritual exercise, no alcohol and no meat. The fall gave extra motivation to do all these. Some people think that things happen and then we give them meaning. I am starting to understand that it is the other way around. The visible events of our lives are manifestations of our spiritual journeys. My broken back was not simply an accident. It has made me try to understand more about what my life is about, how I should live it and what I should be doing.

Resolutions

My New Year resolutions are going well. I have realised that quitting things does not make us more spiritual, but there are things which are beneficial to our growth and others that hold us back. They are different for different people. We must decide what they are for ourselves. Being constantly honest about the things that hold me back is the first important step. The next is trusting that "loving light" that I know surrounds us all, and having the courage to let it into my life, allowing it to influence my ego. I have realised that I need to let "the spiritual element" into all parts of my life, but I am not always willing to do that. This is my struggle, to practise my understanding of the spiritual in everyday life.

WARRINGTON

The Warrington Ireland Reconciliation Enterprise (WIRE) hosted a special occasion on February 25 a special occasion in the Council Chamber of Warrington Town Hall. The Mayor and Mayoress, several town councillors and representatives of different sectors of the area came to hear Michael Henderson speak on the theme of his book 'Forgiveness - Breaking the Chain of Hate'. WIRE was formed in a courageous initiative for reconciliation following the IRA bomb which had killed two young boys and injured many others in the town centre in 1993. Councillor Hannon, Chairman of WIRE, led the occasion.

Henderson quoted the Archbishop of Dublin, Donald Caird, who had said that "Warrington had become a byword for gracious response in the face of evil". Telling stories of forgiveness and reconciliation, Henderson said that on February 12, a mosque, rebuilt after it was destroyed by American bombs, was dedicated in Kabul...

The Afghan rebuilding was financed largely by Christians from New York. The idea originated with Bishop Mark S. Sisk, who became New York's diocesan bishop just two weeks after September 11. He told how