



## AUTUMN 2021 NEWSLETTER

### COMING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

By Our Staff – Gayle & Lisa

It's been a strange 18 months and after what felt like a very long time away, on Monday August 2<sup>nd</sup> we finally opened The Meeting Room's doors again.

During the long months of the pandemic, we delivered almost 5000 hot meals to those in need – and every week, 10 bags of much-needed food and provisions. A big thank you to our dedicated volunteer cooks who helped us all through the lockdowns and our volunteer drivers. We were also able to keep vital contact with all our clients, checking in on them even if it was just on the doorstep! So there have been lots of positives.

We are both excited and happy to be opening our doors again and seeing the clients all together, but it's also emotional. Sadly, we lost our beloved Graham in May. He was missed by us all on that day back as he has been every day since. He was a respected pillar of the community who did so much to help those society forgot.

We are now open on Monday in Leatherhead, Thursday in Epsom, and Tuesday in Ashted. And whilst Graham is no longer with us, we are honoured to be carrying on with The Meeting Room in his name as he would have wanted us to. It's onwards and upwards from here.

### A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE TRUSTEES

by Paul Adair

It would be very remiss of us if our latest newsletter did not start with the acknowledgement of the death of our founder, leader and inspiration, Graham Peddie. After a battle with declining health, Graham passed away on 6th May with his beloved wife, Maureen, at his side.

In the subsequent weeks and months, the messages of love, support and celebration of his life were overwhelming and stand as a testament to the selflessness, sacrifice and generosity to which Graham committed his life. He is greatly missed by all of us who knew him and whose lives were changed by him. The trustees and staff of The Meeting Room are absolutely committed to continuing the work started by Graham and to ensure that his legacy - to include and support anyone from our community who is lonely, lost or suffering, without judgement and with kindness and consistency – will live on.

Several events were organised to celebrate Graham's life including a Remembrance Walk and a Memorial Picnic. Despite the weather, a great many friends, clients, and volunteers of The Meeting Room (and Pitstop before that) turned up to pay their respects. Many had a strong sense that Graham would be looking down on us and be feeling the love and respect that many people had for him.

The past few months have been extremely challenging as the trustees and staff work to secure the long-term future of the charity. We are very happy to be gradually re-opening our lunchtime drop-in centres at Leatherhead Football Club, King's Church, Epsom and Ashted Baptist Church. We have taken a step-by-step approach to this to ensure that our services can be provided as safely and efficiently as possible. We have also restarted other activities such as walks, table tennis, etc. and look forward to doing more in 2022.

Please visit our new website: [themeetingroom.org.uk](http://themeetingroom.org.uk)

Registered address: 252 Cobham Road, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 9JF

The Meeting Room (Surrey) is a charity registered in the United Kingdom (Charity number 1165351)

## WALK IN REMEMBRANCE OF GRAHAM - 30.06.21

By Trustee – Vera Parekh

Our client Daniel led a group of 16 on a walk, in memory of Graham. We walked from Leatherhead town centre to Ranmore Common, passing Tanner's Hatch Youth hostel on the way, where we paid our own respects to Graham and said a few words. Arriving at Ranmore more than 3 hours after we set off, we were greeted by the wonderful aroma of freshly cooked sausages, quiche, homemade cakes and other snacks provided by Fran & Harriet. After our delicious lunch, we walked to Dorking Station & caught the train back to Leatherhead knowing Graham would be proud of us!



### Quotes from client JAN:

"We went through lots of paths and routes. .... Lots of mud & puddles, and climbing over stiles, enjoying the sunshine.....The scenes were really lovely"

"We saw 3 geese & 1 chick and a few other walkers--- and a few friendly dogs!"

"Also on the walk was a singer who kept us amused with songs from musicals!"

"It was nice to feel the breezes on our faces and the weather kept faithful with just a few drops of rain which we took as a sign from Graham to say - He'll Never Forget Us All."

"A very big THANK YOU to Fran & Harriet for supplying the 'nosh'."

### THE ROBIN by client: DOMINIC

I woke with a start one Spring day's morn  
Admiring the newness of a new day's dawn.  
A Robin at my window perched upright with his song to sing.  
He sang from nature's heart from his perfect red breast

He sang to me in such sweet harmony.  
"Why do men ponder such misery and despair in the darkness of thought,  
Settling on all that doom.  
Look at me, I'm Nature's finest,  
At one with the freshest of air and a plumage to boast."

"Look at you, with your unkempt hair and just a couch to roost.  
We robins bring nothing but joy  
Singing from tree to tree with puffed out red breast  
We can teach you to sing to bring harmony to your nest  
If people listened to us, you could be nature's best!

## WEY NAVIGATION WALK (GUILDFORD TO GODALMING) - 14.08.21 by client: MARGARET

We gathered at Leatherhead railway station around 10am and took the train to Guildford. After negotiating a staircase from the road near the canoe club, to the Wey River flood plain, we set off on the windy path along the river.



The first interesting spot was at the foot of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century St. Catherine's Chapel ruins, built on top of a golden sand dune. Here was a picturesque narrow spring flowing across rocks and sand to the Wey River. The spring water was drinkable, so some walkers filled bottles, while others used their hands to drink and splash their faces. After the break, the party traversed the lower side of the golden sand dune, to a swampy area on the other side. Smiling faces greeted smiling faces, as the foot and cycle traffic went in both directions, some with dogs. The calm water of the Navigable Wey River continued flowing calmly north from Godalming to Weybridge, where it entered the Thames, which is a distance of 15.3 miles with 12 locks. I walked the full length in 2020.

Being a warm sunny day, people were making the most of the water and there were a number of canoes, narrow boats, rowing boats and swimmers pulling floats. A walking break was made at a lock while we watched a narrow boat negotiate 2 lock gates.



We crossed another interesting road, which connected Peasmarsh, on the old Portsmouth Road and Shalford, a small village along the Tillingbourne River. Behind Farncombe boat shed is a tall building, which was once a water-powered paper mill and is now converted to a doctors' surgery. At Godalming, we crossed the town bridge and headed along the High Street for "The Cellar", which is a Christian café. Dr Chris Jaggar made us feel very welcome. As we ate a variety of sliced cake, bags of crisps, Loseley ice cream and cans of soft drink, we were entertained by Chris, who first related his memories of Graham Peddie, then singing, accompanied by his guitar and two female singers. Three emotional hymns with actions, created a delightful sound, not only to our ears, but I am sure to both Graham and God, whose spirits were both at the centre of the gathering.

With the friendly entertainment and feasting over, we made our way via the allotments and parish church, to Godalming railway station. A change of trains in Guildford for Leatherhead marked almost the end of our memorable and adventurous day. Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021 was a happy day with new and old acquaintances. Everybody felt a sense of personal achievement and we can thank Graham Peddie's efforts, along with his team of workers and volunteers for setting up Pitstop and then The Meeting Room, to make such outings possible.

Clients of The Meeting Room are very generous, often sharing the little they have with each other. One of our clients recently donated £70 which was money given for their birthday. Our staff and trustees all felt very humbled by this kind gesture and encouraged to know that what we provide means so much to them.

## MEMORIAL PICNIC - 30.07.21 by Trustee: Fran Kane

After weeks of planning for a glorious sunny day to remember Graham, the heavens decided to open and potentially throw weeks of planning out the window. Incredibly we had a wonderful day apart from dressing for a winter's day, everything went to plan, with everyone lovingly recalling Graham. His amazing wife Maureen reflecting him in a most moving speech and how he passed knowing his work would be carried on and with peace in his heart.



I pitched up with a boot full of heavy equipment including a 15kg gas canister and couldn't see anyone. Operation Gazebo was in full swing getting cover up and clients under shelter. But a quick call and my boot was emptied and everything up and under cover ready for lunch.

Tony, my sous chef - and donated husband of Harriet my wing lady - was a great help. All the trustees pitched in, with the hard-working Gayle and Lisa not stopping and getting everyone fed. We had the most generous amounts of gorgeous salads and desserts, so many kind and wonderful people donating to make the picnic so memorable. My big paella pans came in very useful for cooking. The hot sausages and burgers were very welcome keeping clients happy and well fed.

My lasting memory is looking around at the happy faces gathering for the first time since the pandemic and Graham's death. The effort many had made travelling to us was so moving. Finally, the weather decided to be kind and stopped raining allowing us to dismantle everything and clients to get home. Any food not eaten was very happily taken home and nothing went to waste.

## OUR CHRISTMAS PLANS by past Trustee, volunteer & facilitator: Harriet Edgley

It's that time of year again! The lead up to Christmas is always an exciting and positive time at The Meeting Room as we work towards our big Christmas Lunch at Fetcham Village Hall on Christmas Day. Founded by our much-missed Graham Peddie many years ago, The Meeting Room Christmas Lunch hosts clients and friends of the charity who for many reasons would otherwise be on their own or without the means to enjoy a proper Christmas lunch and a happy afternoon.

This year our numbers are a little restricted due to Covid, but we will be welcoming 72 people to join together for a delicious home-cooked turkey dinner, fun, company, sweets and treats. We also offer transport for those who need it and presents for all the family.

As you might imagine, we rely on the generosity of the local community to make this happen. Anyone wanting to support by donating money, presents, food or their time and energy please contact us.

In the meantime, The Meeting Room would like to wish all our clients and supporters an early Happy Christmas! And a huge thank you to all those who support us financially – without you The Meeting Room would not be able to provide the services that we do.