



## Cherry Gould -2012

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I remember my first meeting with Cherry – a conversation on the underground into central London from Wynfrid House – where Shap then met – probably in December 1983. We talked about Samarkand – Cherry had recently been there – and India, where she had also been. I learnt too of the recent diagnosis of her illness, then in its early stages. This early conversation was already indicative of Cherry's indomitable spirit, and of her capacity to make and gather friends. Her interest and concern for her friends remained with her to the end – anyone who visited her in the nursing home will know the importance of her worn and packed address book, as well as that of signing her visitors' book. Nine years or so after our initial encounter we planned together a tour through South India for a small group of colleagues and friends. Intrepid and determined, Cherry tackled this in her wheel chair – not an easy undertaking. A year later in the autumn of 1994 we travelled together by bus from London to Taizé, meeting one of her Norwegian friends there; again the wheelchair came too. Cherry thrived at Taizé as we engaged with pilgrims from Russia, Germany and Canada; meeting Valentina, a kindred cat lover from the USSR prompted Cherry to make a gift to her of her own much admired feline decorated sweater. A spontaneous generosity and hospitality were natural to Cherry – even as one visited in recent months her guests' comfort and refreshment were always of concern to her. Cherry was also a person of strong



principle and firm views – often humorously expressed. (Some reading this may recall her small collection of garden gnomes named after a succession of Ministers of State for Education – they could be sternly addressed, and not left uncertain of Cherry's views!). It was tragic to witness Cherry's physical incapacities in her last years; but it is her spirited approach to life which will remain with me. May she rest in peace.

Mary **Hayward**

I felt a strong affinity with Cherry owing to the double connection of our professional involvement in religious education and our membership of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Our paths first crossed, as far as I can recall, at the meetings during the early 1980s of a Sikh-Christian dialogue group that was set up in Southall by Revd Dr John Parry. Cherry was at that time - as far as I know - Religious Education Coordinator for Berkshire. We were aware that she was already having difficulty in walking because of multiple sclerosis. Through the Shap Working Party on World Religions Cherry and I briefly overlapped in the sub-group that produces the calendar each year. That was when Cherry was still living in her own home, increasingly dependent on a succession of carers, mostly from the Czech Republic, and with the companionship of her beloved cats. Although Cherry became increasingly incapacitated she continued to be keenly interested in religious education and in the lives of her many friends. Visitors were encouraged to write in her visitors' book and to update her overflowing address book. Only two years ago, when she had considerable difficulty in speaking, she managed, through her address book, to put me in touch with a Norwegian friend of forty years' standing, so greatly enhancing an academic visit to Bergen. My memories will always be of a committed religious educationist and a spirited friend

Eleanor **Nesbitt**

A major part of Cherry's contribution to Shap lay in her hosting of the Calendar sub group for several years. We used to meet at her house near Newbury as that was easier for her than having to drive elsewhere. I used to pick up Riadh (el Droubie) at Basingstoke station and we drove on to a warm reception at her house, where she always fed us and various other colleagues with a range of delicate and interesting snacks. Eleanor, David and Roger (Howarth) joined us there in latter years. Because of her Quaker background we elected no chair and took no votes, but the work always seemed to get done with a remarkable degree of unanimity. When in our early days as a team we felt we needed to add more colour and variety to several calendrical entries, she undertook the initial stage of the drafting process throughout the field of the Calendar's coverage. Hers was a creative and distinctive contribution, especially in the field of Christian entries, though by no means restricted to her own deeply held faith. Her kindness and gentleness, and the richness of her interest in so many fascinating people and places will be chief among the memories that stay with me from several years of visiting her at her home and occasionally driving with her to Shap meetings.



Peter **Woodward**

Cherry was a very distinctive member of the group of students on the full-time MA in RE at St Martin's, joint with the Lancaster University. This was in 1980-1 when she was seconded by the LEA from her school in Cumbria. Cherry's approach was characteristically one of 'passionate impartiality'. She was much appreciated by all the other students, as by Peter Gedge who was her other course tutor besides myself. I was greatly struck by her capacity to combine academic and professional energy and enthusiasm with the generation of personal friendship. Though my subsequent contact with her was limited I was delighted to learn of her effectiveness as RE Adviser in Berkshire and of the high regard in which she was held there by Robin Richardson, and more directly to see her at work on several fronts within Shap. Cherry's courage is itself a remarkable testimony to what the Working Party itself is all about.

Brian **Gates**

I have a couple of very good photos of Cherry being taken up Snowdon in her wheelchair and in 1993 a group of us (including Mary Hayward) went to India, travelling around and ending with the Bangalore celebration of the 1893 Chicago Parliament of the World's Religions. She was so determined that her illness should limit her life as little as possible and in the earlier days was intrepid driving her big Peugeot adapted for hands only and with a hoist for the wheelchair. I accompanied her on more than one occasion by train to London for Shap meetings. She was a very active and committed member of Shap, hosting the calendar group at her home whilst she was still living independently. Her commitment to RE and to issues of ecology and justice and vegetarianism and the importance of education were just as strong as her will to thrive and she was a very generous friend, helping me enormously and supportively as a woman with strong feminist ideas, and she invited me to speak at RE events in Berkshire and sometimes stayed with us in Oxford. She once collected me from Heathrow, fed and watered me and drove me to Ammerdown to give a lecture. Latterly she had a collection of key rings with embroidered initials which were sold in aid of the MS Centre to which she went in Reading and gave them to friends who visited her in the Care Home, always asking how everyone was. Her cats were very precious to her and she had a very life-like toy one on her bed in the last days. She loved ballet, and she managed to get up to Covent Garden sometimes even in more recent years. When I visited her I used to take poetry and short stories to read to enrich the time. I found out she liked Auden, but I also read Carol Ann Duffy, Lionel Blue and some sufi stories. It is impossible to talk about friends in many ways. She hated the last stages of disempowerment... and so it is not sad that she has died.

Peggy **Morgan**



Cherry was an inspiration to me when I was teaching in Berkshire. When we first met I had introduced a world faiths approach in school and was looking to take the students on visits to places of worship. Cherry gave me the link with the Education Centre at Coventry where the accommodation allowed for residential weekends at which we visited a wide range of churches, mosques, mandirs and gurdwaras as well as the Cathedral. I remember thinking, if Cherry had managed to take her students all the way from a school in Whitehaven on such a residential weekend then I should be able to organise such a trip for my students in Reading and so it became a regular part of our RE programme. Cherry was always swift to support me and others teaching RE in terms of applications for staff development and attending Shap conferences at the York RE Centre. She also arranged inspirational in-house staff development weekends for RE teachers in Berkshire. Working closely with Cherry on the Berkshire Handbook for RE Teachers was an insight into her professional approach to everything that she did. Cherry was utterly dedicated and untiring in her work despite the fact that her illness was beginning to tax her in many ways. In 1988 a number of us travelled with Cherry to Israel despite the political tensions at the time. The visit was organised meticulously down to the last detail so that there was every opportunity for us to understand the breadth of religious diversity of the region and to learn from the celebrations, experiences and voices of those living every day with the dangers and tensions of the political situation. It was the trip of a lifetime and Cherry had such courage to go and take others with her when she was already having difficulty walking and getting about. Those of us who travelled with Cherry on whatever stage in our RE journey will feel a tremendous sense of loss and sadness at Cherry's death but also a sense having been very privileged to have known and to have worked with such an inspirational light in the RE world.

Carrie Mercer