



SIBYLS NEWS

THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People

BM Sibyls, London WC1N 3XX

www.sibyls.co.uk E-mail: info@sibyls.co.uk

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a
time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NIV)

OUR MISSION

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people,
and their supporters, offering companionship along the journey,
and information/advocacy to churches.
Sibyls pray, eat, and talk together, and seek to fulfil Christ's command to love one another.

OUR RULE

Members must respect the security of each and every other member,
and must never jeopardise that security.

PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS

All those who are contemplating or recovering from surgery,
all those who cannot for whatever reason take the course of action their heart desires,
all those known to us who are in any kind of need,
and those with disabilities or who are suffering from physical or emotional pain.

I have recently had some posted Newsletters returned with "*addressee unknown*" and
some emailed Newsletters have been undeliverable.

Please do keep me informed of changes of contact details.

Thank you to all who help to keep cost down by receiving the Newsletter by email.
Please let the editor know (hjmather.24@tiscali.co.uk) if you would like to receive your
copy by email.

We will still send a paper version if you prefer.

Please note that views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or of Sibyls in general.

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### **Rosie's Jottings**

This is the last Newsletter that I will have responsibility for editing, as I will be handing over to Helen for the Christmas edition. I have only acted as editor for two years but it has been quite an enjoyable, if occasionally frustrating, experience. I wish Helen every success in future and trust that you will all support her by submitting articles for inclusion.

Helen's contact details are as follows:

Ms Helen Mather  
5 Rylands Court  
Barton Street  
BEESTON  
Nottinghamshire  
NG9 1JX

Telephone: 0115 922 6450

Email: [hjmather.24@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:hjmather.24@tiscali.co.uk)

Jay has provided a wonderfully upbeat report on her Garden Party which was in doubt for the future. As ever July in sunny Surrey means rain and even Sibyls have no control over that!

Helen has submitted a very full and interesting report on the Windermere Weekend last May and has also made a provisional booking for Whalley Abbey in Lancashire for November 2013. Details are given below.

Finally Raymus has sent me a really funny little anecdote from the past. I am sure we will all be able to relate to what happened.

I will sign off now by wishing you all health, happiness and success in the future. May you be granted the opportunity to obtain all you need in body, mind and spirit.

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SIBYLS LISTENING SERVICE

People prepared to listen to others are one of God's greatest gifts to us. We are fortunate in having some members who are happy to listen to you and chat with you. Please remember that we are not trained to give advice – but a problem shared in confidence often seems less of a burden. The listening service really does work so if you want someone with whom to talk with, why not call one of the following volunteers?

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Jenny Bond | 01623 836 662 | Jane Bowles | 01492 660 147 |
| Carol Moore | 01625 858 487 | Jenny-Anne Bishop | 01745 337 144 |
| Helen Mather | 0115 922 6450 | Jay Walmsley | 020 8763 0146 |

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### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

*September 2012*

*no weekend currently planned*

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Whaley Hall, Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Whalley Abbey, Clitheroe, Lancashire

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014

The Windermere Centre, Windermere, Cumbria

*Autumn 2014*

*St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Flintshire*

## **REGULAR MEETINGS**

**LONDON** a few members gather on the second Thursday of every second month at 5.30 for a Service at St Anne's, Dean Street, Soho, followed by a meal together. Future dates in 2012 are 11<sup>th</sup> October and 13<sup>th</sup> December, and dates for 2013 are 14<sup>th</sup> February, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 10<sup>th</sup> October and 12<sup>th</sup> December.

**MANCHESTER** events in the North-West and North Wales are organised by Jenny-Anne [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) and Elen [elen.heart@btinternet.com](mailto:elen.heart@btinternet.com).

## **OTHER INCLUSIVE CHURCHES**

Metropolitan Community Church's throughout the world embrace diversity. In the UK there are churches in North London, South London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Dorchester, Torbay, Bath and Newcastle. See <http://ufmcc.com/> for contact details.

**CARDIFF:** City United Reform Church ([www.cityurc.org.uk](http://www.cityurc.org.uk)), Windsor Place, Cardiff, CF10 2BZ, 029 2022 5190, Sunday service at 10.30am.

**BRIGHTON:** Dorset Gardens Methodist Church ([www.dgmc.org.uk](http://www.dgmc.org.uk)), Dorset Gardens, Brighton, BN2 1RL, 01273 605 502.

**OXFORD:** St Columba's United Reformed Church (<http://www.saintcolumbas.org/>), Alfred Street, Oxford, OX1 4EH, Sunday service at 10.45

**EXETER:** Southernhay United Reformed Church (<http://www.southernhaychurch.org/>), Dix's Field, Exeter, EX1 1QA, Sunday service at 10.30am.

**LONDON:** St Luke's Parish Church (<http://www.chelseaparish.org/>), Sydney Street, London, SW3 6NH, 020 7351 7365.

Many other inclusive churches may be found by going to the Inclusive Church website (<http://www.inclusivechurch2.net/>) and clicking on Churches.

Please do let me know of any other inclusive Churches and I will do my best to include details in future Newsletters.

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Change of Address or Email

It was rather sad to have Newsletters posted to three members returned marked '*addressee unknown*' or '*moved away*', and have email copies returned as '*undeliverable*'. Please note that it is not necessary to move house to leave Sibyls, a letter or email asking for your name to be removed is perfectly adequate!

Seriously though, please do let us know if your contact details change as that is the only way we can keep in touch.

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## **Donations**

Our Treasurer Jay informs me that although we have sufficient funds to operate, donations have been very slow this year. More than half of all members now receive the Newsletter by email and that has reduced our costs significantly. However, it still costs in the order of £60 per issue for those receiving the Newsletter by post.

As you now there are no subscriptions for being a member of Sibyls but should you wish to make a donation, no matter how small, please send it to:

Miss Jay Walmsley, 36 Salmons Lane, Whyteleafe, Surrey, CR3 OAN

Cheques should be made payable to "Miss J Walmsley – The Sibyls".

## **JAY'S GARDEN PARTY – SATURDAY 7 JULY AT WHYTELEAFE**

**Jay**

The annual event, the garden party, was held on 7<sup>th</sup> July and went very well. We assembled from about four o'clock. Despite the run of bad weather that we had been experiencing, it wasn't actually raining, and the first arrivals were brave enough to suggest sitting outside. So we sat outside with tea and cakes. Penny brought a home baked lemon drizzle cake which one can only describe as superb. It was peaceful in the garden and we didn't have to stir until it really started raining a couple of hours later. That was the cue to move indoors for the communion service, taken as usual by our good friend, the Rev'd Martin Kelly. Martin is always thoughtful and considerate, and it was an excellent service. Afterwards the usual large buffet and a pleasant evening until folks had to go home.

The bad news was that the weather put paid to ideas of holding the communion service under the trees. The good news is that with ten of us, it made for good company and a good meeting. With such a number, the future of these meetings is much more assured.

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AUTUMN WEEKEND 2013

Helen

I have made a provisional booking at Whalley Abbey, near Clitheroe in the Ribble Valley, for the weekend Friday 8 November - Sunday 10 November 2013.

The price would be £140 (two course meal) or £149 (three courses). I realise this is a little higher than we are accustomed to pay, but I can recommend the accommodation and the meals.

The facilities are on two levels, but there is a lift for those with limited mobility.

The house stands on the site of the Abbey ruins by the River Calder. Although the grounds are open to the public, the house itself is private.

If we can raise the usual 15 people or so, we will have the house to ourselves. They are happy to accept fewer people, but we would then probably have to share.

I would still be willing to take a small party: it's a beautiful setting on my home territory, and I'm always happy to return.

If you have access to the Internet, take a look for yourself at:

<http://www.whalleyabbey.co.uk> or <http://www.visitlancashire.com/explore/whalley>

If you are definitely interested, please let me know as soon as you can; I've to confirm the booking within three weeks.

If there are only a few members who want to go, I'll adjust the booking accordingly. I'll put the booking form in the next Newsletter.

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## **SIBYLS WEEKEND 18 - 20 MAY 2012, URC CENTRE – WINDERMERE**

**Helen**

So, Windermere again. Was it really two years since last time?

I was travelling with Amy again, and we'd planned an early start, so I was up at seven.

But Amy was running late, and didn't arrive until nearly quarter to ten. After a natter over coffee and toast and scrabbling around sorting out the last bits and pieces, we got off at 12. So much for an early start!

I'd planned to call in on my mother half-way, but we'd been even more delayed by traffic, and I wasn't sure whether there would be time for a detour. But I couldn't miss seeing her, however late, and we were so close. She was pleased to see us, and true to form, had tea and biscuits ready. Good job: we'd not get to Windermere for afternoon tea now...

Half-an-hour later we were on our way. Surprisingly, we made very good time and covered the second half of the journey in an hour-and-a-half. But it was still late: half-past four. Would there be any tea left?

Answer: yes! Tea and biscuits were just being served; in fact there weren't many here yet, only Jay, Janet, Jenny-Anne and Elen. **Early** for once? That's not like me! But first things first: sign in, then coffee and biscuits...

I'd made friends with a new member, Debbie, and we were looking forward to meeting. She'd travelled by train, and I noticed that she had already signed in. She appeared ten minutes later. Big hug time...

I handed Debbie over to Amy while I brought my bags in. My room's on the third floor, up a narrow staircase – there's even less room with the stairlift. It's a tiny attic cupboard of a bedroom with one little skylight; it's open, and it's **freezing!** Ouch! Mind that low beam: this window isn't designed for looking out of. Still, at least the bathroom's big. Amy's room, next door, is **huge**: two beds, lots of storage; two windows: easy to see out of. But the bathroom's tiny. You win some; you lose some...

Dinner's at six, so there was plenty of time to meet the others over coffee. Rachael, a long-standing friend, appeared a bit later: good! She's made it this time!

There wasn't anything else to do, so I didn't bother changing for the evening meal. I left Amy and Rachael catching up (they have met before; they just don't remember). There are slightly fewer of us this weekend: we're expecting fourteen altogether.

I was suffering with dental trouble, but I wasn't letting that stop me enjoying tonight's meal (chicken in a pepper sauce, followed by trifle; and, of course, wine). They do food well here. It was a leisurely affair; afterwards Jay and Lawrence welcomed us to the weekend, and then we moved into the lounge for the first meeting.

Rachael had planned a presentation explaining her work as a champion of *trans* issues within the nursing profession. Elen filled us in on some of the weekend's attractions, marking time while Rachael attempted to tame the technology.

Rachael started by giving a little background information, briefly outlining the acceptance she had found in her church and the firm support she had had from her profession: she had been one of the first to transition openly. She then went on to describe a presentation: "*Fair care for trans people*" that she had made to the 2010 Royal College of Nursing Conference. Jenny-Anne added helpful information on wider equality issues. Part Two, a video of the presentation, will happen later...

Anthea, whom I hadn't met before, led a very traditional Night Office, taken from the *Book of Common Prayer* (almost **too** traditional for me!). Carol read a familiar passage in Matthew 19 (verses 2–12).

Although we'd concluded formally by sharing the familiar words of *the Grace*, we remained in the Chapel for a time talking, with music (Schubert's *Mass in B flat*) in the background. Back in the lounge Rachael had got the video display working, and was now able to show her RCN Conference presentation:

[http://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/congress/2010/congress\\_2010\\_resolutions\\_and\\_matters\\_for\\_discussion/3\\_fair\\_care\\_for\\_trans\\_people](http://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/congress/2010/congress_2010_resolutions_and_matters_for_discussion/3_fair_care_for_trans_people)

After this, everyone seemed to scatter. Amy and I moved to the upstairs lounge, which we had to ourselves; it was somewhere quiet to discuss a possible presentation for tomorrow. In the end, we decided we'd rather go to Keswick for a swim! Lawrence had told us last night that there is Wifi available here; I seem to remember it from the last weekend. I have my netbook with me; does it work? It does! so I spent some time catching up on my mail. That done, I took my PC back to my room. It's **still** cold in there: no wonder, the radiator's off! It was 11 o'clock now, but there was still wine left and a few people left to talk to. Amy had gone to bed before midnight, but I'd stayed to talk to Roseanne in the lobby. I wasn't ready for bed yet, and found Jenny-Anne and Rachael in the lounge still talking and setting

up the AV. But I didn't stay long: I'd still to unpack my alarm clock, and sort out my clothes. I need my sleep: I've an early call for tomorrow; we're determined to get to the lake this year, so it's out at 7!

**Saturday morning.** I woke at 6, even before the alarm, so I lay back and listened to the radio for half-an-hour.

Mmm... the radiator's on, and it's lovely and warm now. It's still grey but it's not raining now. Is it cold outside? I decided to wear a jumper and a jacket just in case.



*Looking out, Saturday morning: typical Lake District weather!*

I was just ready when there was knock on the door. 0715.

It took twenty minutes' walk at a leisurely pace. It was trying to rain, so we didn't stay long by the lake: just long enough for Amy to take photographs for a tiny Japanese tourist. "Yes of course..."

Others had been up early, too: we met Jay on our way back; she'd been the other way for a paper. I'd plenty of time before breakfast to change out of my warm outdoor clothes: I'd threatened to wear my shorts this morning. Nobody noticed...

I struggled with breakfast: my mouth was still sore; so I avoided the cereal and chose porridge today, a rare treat. But I wasn't letting anything stop me enjoying a full cooked breakfast!

Morning Office started with a spontaneous rendition by Rachael and Amy of the song *This is the Day that the Lord has made*. Jenny-Anne then set the mood with a quiet recording of *Jesu, Joy of Man's desiring*. We actually opened the meeting with Psalm 118:24, the verse which had prompted our singers.

Jenny-Anne's presentations are always a little bit different. This morning's worship was an affirmation of and thanksgiving for our transgender identity set within a traditionally structured liturgy:

*It's strange, Lord, but I never thought that I should finish up being thankful for what I am.*

*I am thankful, Lord, because I realize that rather than not being able to serve you because of what I am; it is because of what I am that I can serve you in a unique way.*

"Because of what I am" (*Prayers from the both of me*, Jan Goddard)

We finished as we started: with music (*Let the Bright Seraphim*, from Handel's *Samson*)

Elen outlined events for the rest of the afternoon now: any events; any offers?

*"While we have everybody together, are there any musicians among us?"* asked Jenny-Anne. Come on, Amy, show us your talents: that's why you brought your violin, isn't it?

Janet broke in: *"I need about ten minutes sometime..."*

And so followed one of her unique monologues. She had us all singing along in a silly song!

*"Did you record that?"* asked Elen. Well, yes, I did actually. I rely on my audio transcripts as an *aide-memoire*; that way I don't need to take notes, and I can enjoy the weekend.

After coffee Jenny-Anne made full use of the AV facilities in the Conference Room for a workshop on *"Trans people in the Media"*. She gave us an interesting insight into media depictions and caricatures of transgender people with numerous examples: transphobic; amusing; even sympathetic. Of course, this prompted a lively discussion, and we ran well over time, though not too late for lunch!

Lunch today was ham salad followed by yogurt. My mouth was still hurting, so I was struggling, but the meat was good. **Would** I miss out? No way! Our timing today was necessarily a compromise, as we wanted to make the most of the afternoon, but there was time for coffee: there's **always** time for coffee.

I knew that Debbie would be here this weekend, and I'd been looking forward to meeting her. It was obvious that she felt completely at home after the first evening. It was Debbie's first Sibyls weekend, and as she had no car, I invited her to share our free Saturday afternoon. She was pleased to tag along; little did she suspect!

We'd planned to go swimming at Keswick: there's a good leisure pool there. We set off as soon as we could, having learned from our last visit. We'd chosen right: the grey clouds thinned as we approached Keswick. There was half an hour's swim time left when we arrived, **and** we got in at half-price: big kids, eh? We left Debbie reading by the pool, and made the most of it. Plenty of time for the wave machine, and a couple of rides on the flume, Amy nearly losing her hair in the process!

Swim over, we headed for the Saturday market. The sun was out now: it had turned out a pleasant afternoon. I know Keswick market so well, and Amy had been before, but it was a new experience for Debbie. But we weren't shopping today, so after a look round we wandered down through Hope Park to the Theatre by the Lake; they do good coffee and cakes there. We had a good natter, and there was still time to walk down to the lake. It's less than a hundred yards, and it's a must-see.

And of course, pictures of this never-to-be-forgotten day. I learned later that today had been Debbie's first time out in public. I hadn't realised! And she'd enjoyed every minute of it!

There was still plenty of time to return by the scenic route round Thirlmere and get back in good time to change for dinner. No rush this year!

We had prawn cocktail for starter, then a mixed grill: delicious, but oh, so hard to eat! But there was fluffy mashed potato, so it wasn't too bad. And the dessert was mercifully soft...

Nobody had wanted to dress for dinner this year. Tonight was a film night; nothing special, in fact. There'd been a choice of half-a-dozen; the popular choice was *"Different for Girls"*. I'd seen it several times already, so I knew I'd enjoy it.

Wrong. I found myself crying at several points. How we change!

Jay led Night Office: a simple service in a style that Rosie has used on many weekends.

*"Everyone is tired after a long day, and what we really need is some nice comfortable words... and this service, hopefully, will provide it."*

We read antiphonally from Psalms 4 (... *"I lie down in peace ... for only you. Lord, make me dwell in safety"*), 91 (*"He who abides in the shadow of the Most High, abides under the shadow of the Almighty"*) and 134 (*"Bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord"*); and the *Nunc Dimittis*.

The meeting ended in silence; everybody stayed in the chapel for a short time, only moving away slowly. I wanted to be alone, so I found a quiet corner of the lounge.

Eventually I moved to the upstairs lounge, where Jenny-Anne and Rachael were holding a lively discussion. I let them talk, and caught up on my emails. I noticed that Debbie had already posted a short account of her adventure on a forum to which we belong, so I sent her an encouraging word (sort of *"I can see you..."*) Amy and Carol, who had joined us later, left and I was alone with my laptop. I didn't want to go to bed; I was still rather upset. But we'd planned another early start, so I had to go sometime. It was three o'clock when I put the light out. And I can see the stars! It's going to be a fine day...

**Sunday morning.** I woke with the radio at six, and was ready by 0715.

It was clear and bright, perfect for an early-morning walk to the lake. We were a little later today, but Debbie had been up well before us with the same thought. We passed her on our way down, reading a paper, completely absorbed in herself...

I'd have loved to stay longer, but there wasn't time; I didn't manage to get half the pictures I'd have liked. Even so, it was 0825 when we returned: just enough time to change out of my warm clothes into Sunday Best.

After breakfast I'd plenty of time to move my bags into the car: less luggage than usual? better management? I don't know, but there was time to relax before Sibyls Together (not like last time!)



*Early morning by the lake (Debbie's picture)*

It was a long, but useful session this weekend (details were in the Summer newsletter). We over-ran a little, but there was still plenty of time for coffee and talk while Jenny-Anne and Elen set up the chapel for the service.

Today's service was a little less formal than many Sibyls Communion services.

Jenny-Anne had told us earlier in the weekend how she had hoped Andy (Braunstone) would have been able to lead our Communion service today. In fact, **none** of our regulars was available, so she had made the bold decision to preside herself. She explained that this is a role which she has played before, at the Manchester MCC Church, and today we used an adapted form of the MCC Communion service.



Hmm... Non-ordained ministry. That appeals to the rebel in this otherwise conventional Anglican; I'm pleased. Done with dignity and respect, it feels completely right and appropriate.

We opened with the Easter acclamation: *Jesus is Risen! He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!* followed appropriately (and at last in its entirety) by the song *This is the Day*.

Today's songs had been chosen after much discussion; Amy provided the leads (and accompaniment) on the violin. And I'd a **real** soprano to sing with too this time (not that that stopped me trying to out-bass Carol at one point: you'll not hear **that** very often!) All in all, I had an easy and very enjoyable time.

Jenny-Anne led us in a prayer for all gender-variant people.

*God, whose love and compassion extends to all without distinction of Gender or Sexuality; we offer you our lives and experiences as transgender people, straight & gay and people of all diversity. Help us to play our own individual parts in your work of redeeming love and welcome for all people.*

*Give us strength to carry your love into a world that may reject, abuse, or just ignore us. May we journey with your Spirit in faith to be the people you created us to be, loving truth and justice, and trusting in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.*  
**Amen.**

Helen and Rachael read respectively from Matthew 13 v.31-32 and John Ch. 20 v19-31.

I realised though that I'd been too eager in volunteering: Rachael had the dramatic Easter account of Thomas. She read well.

Our intercessions are one of the features of a Sibyls Communion service, each member lighting a candle. This is always a moving (and occasionally amusing) time.

We followed our prayers with a second song *The Lord of the Dance*.

The Peace is another Sibyls moment I always remember: a true sharing; a time for big hugs, and sometimes a time for tears. It's not over until everyone has greeted everyone else. That's the beauty of a small gathering.

A third Sibyls moment comes at the sharing of the bread and wine, passed from hand to hand, each sharing with her (or his!) neighbour...

After a short silence we shared a final prayer:

*O Unfamiliar God, we seek you in the places you have already left, and fail to see you even when you stand before us.*

*Grant us so to recognise your strangeness that we need not cling to our familiar grief, but may be freed to proclaim resurrection in the name of Christ. Amen.*

and the Easter hymn *Thine be the Glory*. Amy had her revenge (a mistake, she says), pitching it very high (that sorts out the Amazons from the girls!); everybody copied.

After a closing blessing, we sang *Lead me, O Thou Great Redeemer*, in full harmony! No Sibyls weekend is complete without that!

It had remained dry and sunny, so there was plenty of opportunity after the service for photographs to remember the weekend by; **lots** of photographs. Nothing changes...

Lunch today was ham salad followed by pancakes and maple syrup. And at **last** the fragment of tooth that had been giving me so much trouble came free: relief! I polished off four pancakes to make up!

But Sunday lunch marks the end of the weekend: over too soon. After final thanks, we broke up into small groups, catching up on missed conversations, and exchanging contact details. Nobody wanted to go.

But there are long journeys to be made; trains to be caught; appointments to be kept. People inevitably drifted away, and it was time to go. We'd planned a detour on our way home, so I wasn't actually the last to leave for once!

Ah well, another enjoyable weekend. What will the next bring, I wonder...

~~~oOo~~~

YOU'VE GOT A BLEEDING CHEEK!

Raymus

I have had my beard for a good few year now. People tell me that I look better with it than without. I don't shave any more but of course, I trim it and keep it clean.

I'm going to tell you about a long time ago before I transitioned; yes, as a woman, I shaved!

I was then with a partner having my pre-breakfast shave one morning and she asked me what I would like for breakfast. I replied that a poached egg and a couple of slices of toast would be fine.

At first I didn't realise that I had cut myself. She said to me, "you've got a bleeding cheek".

So I replied, "what, just for asking for some egg with toast?"

(Editor's note: just goes to show how important it is to not make assumptions!)

~~~oOo~~~