



# FORTY-THREE

OXFORD FRIENDS' MEETING  
43 ST. GILES OXFORD OX1 3LW

## NEWSLETTER

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### Appeal from CAP: 'Too long your scapegoats'

I hope this piece won't sound too angry, but angry is what I feel. Almost every day now we hear about cuts to public spending, which are going to affect people living in poverty in the UK for the worse. Cuts in benefits and services are coming in waves, on top of the increase in VAT. And this is only the start. Protection for people in poverty is being removed in the name of 'cutting bureaucracy'. We can only dread October, when the spending review is published, knowing that the most vulnerable people will be asked again to pay for the wild extravagance of rich and unassailable people. Unemployment may rise, benefits will be cut, and yet the language of policy and the media is scornful: people on benefit are still 'scroungers'. Quakers in Oxford, through words and actions offer a different way: respect, support and speaking out for justice.

The most recent announcements about housing benefits can only make things worse for those trying to find somewhere to live. And commentators fear that the changes to the NHS just announced will make it harder for asylum seekers, people on drugs, people with mental illnesses and, of course, the homeless to find their way to the medical services they sorely need. Many people who find it hard or impossible to find a GP on their own will no longer be helped by voluntary organisations or primary health trusts. Many organisations, whose work is vital in enabling people with the greatest

needs to access services, just won't be there. The world has got radically more unequal in just a couple of months.

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#### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

If we do not have the sense that selfishness is right, we may yet be carried along by the prevailing social currents to behave as though we do. More insidiously, we may seek material well-being for those we love, and thus achieve a sort of displaced selfishness. We may need to examine what we really believe, and in the light of that we can address questions about personal conduct. The main question for us who are comfortable is whether we use our positions of comparative power to arrogate to ourselves more than our reasonable share of the resources of the world. If so, we should try to redistribute what we can, to live in a more responsible way. For those who are poor, a different question arises: what is selfish materialism, and what is proper aspiration?

We cannot take more than our share of finite resources unless we have the power so to do. Poverty and powerlessness are bound up with each other. Poverty leads to powerlessness, and powerlessness leads to poverty.

***QF&P 23.22 Martin Wyatt, 1988***

**Deadline for contributions to the September 2010 issue: noon, Friday 20 August**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated by email: [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org). Paper copy can be left in the Forty-Three pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373.*

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Church Action on Poverty (CAP) is running an appeal. They are asking that people speak up for those in poverty, and for donations. Have a look at their website: [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk). There will be copies of the donation form in the lobby and in (the warden) Dave Dight's office. You can also see the CAP newsletter in the library. We get it each month at Oxford Meeting.

OXFAP will try to keep a watch on what is going on in Oxford as all these changes take place. Help us by giving any of us information you have about poverty in the city. Group members: Jo Dobry, Sue Smith, Elisabeth Salisbury and Rebecca Howard..

**Ursula Howard**, OXFAP convenor



## Friendly Eights

In June, Oxford Meeting started an exercise known as 'friendly eights', helping us to get to know others in the Meeting a bit better. Groups of eight people agreed to meet together on eight occasions, every other week or so.



New eights are about to form. Information is available on the door to the Warden's office; if you'd like to learn more, please write your name there or contact me on 01865 283391 or

[mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mark.ebden@eng.ox.ac.uk). Friends and Attenders of other Meetings who would like to regularly visit the neighbourhood are also welcome.

**Mark Ebdon**

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## To Know Silence Perfectly

There is a music for lonely hearts nearly always,  
If the music dies down there is a silence  
Almost the same as the movement of music,  
To know silence perfectly is to know music.

**Carl Sandburg**, (*Complete Poems*)  
Selected by Stephen Yeo

## The Marian Stoll Fund: Who was Marian Stoll?

Sometimes, when you turn over a stone, you come upon the unexpected. I was looking for the origins of the Stoll Fund in the archives so that we could decide whether it ought to be 'restricted' or 'unrestricted' in the Area Meeting's accounts. I first found it called the *Marian Stoll* fund in accounts for 1992, when the 'Marian Stoll Capital' was valued at £1,850.

Hunting further back, I came to a file of minutes of Overseers from 1984–90 with references to expenses for a visit to Jordans, for the costs of holidays for Friends, and for 'Christmas gifts from the Marian Stoll Fund and the Pendleton bequest', which seemed to confirm the idea that these funds started from legacies.

Further back still, in the Quarterly Meeting's Book of Members, Marian Stoll was shown as a member of Oxford meeting in 1946. At this point, serendipity came to my aid, when I mentioned to the archivist cataloguing our Quaker records, what I was doing. "Ah! I think I remember seeing some papers about that", and she came back with a few sheets that gave me the facts I needed. But the story amounted to much more than the facts.

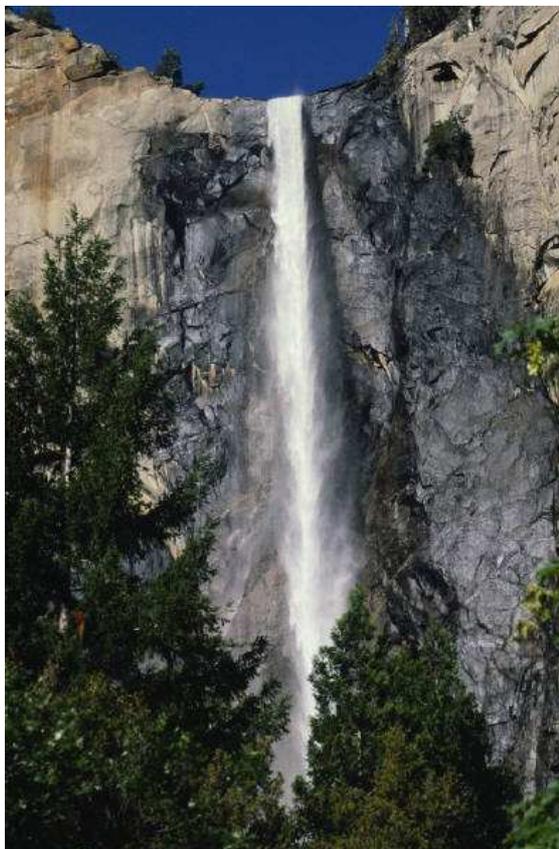
Someone (I'm afraid I can't remember who) had told me that they thought Marian Stoll might be American, and indeed she was. She grew up at a home for the elderly run by her grandparents. Her education seems to have been paid for by one of the residents, and later it was said of her that 'she must have been born with a needle in her hand'. More likely, perhaps, she was called on to help with the darning from an early age. She married, but her husband died in a flu outbreak in 1918. So it was as a widow of 42 that she first came to Oxford and found friendship in the Meeting; and it was as Mrs Stoll that Ottoline Morrell took her photograph in 1931. Is it taken at Garsington Manor?

Searching the internet for anything about 'Marian Stoll' the first site I opened was from the National Portrait Gallery, who have this snapshot by Ottoline Morrell in their photographic archive: 'Marian Stoll – embroidress'. And then I looked at the site of Esther Fitzgerald Rare Textiles, who has been very helpful in filling out her life as an artist and her link to the artistic world through Ottoline Morrell with whom she corresponded. She had studied in Vienna

(and she insisted on using Viennese wools throughout her life); she visited Paris; and came to Oxford in 1921. Her 'wool pictures' were exhibited in Oxford and at the V& A. She was featured in the magazine *The Studio* in 1927 and her work much praised.

She returned to America in 1931 and was featured in *Life Magazine* in 1940. She died in Southmayd Home, Waterberry, Connecticut in 1961 and left half her estate to the Home (with her pictures) and the other half to Oxford Meeting. She wrote of her time in Oxford, "I think of you so often, you were all so wonderful to me".

**John Cottis**  
more at [www.EstherFitzgerald.com](http://www.EstherFitzgerald.com)



'In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth.'

**Mahatma Gandhi**

## *Thank you Tanya!*

*We greatly appreciate the special attention you've given to the sharing of our life stories and of our different spiritual journeys. Your interviews, printed here each month for the last several years, have opened us up to one another in the Meeting in a unique way. We shall miss them while you take your well-deserved break... and hope you might feel inspired to take up your pen again before too long.*



**RPM**

Tanya's interviews with Oxford Quakers are also available in book format, from FMH.  
Books 1 and 2 are £4 each.

## **QPSW Conference March 2010**

In March I went to the Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) conference held at Swanwick. The main theme of the conference was 'networking for peace', and the conference was an opportunity to be introduced to several QPSW staff and to discover the wide range of works that QPSW is involved in. Their current work includes, for example, defending the rights of conscientious objectors, typically in Israel, Colombia, South Korea and Azerbaijan, which is led by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva; setting up technologies in East Africa to enable communication between peace groups working with warring parties; aiding peace-building with communities in North East India; working with the Christian Muslim Forum in the UK; and liaison between the Christian Police Organisation and CND in order to prevent conflict at antinuclear demonstrations, as well as many other activities.

The conference was very inspiring and the central message that arose for me personally was that small actions sometimes really do create positive change,

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## **St Paul for the 21st Century?**

and perhaps sometimes we may never know of the change brought about by those actions. A number of concrete examples were given and one that stuck in my mind is as follows. Sometime in the 1950s Eisenhower was being encouraged by his advisers to drop a nuclear bomb on China. Consequently a campaign arose in which people were asked to send small packets of rice to the President attached to a card which said, 'Send rice, not bombs'. Apparently only a relatively small number of packets were sent and the campaign was forgotten about. Some time afterwards a peace campaigner found herself strangely enough in the Pentagon and when she bent over her rice packet and message fell out of her pocket (she had never sent hers and had kept it on her person). Astonished, someone in the Pentagon who'd seen it said out loud, "Those damn little bags of rice", to which the person replied, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "in the '50s we were strongly encouraging Eisenhower to drop the bomb on China and he said 'No. Every now and then I get one of those little bags of rice, and I am not sure that public opinion will stand it'".

In the worship periods there were a number of inspiring ministries which reflected this message. One person quoted the Talmud saying, 'It is not our task to finish the job, but neither is it ours to abandon it'. Personally I was struck by an analogy to chess. At the start of the game you don't try to checkmate your opponent immediately, but you aim to accumulate small advantages over time until you can win. Perhaps peace activism is similar: we shouldn't expect to build a peaceful world immediately, but we can set about trying to accumulate small advantages.

To finish, there are a number of practical ideas that arose from the conference. First, QPSW now has a new project development manager. If anyone in our Local or Area Meeting has a project that would fit in nicely with QPSW work, the project development manager is there to help facilitate such projects. In the first instance there is only funding available for three projects. Second, one thing that was mentioned as something that would be of practical help for peace-building is to write letters of support to imprisoned conscientious objectors. A list of people currently imprisoned and their addresses can be found at War Resisters International:

<http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/pfp>

I was asked recently to suggest a passage from the Bible for a group to discuss and I chose St Paul's Letter to the Corinthians 1 (13). When I reread this, in the King James Bible (1662), which I have always used, I realised that it was unlikely the people in the group would be familiar with this version. I wrote a quick, totally spontaneous and colloquial interpretation of the passage and have not altered it. It was not intended for 'publication', but it stands as I would have presented it in a discussion of the passage.

*Even if I am intellectually impressive and talk fluently but have not love, my words have no true value.*

*If I have remarkable gifts and wide knowledge, or if I experience myself as having profound faith but do not act with love, it is not enough.*

*If I give time, money and assets to good causes, even to the extent of giving my life as proof of my faith, but do not act with love, it will not have sufficient power.*

*Love is endlessly patient and kind. It does not envy other people, nor is it vain or arrogant.*

*Love does not behave badly even when provoked and does not indulge in spiteful thoughts or despairing or destructive behaviour.*

*Love celebrates wherever it sees truth, justice and caring behaviour prevail, and it opposes the evil and harmful things in the world.*

*Love lives courageously and continues to believe in what is good despite seeing hatred and injustice flourish, as it always does. It never abandons hope.*

*Love never fails in its creative and transforming power. All lesser virtues fail eventually because they are partial but God is the source of love and the supreme power.*

*It is difficult for us to understand and believe in the spiritual power of genuine love which Christians see exemplified in Christ. It also exists in many different forms within the family of man.*

*Until we become spiritually adult there are and will be many things we cannot understand.*

*As human beings, there are many things we will never know.*

*There are many creative and transforming powers of which we have experience but the greatest of all is love.*