



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

www.oxfordquakers.org

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Forty-Three and the Web

Forty-Three is still a paper-only publication. We thank those who read and responded to last month's articles regarding the expansion of *Forty-Three* to the world wide web. Both articles – 'Privacy, please!' and '*Forty-Three* online? Yes, please!' – have received expressions of support. We'd like to encourage all those with views to attend the MfWfB on 5 July.

The editors

Today's issues around Death and Dying

Twenty-three Friends, all women and all elderly, or nearly so, gathered at Woodbrooke on a Bank Holiday weekend (4-6 May) to consider one of the most sensitive, but most urgent, questions facing the developed countries in our world: what is a 'good death' and how can we make sure that as many of our fellow citizens as possible have one? The graph of life-expectancy goes up and up, but expectancy of a life in good health does not rise with it, and a large proportion of lives will end in several years of dementia. The 'selfhood diminishing' that dementia brings was seen as the worst nightmare by all of us. In this world where choice is held up as the greatest blessing, why should we be denied the choice of leaving this world while we can still plan a dignified exit rather

than endure one which we know will 'spoil the idea of the life [we] have lived'? (Mary Warnock in her helpful book *Easeful Death*.) The experience of those with other end-of-life illnesses may also be made more miserable than necessary by an over-medicalised and uncaring hospital regime, which could become more humane and effective by adopting the philosophy and practice of the hospice movement. Guided by our loving facilitators, Alison Leonard and Margaret Nunnerley, we shared our own experiences with the deaths of relatives and friends (this was very moving) and looked at the medical and legal issues, such as assisted suicide, that are at last being widely discussed. We

Continued on page 2, column 1

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Quakers do have something very special to offer the dying and the bereaved, namely that we are at home in silence. Not only are we thoroughly used to it and unembarrassed by it, but we know something about sharing it, encountering others in its depths and, above all, letting ourselves be used in it...

People so often talk of someone 'getting over' a death. How could you ever fully get over a deep loss? Life has been changed profoundly and irrevocably. You don't get over sorrow; you work your way right to the centre of it.

QF&P 17.06 Diana Lampen, 1979

Deadline for contributions to the August 2009 issue: noon, Friday 17 July

Contributions, of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated, preferably by email: oxfordpm@yahoo.co.uk. Paper copy can be left in the Forty-Three pigeonhole at Oxford Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373.

Continued from page 1, column 2

ended in thankfulness for this moving and fruitful gathering, and all we have learnt from it, and in determination to carry forward our exploration both among Friends and any other groups we are in contact with. We hope we may be able to start by initiating discussion with Friends in our Local and Area Meetings.

Marigold Best and Janet Toye

Burford Meeting House Tercentenary



This year Burford Quakers (Society of Friends) are celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of their Meeting House, a simple and beautiful building that has remained largely unchanged since the first stone was laid in 1709. The following

are extracts from the Quaker Meeting House, Burford:

“If Friends from the 18th century were to return today they would immediately be at home in the virtually unchanged Meeting House. For three hundred years the premises have been at the centre of Quaker work in and around Burford....”

“Prayers for Peace are regularly held in the Meeting House and Friends take a full part in the ecumenical movement through ‘Burford Churches Together’. The international scene is reflected in the activities of individual members. The organisation ‘Peace Direct’, which works towards conflict resolution both in the U.K. and overseas, was founded by a member of the Meeting. Another Friend is involved with fundraising to help farmers in Burundi. The Meeting supports these projects and many others.

“As we celebrate the tercentenary of our Meeting House, we look back with joy and thanksgiving over its past history, but we also look forward to its future, remembering always that its true value lies not in bricks and mortar, but derives from the worship and service of the Meeting.”

The following are upcoming events, with free admission:

Garden Open (5 July, 2-6 p.m.): The Meeting House garden has been completely redesigned and includes plants which have been introduced into the country by Quaker Botanists.

Quaker Clockmakers of North Oxfordshire (9 July, 7 p.m.): An illustrated talk by Tim Marshall on the 18th-century Quaker clockmakers of North Oxfordshire, with exhibits of their distinctive style throughout the period.

Quiet Day (3 September, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.)

Ride and Stride (12 September, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.): An annual event organised by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Striders and Riders are sponsored to see how many places of worship they can visit during the day.

National Quaker Week (3-11 October)

To talk to someone about Burford Meeting House, in the first instance contact Vi Welbourn (tel. 01608 810854, email zen155406@zen.co.uk). Our website is www.burford-quakers.org.uk.

**Adapted from the
Burford Meeting Press Release**



Worship – oh how difficult!

*Be still, my soul, and you, my wandering mind –
The monkey mind I’ve heard it called and so
It is, leaping from place to place, not slow
Or pensive, but eager, keen to find
Diversion in the quiet time assigned
To prayerful meditation; day thoughts left behind,
It cries ‘See here – new problem – off we go!’*

*My thoughts won’t change this. I can’t force
the choice
To bring myself back to the proper track,
Willing the monkey to keep still and calm,
But try to listen for the silent voice,
That soundless call which, loving, brings me back
To Light and glimpses of Love’s healing balm*

Judith Mandeville Atkinson

Outcry!

Outcry is the name of a new campaign launched by the Children's Society to end the immigration detention of children and their families. It has the support of the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. The launch follows publication of the Children's Commissioner for England's report earlier in May about the situation at Yarl's Wood detention centre, where children and their families are held prior to deportation. The Commissioner repeated his call for detention of children to be ended. On 20 May UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, published its comments about the how the UK asylum system deals with unaccompanied children, finding grave shortcomings in the way evidence is collected and assessed. All these developments put further pressure on the Government to improve the way children are dealt with and, in particular, to end their detention. Oxford Meeting is playing its part in this process through its recent letters to MPs. Immediately after the last one was sent, early in May, we received an appreciative response from the Children's Commissioner.

Janet Toye
(Human Rights and Asylum Group)

Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



Janet Toye,
talking to Tanya Garland

Although I've been a Quaker only since the early 1990s, my early memories involve Quakers. The first home

I remember was in Worcester, next to apple orchards and countryside. My parents were conscientious objectors and a Quaker family rented them the house. I look back on those first years as a very happy time. I remember becoming aware of the beauty of nature, and think of Wordsworth's '... trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home'. I think of the place and time often and very occasionally I can recapture that joy.

At the end of the War we moved to Leamington Spa, where my father restarted his career. My mother loved the town, as did I, but my father discovered some corrupt practices within his company and changed jobs. We moved to Wolverhampton and later to Australia where we lived for nearly five years. By this time I was the eldest of four children. As I grew older my life at home was less happy. At times my mother suffered from depression and easily became distressed and angry. At other times she had a great love for life, was excellent company, and would take me out to the ballet, film or theatre in the centre of Melbourne. The family's unexpected return to this country threw me sideways. I lost confidence socially. My mother found Britain difficult too, and my teenage years were the worst of my life. As a girl she had not been allowed to take up a grammar school place. The requirement of uniform and a hockey stick had been the final straw for her father. She left school at fourteen and went to work, feeling rejected by her father and humiliated. While I was at grammar school, with the prospect of going to university, I think she relived both the hopes and disappointments of her own life at that age.

At Sunday school in Australia and later at Keele University in England, I met Christians who were evangelical and their approach put me off completely. For years I was an atheist. Halfway through my course at Keele I went to Swarthmore, a Quaker college near Philadelphia, on a year's exchange scheme. Looking back, I regret that I didn't even set foot in the Meeting House while I was there. In many ways that year was good for me and I grew in confidence. My absence, however, was probably very hard for my mother and she had a severe depressive illness while I was away. On my return I found she was no longer so critical of me. Our relationship improved somewhat but unfortunately she continued to suffer from depression. She committed suicide when I was 33.

I didn't know what to do after my degree, and followed the careers adviser's suggestion to apply for work in the Civil Service. I joined the Home Office, which had (and still has) many areas of work that interest me, but I was not satisfied with following the 'departmental view' nor the fact that one could be moved to another section at a moment's notice. I needed my work to involve

Continued on page 4, column 1

Continued from page 3, column 2

personal commitment. John and I met on a course, while he was working in the Treasury. Soon after we were married, I left the Home Office to train as an English teacher and a year later he left the Treasury to train as an economist, specialising in the development of poor countries. John was very good for me, with his positive attitude to life and belief that it was worth living. My mother's depression was accentuated by her sensitivity to the world's cruelties, and I have felt the same. With fears about the possibility of a nuclear war I was very doubtful about having children, but eventually realised I was unable to accept the idea of *not* having them. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.

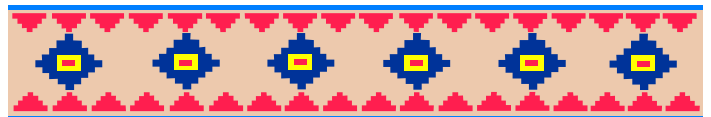
In my thirties I returned to an interest in religious ideas, and those of Spinoza made sense in a way nothing previously had. He identified God the creator with his creation nature, as the eternal or timeless cause of all things. This approach abandons, what for me was, an unconvincing explanation that God created the world at a particular point in time. It invites us to accept the fundamental mystery that anything exists at all. I came to feel that we live in the heart of a mystery. I'm an agnostic in a positive sense, believing we cannot expect to understand the totality of something we are part of.

In the mid 1980s I started to attend Quaker meetings in Swansea and very much liked the peace and social witness aspect, but there was no opportunity to explore Quaker experience beyond that. On moving to Brighton soon afterwards we became preoccupied with my father's ill-health. After he died in 1991 I began to suffer from night terrors, awakening to the experience of not existing or not having any identity. I began therapy with a Jungian who was also a Quaker and it soon became clear that I was on a spiritual search. I started attending Meeting and after two years became a Member.

My work for about twenty years had been in vocational education and training, but I was never entirely satisfied with it and became interested in training as a counsellor. In 1990 I learned about cognitive analytic therapy, whose philosophy and methods I found persuasive in terms of my own experience, together with its integration of psychoanalytic, cognitive and behavioural theories.

After training, I worked in an NHS Clinical Psychology Department, which was fulfilling as nothing else had been. On retirement I came to Oxford, where John was working, and started work as a therapist with clients from the Night Shelter resettlement programme. I feel privileged to share in other people's life journeys and to learn from them, and I value contact with a different side of life from my own.

When I was fifteen I decided that the aim of my life was to find out the truth. This I now interpret as a search for wisdom, the struggle being to learn how to live with peace of mind in a world where so much happens that I see as cruel and stupid. The quotation from *Advices and Queries* I find most helpful is the first: *'Take heed, dear Friends to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.'* Whether I have experience of God's presence or not – for me it has happened so far for just one period and otherwise only fleetingly – I can still try to feel, think and behave in accordance with love and truth.



Food donations – East Oxford



If you live near Asylum Welcome (AW), you may already be taking food donations there directly. If, however, you have been bringing them in to the Meeting House, but could deliver

them directly to AW, please do so. That saves you, and Patricia Wright and Sally Wilkins, the task – and weight – of carrying it between the two locations.

AW is at 276A Cowley Road, next to Ss Mary and John Church. Opening hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It may be possible to deliver at other times if you check first by telephoning: 01865 722082 to check that someone is in the office to receive food.