



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### Reflections on Britain Yearly Meeting

Some Oxford Friends reflect on their experiences of attending Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) 2010 at Friends House:

**Jenny Buffery** (who identifies herself as “a usual suspect” when it comes to “banging on about Yearly Meeting”) had been on the agenda committee for BYM at the beginning and was pleased to see that engaging with the political process and the ministry of giving remained the central themes. She was disappointed that the Saturday afternoon session on engaging with the political process “went down like a lead balloon” – but in one of the “annual miracles of Yearly Meeting” she has come to expect, new life emerged in the second session.

**Mark Ebdon** was glad he went, on the Sunday, and not just because of the gold star given to first-timers. He found informative the lunch-break introduction to Meetings for Suffering, and passed happy moments browsing the periodicals and special offers at the publications table.

**Jill Green** could only attend on the Monday and was glad that early morning worship with ministry on equality was a “levelling experience” for her after she had enjoyed a week with much praise for her Art Weeks exhibition. She was excited to hear Gillian Ashmore’s same sex marriage update with its mention of Oxford Meeting’s contribution to

mobilising support for changes in the law. She found the discernment on allowing journalists into some BYM session raised conflicting feelings and was comforted that the final minute recognised the need for a specially appointed group to work out in detail how to induct and care for any journalists who come to Yearly Meeting.

**Kate Joyce** said this was her first BYM in London (she has been to several residential Yearly Meetings) and she found it more tiring, but really enjoyed the chance to get to know the building – confusing though it may be!

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#### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

I ask for daily bread, but not for wealth,  
lest I forget the poor.

I ask for strength, but not for power,  
lest I despise the meek.

I ask for wisdom, but not for learning,  
lest I scorn the simple.

I ask for a clean name, but not for fame,  
lest I contemn\* the lowly.

I ask for peace of mind, but not for idle hours,  
lest I fail to hearken to the call of duty.

**QF&P 20.01 Inazo Nitobe, 1909**

*\* To view or treat with contempt.*

**Deadline for contributions to the August 2010 issue: noon, Wednesday 14 July**

*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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**Tony Joyce** was thrilled and fascinated by his first experience of attending BYM and said “it should be a requirement for all members and attenders to come”! He really got the broad perspective of what Quakers are about and what they do and was intrigued by the way that issues facing BYM around the upkeep, use, income generation and “greening” of Friends House so closely mirrors the issues we in Oxford face with our listed building. He was hugely impressed by seeing Quaker Business Method work in a meeting of over 1,000 people and by the skill of the Clerk (our own Lis Burch) in extracting a minute from such a spread of diverse contributions.

**Sarah Lasenby**, although struggling with a heavy cold, was inspired by Paul Lacey’s Swarthmore Lecture and looks forward to reading the book version *The Unequal World we inhabit* – Quaker Responses to terrorism and fundamentalism. She was encouraged that we are daring to be political and that Michael Bartlett, our parliamentary lobbyist, is being kept busy.

**Oliver Robertson** enjoyed being free of the responsibility of reporting Yearly Meeting sessions this year and spent much of the time out of the formal session, meeting up with Friends and he very much enjoyed the Group Fair. The highlight of BYM for him was the young people’s demonstration opposing prejudice against teenagers.

**Patricia Wright** found herself weary for lack of sleep and suggests a “crash-out pad” for future BYMs. She drew our attention to the Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD) video, *Too Much Too Young*.

**Sandra Figgess**



The next  
**Yearly Meeting  
Gathering**  
is from 30 July to  
6 August 2011  
at the  
University of Kent,  
Canterbury.

## Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



**Dorothy Darke**,  
talking to Tanya Garland

– Part 2 of 2 –

When Michael and I moved from Manchester to retire to our home near Midhurst, Sussex, I went to work for the education department of Oxfam and volunteered to organise projects in schools. It was the time of the Brixton riots in London and there was great concern over the state of race relations in this country. Lord Swan’s report stressed the importance of influencing children at a very early age, to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity rather than to view it as a threat to already established traditions in this country. This was a voyage of discovery for me. The government gave very generous funding for the In-service Training of Teachers (GRIST), enabling me to organise programmes to bring in artists, dancers, musicians and writers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. For example, together with the director of music in Sussex, we arranged for children from a Notting Hill school steel band to come and teach the children from eleven primary schools to play the steel drums. The West Indian children stood behind the primary children, holding their hands and directing their playing. At the end of the day, they performed a concert in the town hall to which the rest of the pupils from these schools and their parents were invited. I shall never forget the sheer joy and excitement of these occasions in the ’70s. Later, the West Sussex County Council (local education authority) invited me to work for them, which gave me a far wider access into schools. I couldn’t have wished for more enriching and rewarding work. I found myself, during the next four years, in a cultural and spiritual environment, which further nurtured my own personal pilgrimage.

My father died when he was 69 after previously having had two heart attacks. Ten days before he died, we all spent the post-Christmas/New Year period with him and my mother, and I believe that week was ‘God-given time’, with a huge feeling of solidarity and love for each other.

My grandmother told me that, after the War, it took time to discover what had happened to all the Jews

## Questing Quakers

left in Germany and who had been taken to the camps. Quakers were working in Germany on programmes to reunite families that had been separated during the War, and they helped my father discover what had happened. Back in Germany, he learned that in 1942 his parents, with all the other remaining Jewish people from Bielefeld, had first been taken to Theresienstadt, and from there, they had been put on a train to Auschwitz. There was an incident *en route*, which resulted in a few people from each carriage, including both of my father's parents, being taken from the train and shot by the side of the track.

My father then travelled to Tübingen to tell my mother's family the fate of his parents, and of all those members of his family and their many friends who had been trapped in Germany, and whose lives had ended in Auschwitz. My mother's family were all there, nervous and unwelcoming, but he said to them that, having lived in Germany during Hitler's time, he knew what a reign of terror the Nazi years had been, and he did not blame any of them for what had happened. That, for Hilda's sake as well as for himself, he wanted our family, and all of them, to be friends. It was my grandmother who told me this, when she came to stay with us after the War, and it sums him up so well. He was a natural peacemaker and it's because of him that I have such a strong focus on peacemaking. I think there is nothing more important in this world than helping to bring people together with love and mutual respect. I have a favourite quote from 'Turning Enemies into Friends', an essay by Jonathan Sacks (chief rabbi in the Commonwealth), [from *After Terror*, edited by Akbar Ahmed and Brian Forst]:

*... Twenty centuries ago, Judaism's sages posed the question: Who is a hero? In most literatures until recent times, a hero was one who performed mighty deeds on the battlefield... and perhaps died in a noble cause? A hero is one who defeats his enemies. The rabbis thought otherwise. 'Who is a hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend.'*

That is exactly what my father would have said.

I believe the Quakers have got it right when they say, 'there is that of God in everyone' but I don't think God is anything external. I think God is in the whole of creation, in everything, a concept not separate from anything else.

The challenge of Quaker Quest was to answer honestly "How did you come to your present understanding of Peace?" and "How do you put your peace witness into action?". We were encouraged to think "outside the box" of peace campaigning in the narrow sense. The self-review was refreshing.

There are steady background influences – family, a Quaker education at The Mount, long involvement with the Peace Movement – and there are pivotal experiences. The first of these was a talk by a friend's father at The Mount about the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.o.R.)\*, a Christian pacifist organisation that had its origin in a handshake on Cologne Station in 1914 between a British Quaker and a German Lutheran. I was pretty idealistic at fifteen (still am!), and to find a group of people prepared to take literally Christ's injunction to "love your enemies" was liberating. That "love is the only sufficient basis for society" remains one of my core beliefs.

Another turning-point came in 1981 in Abingdon Meeting. We were in the Cold War, Russia had just invaded Afghanistan, and the Third World War, which could destroy the planet, felt imminent. I was expecting our second son, feeling protective of the world I was bringing him into, and was suddenly filled with anger: the world is such a beautiful, glorious, fragile miracle – how dare these men, these mere politicians, threaten it? I spoke in Meeting, and afterwards a Friend visiting from Oxford PM, Jim Howard, stopped me. "Are you working? No? Good – we've got work to do!" and not long afterwards Abingdon Peace Group started up.

In 1999 five of us from Abingdon Peace Group, including Jim and Mavis Howard, attended the great Peace Conference at The Hague. Thousands of



citizens from all over the globe got together for a week, many of them young – street children from Colombia, school-kids from the former USSR, Japanese university students – all eager to envision a world without war. We came home enthused, and the result in the UK was the Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW), headed up by Bruce Kent, whose aim is to promote the idea, through education, films, music, that war

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is not inevitable, that one day war will be as unacceptable as slavery is now. And one of the small ways I put my peace witness into action is on the MAW committee, and by running the mail-order for MAW literature and CDs from my bedroom!



Abingdon Peace Group takes the view that if people knew the facts, any sane person would be against war. So our focus is on education, via a monthly newsletter, leaflets, meetings etc. And a measure of our success, perhaps, is that “Peace” is no longer a dirty word in Abingdon as it was in the 1980s!

In my professional life as a GP at Luther Street, I find that treating homeless people with respect and “unconditional positive regard” defuses anger. I very consciously draw peacefulness and strength from Nature before going to work, to be able to give it to my patients. I believe it is at least as useful to them as any medicine I can prescribe. In bringing up our two sons we had the usual heart-searching about whether to allow guns and war-toys, and decided early on that to ban them would just make them more attractive. Children learn a lot from role-play, and I just made sure that I made it real, so that if anyone said, “Bang-bang, you’re dead!” I would play dead, and talk about what that means. They soon lost interest and decided to play fire-fighters or ambulance-men instead!

And where do I find my personal peace? I find Yoga wonderful for the soul, and walking in Nature, and of course Meeting for Worship. The Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh in his little book for Peace activists, *Being Peace*, says, ‘Without *being* peace, we cannot do anything for peace’, and I’m sure that that is true. I like the 1987 epistle of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa/New Zealand (*QFP* 24.10): ‘We must start with our own hearts and minds. Wars will stop only when each of us is convinced that war is never the way.’ And a reflection by Mary Lord of the American Friends Service Committee, “Can love really overcome violence and hate?” given at FWCC in 2002. She says, “We shall fail if we think the power that may move through us is our own. The power is not ours, it is God’s.”

**Sally Reynolds**

\* F.o.R. now has its headquarters at Peace House, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX1 1LD.

## A Good Read

Ian and Deirdre Flintoff have given the library a copy of their son John-Paul’s recent book, *Through the Eye of a Needle* (Permanent Publications, 2009). Having enjoyed John-Paul’s article in *The Friend* (4 September), I thought I’d glance at the book: while I’m a relentless wearer of second-hand, though I don’t aspire to make my own clothes, I’m married to someone who has even made her own nineteenth-century underwear.

Part of the fun of this book – aside from its sheer quirkiness – is its inquisitiveness, and the opportunity it provides for becoming acquainted with the sort of activity that journalists engage in for research. It’s very much like the particularly fun sort of research I do for pure pleasure as literary scholar and actor, trying to have experiences like those my favourite authors or the characters I’m playing experienced, or going to places they’ve known: finding out by doing.

John-Paul has an assignment from *The Sunday Times* to write about bringing back apprenticeships and gets himself apprenticed for a day to a Savile Row tailor.



Though the book may seem at first glance potentially desultory, it is seductive enough to invite reading from beginning to end, and the reader finds it growing to reflect the connectedness of all aspects of an individual’s life (and, one gradually begins to feel, of all life). As the author is led gradually to discover the joy of making his own clothes, he explores various political parties and modes of experiencing religion. He examines Mormonism, Church of Scotland, Catholicism, Quakerism, Buddhism, Church of England and Pentecostalism (Quakerism and Buddhism fare particularly well – indeed *Faith and Practice* is listed in his suggestions for further reading). Because of this exploration, by the time he becomes a fully fledged clothes-maker, he is *not* simply a clothes-maker but ‘man making clothes’, as Emerson might say.

The book is attractive, decorated with the author’s own drawings, and well written, in conversational style. Sadly, there are at least seven misprints. John-Paul endears himself (to me, at least) by liking commas. But one is misplaced, leading the reader to imagine he is recommending *Walden* rather than a book by Dan Price. (Actually, why is *Walden* not

on the list of further reading?) Still, someone clearly cares, and perhaps there were originally more: while on one page a name is deprived of an apostrophe, on the next someone has caught the same error late in the process and added the apostrophe in the space between words.

This book makes one begin to think that creativity of this sort, which results from finding one's own ways of solving daily problems as well as the huge problem of how not to harm the earth, can – or perhaps must – lead inevitably to creative peacemaking. And it demonstrates that/how the kingdom of heaven is within us.

**Arthur Kincaid**



## **Flourishing with Less**

Here at the Meeting House on Saturday, 9 October, the John Macmurray Fellowship annual conference will address the question 'Flourishing without Growth: How to Build a Society where Less can Really be More'. We hope that a number of you will come and hear our two speakers, Molly Scott Cato and Gordon Ferguson, and join in the discussion.

Molly Scott Cato has written books, such as *Green Economics*, and is a speaker on economics for the Green Party. Gordon Ferguson is the Chair of the John Macmurray Fellowship, a member of Sheffield Meeting, and engaged in many local community activities. His talk will focus specifically on Macmurray's idea of community and its relation to the wider society and economy.

If you book in advance you can also book a simple lunch. Or come on the day and bring your own lunch. Registration is at 10:30, first talk at 11, finish with tea at 4. Cost £10 or £5 concessions, lunch £5. See notice board for more details or ask me.

Please do your best to join us! The more who come, the more ideas there are to share!

**Jeanne Warren 5**