



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

[www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)

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### Thanksgiving for 350 years

– Part 1 of 2 –

At Friday with Friends on 15 January, I gave an overview of Quaker history. Three hundred and fifty years of history won't fit on a page – but I have written some briefer reflections on a few milestones in our history for which I am personally grateful.

The first is that we are here at all. I am grateful for the young, questing George Fox and for the Westmorland Seekers whom he found, born of a similar religious and social discontent, waiting themselves in silence with no rite or ritual, and for the Valiant Sixty who went out with the message of a god who could speak directly to our condition. Though I shall refer in the main to our own London/Britain Yearly Meeting, I am grateful for their brave travels to the Netherlands, to Germany, to the sultan of Turkey, to the Pope in Rome, to the Americas, always seeing their message as a universal one, for all people and places.

I am also grateful for the articulation they gave to their message:

- for Penington, the man of letters who could express in words which transcend the centuries some of these experiences which echo with my own;

- for Barclay, the systematic theologian who could put the insights firmly and credibly into a living and on-going Christian tradition.

I am glad that, in the main, they held together so that we in the twenty-first century who seek God without rite or symbol are able to be less prey to our individual whims and vanities, and held in a community and within a history of experience.

Mystical insight could have led us down many paths. I'm grateful that the one they chose was in

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#### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Worship is the response of the human spirit to the presence of the divine and eternal, to the God who first seeks us. The sense of wonder and awe of the finite before the infinite leads naturally to thanksgiving and adoration.

Silent worship and the spoken word are both parts of Quaker ministry. The ministry of silence demands the faithful activity of every member in the meeting. As, together, we enter the depths of a living silence, the stillness of God, we find one another in 'the things that are eternal', upholding and strengthening one another.

**QF&P 2.01 1967; 1994.**

**Deadline for contributions to the November 2010 issue: noon, Friday 22 October**

*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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Penn's words 'true religion don't turn us out of the world' but right back in there with our endeavours excited to mend it; a faith in action that engaged with the real world.

They refused tithes, showed no respect for titles, fought wrongs with spiritual weapons. Men and women, rich and poor equally sought their insights through and in their experience of the divine. They were able to hold their convictions together and testify to them through their behaviour, thus giving us our tradition of Testimony.

I am grateful for that, and that they were not afraid to engage with the difficult or impossible. They tried to build an entire State of a nation as a holy experiment, not shrinking away from the challenges that might bring – of compromise or getting their hands dirty.

I'm glad we didn't die out. We were 60,000 Quakers, going into the eighteenth century but only 16,000 at its end. As we sought quiet and order and organisation, acquired property and tried to preserve our insights together we became a closed, strangely dressed, inward-looking community. We sought to 'give no offence nor occasion to those in outward government'. We disowned for 'marrying out'. We became worthy but not threatening, admired but not joined.

I am grateful therefore that the 'broad sweep of history' is just that — a 'broad brush'.

Even though we describe this as a 'quietest' century there were in fact plenty of noisy, questioning trouble-makers for God:



*A lively Quaker Meeting House in the 17th Century. Thanks to [www.jonwatts.com](http://www.jonwatts.com).*

- John Woolman looking for the roots of injustice and urging the end of slavery;
- Betsy Gurney / Fry to whom we owe so much of our long involvement in penal affairs;
- William Tuke, founder of the Retreat;
- and all those — nameless to history — Friends who persevered and got us through to the nineteenth century.

*– To be concluded in the next issue –*

**Val Ferguson**

*A version of the above article first appeared in Quaker Monthly in 2002.*

Canadian Thanksgiving is held on the second Monday of October, and American Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November.



## Collections

This is the time of year when Oxford Meeting plans how to use the Collections that it takes at its Meetings during the coming year. As Convener of the small group that makes proposals on this to the Business Meeting, I would be very glad to receive suggestions from members of the Meeting.

As you know, each week we try to have one collection for specifically Quaker objectives (Quaker Life, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, Quaker Communications, Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations, Quaker World Relations Committee (covering Friends World Committee for Consultation, QCEA and Middle Eastern Section), Woodbrooke, Charney Manor etc). In addition, each month we have one special collection for some good cause which is sponsored by a member of the Meeting.

We try to ensure some continuity from year to year, but also to make some changes, so as to bring in new good causes. Please send your suggestions (either to continue supporting a cause that we supported previously or to bring in a new cause) by means of a note in my pigeonhole or by e-mail ([cjhwatson@ntlworld.com](mailto:cjhwatson@ntlworld.com)), preferably not later than 7 October. For the 'special collections' we ask for a short (one page maximum) description of the work done by the charity concerned, explaining why it particularly deserves our support.

## **Hello, Helen and Bye, Barney: Change of cast at FMH**

This autumn we bid a fond farewell to Barney Palfrey, who comes to the end of his service as Assistant Warden, a capacity in which he has made himself invaluable to the Meeting. He has been a dedicated, unfailingly helpful and genial presence, and will be much missed. The editors would like to thank him for his quietly efficient support and take this opportunity to wish him all the very best for the future.

He is a hard act to follow, but Helen McCabe, who will be taking over his role, knows a thing or two about acting and will doubtless rise to the challenge. She has responded generously to our request for a brief introduction:



*Hello!*

*As I am going to be Assistant Warden from October, I have been asked to write something about myself,*

*in order not to be a complete stranger when I arrive.*

*I hope I am already not a complete stranger to all of you, as I regularly attended Oxford Meeting from September 2005 through to September 2008. Since then I have been living partly in Oxford and partly in Ipswich, Stourport-on-Severn and Scarborough, finishing writing my D.Phil thesis, which was on the nineteenth-century philosopher John Stuart Mill. I submitted in June, and am waiting for my viva. I have just started as a part-time teacher on the Philosophy A-Level course at Magdalen College School, and am looking forward to taking up my new duties at the Meeting House in October.*

*A bit of background: I was born in Blackburn, but moved to Burnley when I was three, and grew up with a view from my bedroom window of Pendle Hill (which George Fox had just climbed when he had his vision of the light of God shining in all of us). My mother's family were Quakers, regularly attending Stafford Meeting when she was younger, though by the time I was born none of them lived near a Meeting House, and had stopped attending. However, I was brought up to be familiar with many Quaker attitudes.*

*I left Burnley in 2002 to come up to Oxford for my undergraduate degree in PPE (at St. Hilda's), and have stayed on at the University ever since. In between degrees, in 2005, I went to New Zealand and spent part of my time there staying with an old family friend whom my mother met at YFGM in the early 1970s. He and his family live very much in accordance with their Quaker principles, and the calmness, centeredness and sense of spiritual peace I enjoyed in their home made me determined to start attending Meeting for Worship as soon as I returned to Oxford. I got involved with the crèche, with Young Friends, and other activities at Oxford Meeting, and was always grateful for the warm welcome and weekly sense of peace in what was often a hectic post-graduate life.*

*I am hoping to spend some of my time over the coming year continuing to write and direct plays as well as write prose, and, hopefully, an accessible book based on my thesis. I have had a few plays I have written performed in*

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*Oxford (including Yet Tell My Name Again to Me, a play about Mill which I know a few Oxford Quakers very kindly came to see), and have directed many more — the highpoint of my writing probably came this year when one of my plays was shortlisted for the International Student Playscript Competition.*

*I'm very glad to be coming back to Oxford, and meeting all the new faces at FMH, and re-meeting some more familiar ones. Please do come and say hello if you think you see me!*

*Helen McCabe*



### **Poetry in the Meeting House: 8 Nov and 20 Dec**

On Monday 8 November at 7 p.m., Philip Gross, winner of this year's TS Eliot poetry prize and a Friend, will give a talk/reading in FMH. And on Monday 20 December, Michael Horovitz will give a reading/performance in FMH also at 7 p.m. Michael is the prophet/founder of Live New Departures/the Poetry Olympics etc., and got 300 votes in the recent election for Professor of Poetry, even though his opponent was Geoffrey Hill. (Shall we try and get Hill later in the year?)

Please come to these two events and bring and tell a friend or two. They will be good and lively evenings. Some of Philip's work is in the Library.

**Stephen Yeo**

stephen.yeo@pop3.poptel.org.uk

## **Young Friends**

If you are aged from 18 to early 30s you might like to come to Young Friends. We meet every Thursday at 7:30 for 8 p.m. for Meeting for Worship and discussion.

'Quaker testimony' will be the theme of our discussions after Meetings for Worship throughout October. We shall discuss peace on 7 October. Some of us will have just returned from a course called *Pacifism Today* at Woodbrooke, and we hope to share our reflections on this. We continue with truth on 14 October; simplicity on 21 October; and equality on 28 October.

'Young Friends General Meeting' is the national meeting of Young Friends in Britain, which some of us will attend in Liverpool on 22 - 24 October.

For further details of Young Friends, including our social events, please ring Matthew on 01865 205949 or 07814 499943, or visit

[www.oxfordquakers.org/youngfriends](http://www.oxfordquakers.org/youngfriends)

You may like to join our mailing list, through which we sometimes circulate readings and other event updates.

**Matthew Gee and Mark Ebdon**



"The smart bombs are getting too smart!"

## Sometimes

Sometimes things don't go, after all,  
from bad to worse. Some years, muscadell  
faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail.  
Sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes will step back from war,  
elect an honest man, decide they care  
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.  
Some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best intentions do not go  
amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to.  
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow  
that seemed hard frozen; may it happen for you.



**Sheenagh Pugh**  
Selected by RPM

## Meetings and Notices

### OX2 Coffee Morning



2 October  
10 a.m.—12 p.m.

at  
Katharine  
Nicholas's:  
31 Frenchay Road

### National Quaker Week:

2-10 October



On Sunday 10 October, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
there will be an **all-age worship**, with the  
children having a planned input for the last  
twenty minutes or so.



Oasis of **واحة السلام** Wahat al-Salam  
Peace **נווה שלום** Neve Shalom

Oxford Friends of Israel's Oasis Of Peace  
**PATHWAYS TO PEACE: A Dialogue**

**Saturday 23 October**, FMH, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., followed by lunch

**Purpose:** Through Dialogue, to learn more about the Youth Encounters Programme, as this is the programme that Oxford Friends support. This programme brings together teenagers from both sides of the cultural/political divide in Israel/Palestine, in order to gain an insight and understanding of the other community.

A suggested donation of £10 is requested, £8 for students.  
All proceeds will be donated to funding the Youth Encounters Programme.

For more information and to book, please contact Andrew Walkey  
(01865 872840, walkey.cake@ntlworld.com) or Dorothy Darke (01865 554434).

# CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER 2010

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Fri 1st	7 for 7.30	Friday with Friends	Sat 16th	10.30-3.30	Quilting
Sun 3rd	12.30	Local Meeting for Worship for Business	Sat 16th	10—12	'Friendly Eights'
Wed 6th	1.15—1.35	Prayers for the Homeless	Mon 18th	7—9	Poetry Group
Thur 7th	7.30—9	Young Friends	Wed 20th	1.45	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sat 9th	10—4	Extended Meeting for Worship	Thur 21st	7.30—9	Young Friends
Sat 9th	4—6	Network of Women	Sat 23rd	9.30—3	'Oasis of Peace'
Sun 10th	10.15-11	'Becoming Friends'	Thur 28th	7.30—9	Young Friends
Tue 12th	7—9.30	'Friendly Eights'	Sun 31st	12.30	Bring-&-Share Lunch
Wed 13th	2—3.30	Sea of Faith			
Thur 14th	7.30—9	Young Friends			

*Forty-Three* is now available online, at [www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter](http://www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter)

If you are considering writing an article or notice but would prefer it not to go online, please don't hesitate to contribute it. Just indicate that the piece is not for inclusion in the internet version — no reason will be asked for. Articles and notices are very welcome to appear in the print edition only.

## MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

**Sundays** at 9:30 and 11 a.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by coffee and tea)

**Wednesdays** at 12:15 p.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by coffee and tea)

**Tuesdays and Thursdays** at 7:30 a.m. at 43 St Giles  
(followed by breakfast at 8 a.m.)

**Sundays** at 10 a.m. at The Priory,  
85 Old High St, Headington

## OPENING TIMES

### 43 ST GILES

Wednesday - Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Closed in August