



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

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

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### Woodbrooke Happenings

The news from Woodbrooke is that it is thriving – and that is largely thanks to the leadership of its director, Jennifer Barraclough. Jennifer was the person who had the vision to turn an ailing institution, in a shabby building, into a dynamic centre for learning and reflection.

This year brings many changes and Woodbrooke is upbeat about what they will entail. Jennifer will retire in November, and will be much missed, but all staff are united in feeling delighted with the appointment of Sandra Berry as the new Woodbrooke director.

The range of courses on offer is impressive: in the five months November 2010 to March 2011 there are some 50 courses programmed, delivered by a variety of tutors and associate tutors. With so much choice, it is very easy to find something just right for you. In addition, you can go as a paying guest and enjoy the amenities without doing a course. Woodbrooke is in Bourneville, just a bus ride from New Street Station, and is a good base for exploring Birmingham. I do urge Oxford Friends to visit and discover for themselves the riches there.

Significant as the achievements of the past years are, Woodbrooke is not resting on its laurels. There are fresh plans to work collaboratively with departments at Friends House, and also to expand the 'Woodbrooke on the Road' programme,

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### From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

I stood at the fence one night in September, feet rooted to the muddy ground, hands deep in my pockets, watching through the wire that flat ravaged land that is now never dark, never quiet, imagining through the fence a field of bracken and scrub, a field of flowers.... To my left, women cut the wire, roll away the stone, and walk through into the tomb. No angels greet them; no resurrection yet.

Yet still women witness to that possibility, the possibility that something may be accomplished which in our own strength we cannot do. Women waiting, watching, just being there, behaving as if peace were possible, living our dream of the future now. 'Why do you come here? Why do you keep coming?' — a soldier near Emerald camp on an earlier visit — 'It's no use, there's nothing you can do, what do you women think you can do by coming here? The missiles are here, you won't change anything, why do you come?' We come to watch, we come to witness, we come with our hands full of ribbon and wool, flowers and photos of loved ones, hands full of poems and statements and prayers, hands full of hope and the knowledge that such hope is impossible to rational minds. I come to be with the women who live here, the dykes, the dropouts, the mothers and grandmothers, angels with countenances like lightning, I come to talk with the police, the soldiers, men who might be gardeners standing by the tomb; I come to meet the Christ in them.

**From *QF&P* 24.28**, A member of the Quaker Women's Group, 1986 [at RAF Greenham Common]

**Deadline for contributions to the October 2010 issue: noon, Friday 17 September**

*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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through which you can have a Woodbrooke course delivered to your door.

Oxford Meeting will be holding collections for Woodbrooke in October, and I hope you will feel that this unique study centre is a cause worth supporting. I'm asking that the donations are applied to the bursary fund so that even more people will be able to have a Woodbrooke experience.

**Peggy Heeks,**  
Woodbrooke Correspondent

## **PATHS Volunteer Project**

### **Promoting Access To Health Services**



In February this year, the Oxford Homeless Medical Fund Newsletter carried an article asking for volunteers to help set up a new project. Luther Street Medical Centre provides GP services

exclusively for homeless people. The team of doctors, nurses and support workers there have a unique understanding of the particular and complex range of physical and mental health problems that homeless people can suffer, and try to run their services in a way that takes account of the chaotic lives many of their patients lead, their distrust of authority, chronic lack of self-confidence, mental health and substance abuse problems.

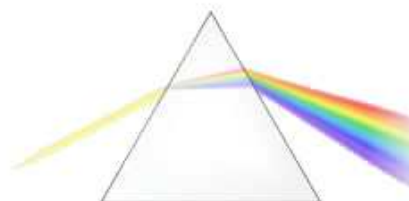
Problems arise, however, when the doctors need to refer patients on for hospital or other specialist health services – four in ten of their patients simply do not turn up for these appointments, and as a result, their already poor health gets worse, as well as representing a waste of resources for the NHS. The GP practice at Luther Street decided to see whether patients could be helped and encouraged to attend these appointments by providing a volunteer to go with them: someone who could remind them of the date and time of the appointment, help them to find the right bus to get there, find the right hospital department and deal with the staff, go into the appointment with them if that is what the patient wants, and generally help reduce the patient's anxiety.

I read about the project being set up, and decided I

would like to become one of its volunteers. I undertook their four-week training course in March with six other people. The training itself has been very interesting, and the insight gained into 'street people's' lives – as well as knowing you *are* making a difference – is something I've found really rewarding.

The project is still in its very early days. The important thing, however, is that the original idea works. So far, with one exception, every patient who has been provided with a volunteer to go with them has attended their appointment. The project now wants to expand and train more volunteers, and will run another course in October. If you are over eighteen, are available week days, and think this would be a useful and fulfilling way of spending three to four hours a week, please contact Jan Penrose, Volunteer Co-ordinator, for an information and application pack on 01865 792126, ohmfvolunteers@btconnect.com. If you'd like to hear more about my experience as a volunteer – either with PATHS (Promoting Access to Health Services) or with the Gatehouse, Oxford's café for the homeless – please do talk to me on 01865 429339, or e-mail karima-brooke@hotmail.com.

**Karima Brooke**



## **Experiment with Light**

An introduction to this will be given at 'Friday with Friends' in the Garden Room on Friday 1 October at 7:30 p.m. by Kate Joyce. It is a 'guided meditation' which was developed by Rex Ambler, as detailed in his book *Light to live by – an exploration in Quaker Spirituality*. The meditation has been used and appreciated by many Quaker meetings, and though not appealing to some Quakers, many have found it helpful. It consists of several short passages in which directions for reflection are read out, and these are separated by 6-8 minutes of silence, altogether taking about 50 minutes. Rex believes that it is possible that the process is similar to the earliest Quaker meetings.

**Kate Joyce**

## Knock Knock .... Who's There?

In April the Meeting House was the venue for the screening of a remarkable and thought-provoking film, the showing of which was kindly organised by Rhonda Riachi for the Oxford group of the Alistair Hardy Society.

The film is being produced by Tim Coleman, an independent journalist and documentarian, to document an investigation, by the Society for Psychical Research, into a five-year-long project by a group of mediums, to make contact with departed souls 'on the other side'.



The film is still in the process of final editing, and one of several frustrations I had with the version we saw was that it gave little information on the mediums and how and why they had come together. They seemed a robust and good-humoured lot, who met regularly in a cellar of a cottage in the village of

Scole in Norfolk. They seemed quite unfazed by their regular Dante-like descents into this Underworld to meet the dead, and the prevailing ambience was less Edgar Allen Poe/Vincent Price Gothic horror, than that of a group of friends out for a good-time day trip on the London Tube.

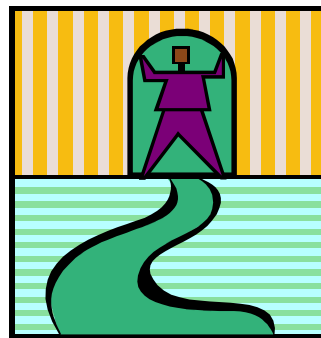
If the film is to be taken at face value, a not dissimilar team regularly assembled 'on the other side' not just to communicate as individuals, with their own personalities and histories, but over time to produce an extraordinary range of apparent proofs that physical matter could be created and manipulated 'out of thin air' by intelligent agency not based in any physical body. This included the sudden solid manifestation of intricate physical objects from nowhere, and even the imprinting of images on undeveloped film that had been purchased and brought to the scene by the investigators, not the mediums, and which remained throughout sealed in unopened cartons firmly held by the investigators. The images emerged once this unopened film was developed.

The film thus appears to record a five-year collaboration between apparent incommensurables – this world and the next – even more remarkable than our current Lib-Con pact.

For me, the most interesting aspect of this film was the record of the investigation by four retired scientists working for the Society for Psychical Research. Years ago in London I went to a number of their talks, and was friends of the then Secretary to the Society. In my experience, they are an extremely sceptical lot, and the researchers in this case seemed no exception. The film details the lengths to which they went to check on and ensure against fraud, which included, amongst many other steps taken, consulting a professional magician. Their conclusion was that whatever the explanation for the phenomena they encountered, any kind of fraud was ruled out.

A lot of what happened in these apparent communications with spirits is covered 'live' in real time, and there is some quite extraordinary footage – with the one *caveat* that the film is not always very good at distinguishing between what is real life footage and what are visual effects created afterwards by those producing the film. Nevertheless, there is enough which is clearly 'real time' footage, to make this an extremely interesting film to see. There are a few comments 'from the other side' on the kind of world that it is, though I would have liked to see the departed and/or the film editors having more to say about this, if necessary at a small sacrifice of the amount of time the film understandably devotes simply to the physical manifestations and their investigation.

As to what to make of it, the attitude of the Society researchers seemed to be that they could not offer any definitive interpretation. An alternative interpretation to the departed living on and trying to convince us about an afterlife is that the human mind has unexplored powers, and that the unconscious of the mediums themselves were producing these phenomena. This was an alternative possible interpretation offered by the



biologist Rupert Sheldrake, who was interviewed in the film. That, in its way, would be as inexplicable and miraculous in terms of our current scientific understanding of what it is to be human, as our life surviving physical death.

My sympathies are with the Society researcher, who said that further investigation was needed; and

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that it was a frustration to him that this area is so marginal in scientific research when it deals with one of the most fundamental questions about life that we can ask. We seem to live in an age when almost the only people prepared publicly to take seriously the idea of survival after death, are the lunatic fringes or the 'back to the past' fundamentalists who wish to barricade themselves in behind lath and plaster walls of ignorance which ignore everything our scientific culture has learned about the universe. For the more respectable and serious segments of our society, both in the scientific and the spiritual domains, the question of survival seems to have acquired the status that mentally unstable relatives held in Victorian times – an embarrassment to be kept out of sight and not talked about if at all possible, to avoid bringing the respectable members of the family into disrepute.

Rhonda has kindly offered to arrange a second showing of the film if enough people show interest, so I hope anyone whose appetite to know more has been whetted will contact her, either via the pigeonholes at 43, or by email at [rhonda@riachi.free-online.co.uk](mailto:rhonda@riachi.free-online.co.uk). There is also a book available on the Scole Project, and a website giving details of this and further information, at [www.thescolexperiment.com/index.htm](http://www.thescolexperiment.com/index.htm)

**Chris Gaal**



## **News from the School for Peace**

Beyond, and in addition to, the vital work we are doing with young people in the Youth Encounter Workshops, Mr Ahmad Hijazi, Director since September 2008, and I are in the process of adding a third goal to our educational work.

Besides the important task of raising awareness and taking responsibility for the conflict, our goal is for participants of our courses to become Change Agents: activists for peace and justice. Since 2005 we have been developing Change Agents courses for professional groups that can

have an impact on the conflict. These include architects and urban planners, lawyers, mental health professionals, teachers and journalists, who, as a result of our training, will advocate for change through their professional work.

I will give you some examples. A Jewish urban planner, Sebastian Walerstein, wrote a report on the distress caused to Palestinians, natives of Jaffa, when they are driven out by settlers and by real estate companies. As a result of his report, he was appointed as mediator between the Palestinian leadership in Jaffa and the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality. Another example is of two lawyers, graduates of a Change Agents course, both Israelis, one Jewish and the other Palestinian. They fought and won in the Supreme Court a case of pollution that affected 800 children at a primary school for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem.

This coming year we will receive the third tranche of a grant from USAID, and the eighth grant from the EU, for training programmes for media professionals. These courses have great potential and we are very proud of the results so far.

Soon to come is a joint programme with Tel Aviv-Jaffa College for an MA in Peace Studies, in co-operation with Professor Naomi Chazan. We will also be developing the newly established Fred Segal Peace & Friendship library at Neve Shalom ~ Wahat al Salam, where a conference on Peace and Human Rights was recently organised for 120 participants, many of them heads of Peace and Human Rights NGOs. Under discussion was the deterioration of democracy in Israel, the blockade of Gaza and the attacks on peace activists – Palestinians and Jews – who oppose government policy.

Our priorities are to continue our work with young people, as this is where the seeds of peace activism are sown; but even though we are a small staff, we want to reach out to more and more groups and engage in new dimensions of peace activism.

**Nava Sonnenschein and Benita Hide**  
via Dorothy Darke

Benita is the Director of the British Friends of Neve Shalom ~ Wahat al Salam ([www.oasisofpeaceuk.org](http://www.oasisofpeaceuk.org)). She and Nava will be speaking at next month's *Pathways to Peace* conference on Saturday, 23 October at FMH.

## Hail and farewell

Dear Ffriends,

*I will be leaving Oxford on 22nd September (like Bilbo and Frodo leaving Hobbiton, but hopefully avoiding Ringwraiths and similar!) to begin a new job at the University Library in St. Andrews. I will miss Oxford Friends, having spent nearly ten years with the Meeting and got to know people well. I've always been happy when people have said nice things about my hats. The Meeting has enriched my life both spiritually and socially, and I hope to come back to visit from time to time. I wish Friends*



*health and happiness both individually and collectively, and I hope to hold some kind of farewell event before I go: information to be announced...*

Rebecca Howard



Penny and Mark would like to bid Rebecca an extra special 'fare thee well', and to thank her for many hours of thoughtfulness and giggles as we put together the monthly newsletter. Lively, incisive, with a delightful and sometimes wicked sense of humour, Rebecca has been a faithful member of the editorial team and will be greatly missed — and not just for her wonderful hats!

## Meetings and Notices

### Coffee rota, 11 o'clock Meeting



This has shrunk in recent months! Please could Friends consider offering to make coffee after Meeting – not an onerous job, and the longer the rota the less often you have to do it! Please see Mavis Howard, leave a note in the 'H' pigeonhole, or email [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org) to add your name to the list.

### OX2 coffee mornings

These are held on the first Saturday of every month, between 10 and 12. The next is on

2 October at  
Katharine Nicholas's:  
31 Frenchay Road



### Oxford Friends in *The Friend*

18 June: 'Quakers in Parliament - and elsewhere'  
Ian Flintoff

2 July: 'Letting go and taking up'  
Peggy Heeks

6 August: 'Prospects for civil liberties'  
Rupert Booth

### Quaker PhD opportunity in Brighton, from October

Application deadline: 24 September

**Details:** [www.oralhistory.org.uk/  
vacancies/showjob.php?id=203](http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/vacancies/showjob.php?id=203)  
or speak with Ursula Howard

# CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 2010

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Sat 4th	10—12	OX2 Coffee Morning	Mon 20th	7.00-9.00	Poetry Group
Sun 5th	12.30	Local Meeting for Worship for Business	Sat 25th	11.00- 4.00	Regional Meeting
Sat 11th	10.30- 3.30	Quilting	Sun 26th	12.30	Bring-&-Share lunch
Sat 11th	10.30	Area Meeting, Swindon			
Sat 11th	4.00-6.00	Network of Women			
Sun 12th	10.15-11	Becoming Friends			
Sun 12th	2.30-4.30	Play Reading	<b>Berks and Oxon Regional Quaker Meeting</b> Saturday 25 September, 11 to 4 p.m., FMH The topic will be Homelessness and the main speaker will be Sally Reynolds of Abingdon Meeting, who is a GP at Luther Street Medical Centre which works with peo- ple experiencing homelessness.		
Wed 15th	1.45	Friends Fellowship of Healing			
Fri 17th	7.00	Rebecca Howard's Leaving Party			

## Young Friends (those aged 18 to approximately 30)

Thursday **2, 9, 16, 23, 30 September**: Meeting for Worship and discussion, 7:30 for 8 p.m. at FMH

Wednesday **15 September**: going to the New Theatre for a play at 7:30 p.m.: 'House of Ghosts'  
(RSVP to Matt Godwin)

Sunday **19 September**: attending the Adderbury MfW (via a 12:15 p.m. bus from Oxford)  
RSVP to Matthew Gee on matthewgee@doctors.org.uk or  
07814 499943. **Everyone from the Meeting is welcome to join.**

More details are available from Mark Ebden (07500 521675) or at [www.oxfordquakers.org/youngfriends](http://www.oxfordquakers.org/youngfriends)

### MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

**Sundays** at 9.30 and 11 am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by coffee and tea)

**Wednesdays** at 12.15 pm at 43 St Giles  
(followed by coffee and tea)

**Tuesdays and Thursdays** at 7.30 am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by breakfast at 8 am)

**Sundays** at 10 am at The Priory,  
85 Old High St, Headington

### OPENING TIMES

#### 43 ST GILES

Wednesday - Friday, 9.30 am - 1.30 pm

Closed in August