

FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

Number 402

SEPTEMBER 2012

40 pence

Lessons from the Oncology Ward: Two *You've got to laugh!*

The fine line between life and death is all too apparent in hospitals with the result that superfluous feelings are stripped away and we are left with a clear sense of priorities. Do I worry about the state of the European economy? No, I worry about not having opened my bowels for four days. Likewise, tragedy and comedy are close partners, as Charlie Chaplin well knew, and the incidents which stick in the memory are either poignant or hilarious. Of course it helps if there are other patients in your ward with a similar sense of humour, always assuming that you have enough energy to *have* a sense of humour. I'm a firm believer in the therapeutic value of the use of the chuckle muscles and, for this reason, would always prefer to be in the group ward, rather than an individual side room.

There was the occasion when a debonair doctor (identified by the stethoscope round his neck) strode into the ward radiating machismo and flashing white teeth and addressed an elderly female patient with the surprising greeting: "Hi, I'm Randy!" At least I *think* that's what he said (we learned afterwards that his name was Randeep). But it gave us a happy afternoon in retrospect trying to think of the ideal response: "Really? Well what are you going to do about it?" or "Darling, where have you been all my life?"

Then there was a very strange message which showed up on my mobile phone: *rally wants to tuggist non* which gave us cause for mirth. It turned out to be the very first text message attempt from a dear friend! How sporting of her to have a go, rather than admit defeat, and what good value – it made us giggle every time we thought about it.

Nobody goes to hospital to be surrounded by dignity and decorum, especially if, like me, their problem is difficulty in the elimination of bodily fluids. However, recently I found myself in a situation just too close for comfort.

It was the morning of my ureter-stent operation and I wanted to have a wash and change my underwear. Would I be able to manage it while a pick-line was attached to a cannula in my right

Continued on page 2, column 1

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

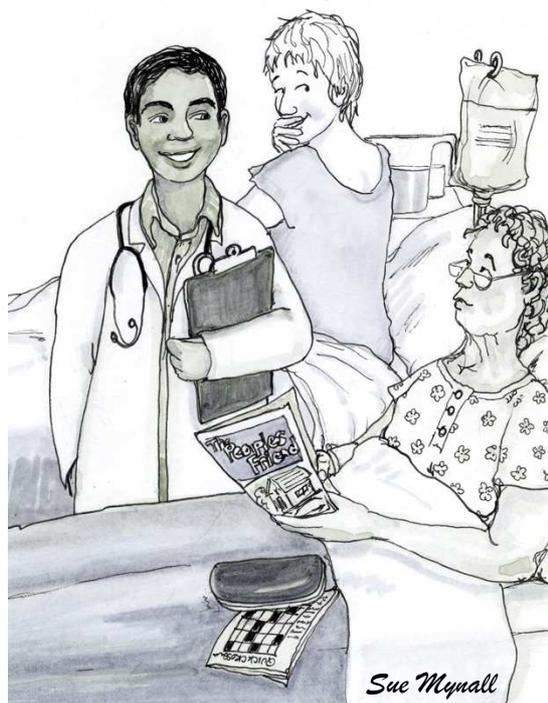
Love bridges death. We are comrades of those who are gone; though death separate us, their work, their fortitude, their love shall be ours, and we will adventure with hope, and in the spirit and strength of our great comrade of Galilee, who was acquainted with grief and knew the shadows of Gethsemane, to fight the good fight of faith.

QF&P 22.94 John Wilhelm Rowntree, 1905

Deadline for contributions to the October 2012 issue: noon, Friday 21 September

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to alessandro.simari@keble.ox.ac.uk. Paper copy can be left in one of the editors' pigeonholes at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

"Hi, I'm Randy."



hand and a catheter was attached to – well, you know what it was attached to – or should I call the ever-so-busy nurse?

Explanatory note:

*Red blood's connected to the cannula
Cannula's connected to the pick-line
Pick-line's connected to the drip-stand
Drip-stand's plugged into the wall.*

All went well to start with: I managed to unplug the drip-stand from the wall and push it in one hand, while carrying the unhooked catheter bag in the other, being careful not to execute any inadvertent pirouettes, which snarled up the lines. I should add that the theatre gown was untied for ease of access and the tapes seemed hell-bent on eloping with the pick-lines!

So far, so good. I managed to get my pants off, had a wash, and then found that my pants were firmly attached to the catheter line! Life at this point seemed far too complicated, so I decided to ring for the staff nurse. The door was opened by a young male

staff nurse with the biggest black eyes, to be confronted by this old woman with dead-straight post-chemo hairstyle, butt-naked, with her pants attached to her catheter and her theatre gown escaping over her shoulder!

For him this was all in a day's work – he'd seen it all before – but for me it was not what I was expecting, and this sudden confrontation was all too much. I managed to blurt out: "Oh, it's all right, I think I can manage now!" Once he'd gone, I remembered the scissors left on my table by one of the nurses. Simple! I wrapped the gown round me, the curtains round my bed, cut off the offending pants and put them firmly in the bin!

Lesson One for Today: I must let go of long-held certainties, i.e. all nurses are female.

Lesson Two for Today: I must learn to ask for help and stop thinking I can do it all.

Blessings: It was really funny – afterwards!

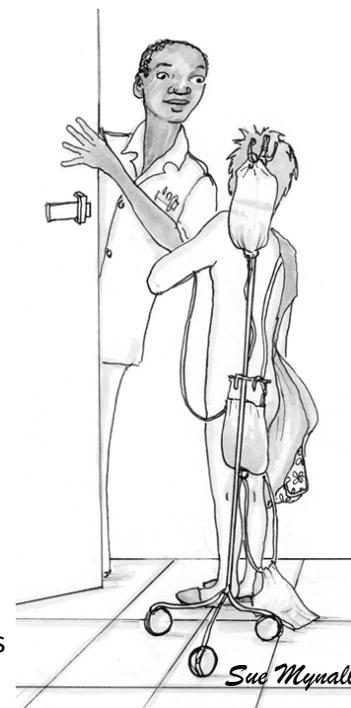
Maretta Stark

Maretta or Bushka

Whichever sounds better
I shall start with a poem about my Gran Maretta.
She was so thoughtful and kind at heart,
Good things about her?
Where do I start?
Funny, clever, pretty, that's true, She loved life so much
That she went to Peru.
Every person she met she would treat with goodwill
And has kept that up despite being ill.
Even when ill, she kept spirits high. But now we have to say "Goodbye".
To a Mum, a Gran and an awesome friend, but you know, It is never the end.
So Tim and Mummy, I hope you're OK
Because we all pass some time of day....

Josie Harding

Written in the small hours of Sunday 5 August, when 10-year-old Josie couldn't sleep, while her Mum, Niki, was up at Sobell House with her mother, our Friend Maretta Stark, known in the family as Bushka, who died at 1:42 am that day.



At Maretta Stark's funeral Meeting on 13 August this poem by W.B. Yeats came into my mind as another way of remembering her. It seems to me to capture her life-dance and the sorrow mixed with song of her passing, 'sudden and light'. So I offer it to *Forty-Three*, with love. Yeats seems to me to be 'Maretta's poet', though I don't know whether she liked his work.

Stephen Yeo

The Cloak, the Boat, and the Shoes

"What do you make so fair and bright?"

"I make the cloak of Sorrow:
O lovely to see in all men's sight
Shall be the cloak of Sorrow,
In all men's sight.'

"What do you build with sails for flight?"

"I build a boat for Sorrow:
O swift on the seas all day and night
Saileth the rover Sorrow,
All day and night.'

What do you weave with wool so white?"

"I weave the shoes of Sorrow:
Soundless shall be the footfall light
In all men's ears of Sorrow,
Sudden and light.'

W.B. Yeats

2013 Collections

This is the time of year when Oxford Meeting begins to plan how to use the Collections that it takes at its MFWs 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 and Attenders. 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 or Attender 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 for continuing support for a cause or to bring in a new one) by means of a note in my pigeonhole or by email, preferably not later than 30 September. 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.

Christopher Watson
cjhwatson@ntlworld.com

We would like to thank all the Friends from the meeting who made such huge contributions, spiritually, practically and emotionally, in our preparation for marriage and during our wedding: all the way through from our meeting for clearness, preparations for the wedding, the meeting for worship itself, refreshments, washing up and clearing up the meeting house. We know there were Friends who were unable to be with us on the day, but who were holding us in their prayers and thoughts. We know that Friends from the meeting will continue to support our marriage in the years to come and we thank you, in advance, for that!

In Friendship,

Katherine & Matthew Gee 3



In True Quaker Tradition



To assist me in running my Old Injuries business, I sought help, first of all from a business coach and then I had an idea that a Mastermind Group* might help me. I looked around in Oxford and found nothing. So I asked the

national Quaker & Business (Q&B) Group if they ran them. Back came the response: 'We don't, but perhaps we should; would you like to start one?'

I wrote a piece for inclusion in the Q&B mailing describing what a Mastermind Group is and asking how many Quakers would be interested in a pilot group. I had a wonderful response, some who'd love to come but lived too far away, some asking me to start one in London and Scotland, some who said "yes, how do I pay?" and someone saying that it sounded like a true Quaker tradition.

A few days later I was asked to attend a Q&B meeting in London, so I arranged to go to Friend's House in Euston. I felt slightly overawed, but everyone was helpful. I waited for my turn (I was an agenda item!) and presented my idea, that Mastermind Groups would be beneficial to Quaker business owners. I had such a wonderful, positive, uplifting response, I felt really encouraged. So I started a pilot group in Oxford Meeting House, and at the same time decided that I could be starting others in the area, to answer the need for high-quality groups for business owners to air their business issues in a spiritually sympathetic setting (these are open to all, not just to Quakers). I'm clearly not the only one trying to instill into myself the notion that God doesn't disapprove of us earning well!

One of the problems faced by business owners is isolation. It often prevents them from having a balanced view when contemplating a next move or dealing with a problem. I once spoke to the owner of a business who had two establishments and perhaps half-a-dozen staff. She confided in me (as an outsider): "The problem is I'm at the top of the tree; there's no-one here I can discuss things with".

I have worked as a self-employed person much of my life, and I know this problem. I see it in many of the therapists whom I have worked alongside:

getting frustrated because they can't seem to get on in the way they'd dreamed, and failing to work as a group because they have disparate philosophies, instead of seeing their common predicament. When someone has suggested that everyone working from the same unit should pool their efforts, in publicity for example, the appeal has fallen on deaf ears.

So I have decided to run some groups for those who can see the benefit of pooling our best resource: our minds. They are called Mastermind Groups, referring to the greater power of a group of minds focused on a single point. It isn't a discussion group; it's a questioning system that uses everyone's mind to focus on each person's business in turn. It is an intriguing system and brings some interesting results.

Catherine Holland

* Definition:

<http://luann.machighway.com/~oxfordpa/groupsprices.html#whatisamastermindgroup>

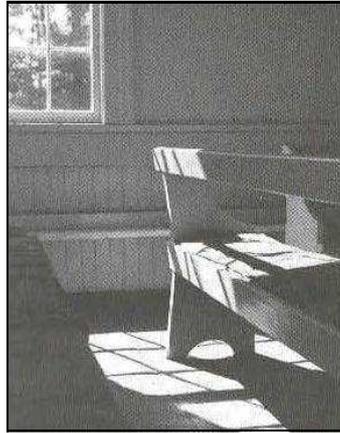
New every time

After I had attended Quaker Meetings for about six months, I realised that, for me, silent meetings are rather challenging. The thing is that every week I have to start afresh. The Meeting really is new every time; there's no familiar liturgy or routine for me to fall back on. It's up to me to make it work – or not.

I try not to go into the Meeting with preconceived ideas of what I should think about and what I'm expecting to happen, which means that every week, I have to "reinvent" the Meeting from scratch. That's not always easy, and I'm not yet convinced that it gets easier with experience. In fact, in some ways it gets more difficult.

I sit there trying to clear my head of mundane thoughts and then I become distracted by wondering whether this Meeting will be as "good" as last week's, or whether it will be as "good" as the best Meeting I've ever experienced. Note the quotes – I'm not even sure in my own mind how I personally measure the quality of a Meeting, but I do know that some of them seem to be better – more fruitful, perhaps – than others.

It crosses my mind, of course, that those who follow faiths that use programmed worship – that is, set forms of service – might be having an easier time. After all, their “Meetings for Worship” follow a set formula that, in many cases, has been developed and refined over



Inner Light © Michael T. Smith

centuries. They never have to start from nothing and reinvent their worship. Surely that has to be easier?

I’m sure that for some people it is, and I would never want to discount or criticise their point of view. Nevertheless, the more I think about it the more I realise that, for me, programmed worship makes things more difficult rather than easier.

I was, many years ago, an Anglican and a regular churchgoer. But one of the things that I was never really happy with was the routine of the services. Yes, that routine was in a way warm and comforting, but it was warm and comforting in the way that tended to put me to sleep rather than stimulate me to become involved. I don’t mean that I didn’t keep up with the responses; it’s just that after a while they came out of my mouth without passing through my brain.

Not so in a Quaker Meeting for Worship. As I said at the beginning, I feel I have to meet the challenge of approaching it anew every time. That can be hard work, I won’t deny, but I do feel like I am genuinely participating in an act of worship, in a way that I rarely if ever did in my churchgoing years.

Keith Wilson

Going to Afghanistan

‘Live adventurously’ is a phrase which has taken on a special meaning of late. Last year my friend, Maya Evans, went to Afghanistan with the Chicago-based movement, Voices for Creative Nonviolence (VCNV), formerly Voices in the Wilderness. On her return Maya gave talks about her journey, and when she came to Abingdon I attended. After the talk she said she’d kept wishing, whilst in Afghanistan, that I were with her. She said this because of our work at

St Francis House, giving hospitality to asylum seekers, several of whom come from Afghanistan.

Up until now I have never felt drawn to travel to war zones or other dangerous places, mainly because of environmental issues with flying, but I offered to accompany Maya on the first British VCNV delegation. I also had concerns about my visual impairment but Maya said she did not see this as a difficulty for the group.

For several years now VCNV, led by Kathy Kelly, has been supporting a group of young Afghans called Afghan Peace Volunteers (APV, www.ourjourneytosmile.org). APV started in Bamyan province and is dedicated to nonviolent conflict resolution. The core group now lives in Kabul, and our delegation will stay with them, listening, learning, befriending and finding out what we can do to further the work for nonviolence in a war torn country.

We call our delegation VCNVUK and we are five in number: Maya from Hastings, Ariadne from Brighton, Brian from Scotland, and Beth and me from Oxford. We had our first meeting in Oxford at St Francis House and spent the time well, forming a community.

Maya shared her experience and gave us background to VCNV and APV. We then shared the reasons why we volunteered for the delegation and what we felt we could contribute in terms of skills and experience. We had practical discussions about visas, tickets etc and, most importantly, we shared our concerns and fears. This last was done in the context of a three-hour session with a facilitator from Seeds for Change, which was most helpful and thought provoking.

We now each have tasks to do before our next meeting and are pursuing funding opportunities, trying to find organizations which might give us grants. An account of my personal preparations is on my online journal, which I refuse to call a blog; it’s such an ugly word!
<http://susancClarksondotcom.wordpress.com>

Susan Clarkson

VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

Book Review: *Only a Thought Away* by Angela Howard



Angela Howard

Just once in a while I encounter a book that I can't put down and find myself rationing my reading so that other things are not neglected. *Only a Thought Away* is such a book, and it deals warmly and authoritatively with neglected things in our culture: death, bereavement, the afterlife and contact with the deceased.

Angela's story is related in a straightforward, frank and uplifting way that few autobiographical writers achieve.

The book is in two parts. In the first part the author describes how her husband Martin contracted cancer, and describes his illness, death and funeral. A month after he died Angela visited a medium (Paul Lambillion) and established contact with Martin through Paul. Part 1 includes the spiritual/psychic experiences of other Quakers, with the testimony of two Friends who likewise made contact with their deceased husbands through a medium, and the spiritually uplifting effect that these contacts have. The final chapter of Part 1 describes Angela's own experience of bereavement. I particularly valued the honesty of her reflection on her own and others' behaviour during this especially difficult time, made more difficult by our society's current awkwardness concerning death, grief and bereavement.

Part 2 provides a highly informative summary of the evidence for the afterlife, quoting from numerous sources such as the Bible, near-death experiences and mediumistic communication. As a founding member of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies, Angela is well placed to give this summary, and it covers all the key aspects that an introduction to the afterlife requires, including a brief résumé of the origin of the Spiritualist Movement. The book concludes with a bibliography, suggested reading and a list of helpful organisations.

I can't recommend this book highly enough: to anyone who has been bereaved, to any who fear death and bereavement, and to those who are just curious. Whether Quaker or not, this book speaks to our condition and to our time. At the start of the book Angela includes a long quotation from William

Penn, taken from *QF&P* [22.95], which is beautifully apposite. Here is an excerpt:

For though death be a dark passage, it leads to immortality, and that's recompense enough for the suffering of it. And yet faith lights us, even through the grave, being the evidence of things not seen.

Only a Thought Away can be ordered from Angela Howard, cost £5.00 + £1.50 post and packing. Order from and make cheque payable to: Angela Howard, Webb's Cottage, Saling, Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DZ. Published by Quacks Books, York, 2010. ISBN 978-1-904446-28-6

Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies:

www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk

Rhonda Riachi

rhonda@riachi.free-online.co.uk

Berks and Oxon Regional Meeting

Regional Meeting was last held in March, in our own FMH. About 50 representatives from fifteen LMs attended (seven LMs were prevented). After worship, guest Noel Moules spoke to us about 'An anabaptist understanding of the peace testimony'. We then broke to eat our sandwiches, before Don Mason reported on 'The peace testimony in the twenty-first century'. The third talk was by Martina Weitsch, on how the Quaker Council for European Affairs is helping to achieve peacebuilding. We took a few minutes for business matters, and then our local Bread & Roses committee provided Tea.

The next Regional Meeting will take place on Saturday **29 September** at 10:30 for 11 a.m. in Banbury Meeting House. The theme will be "Nurturing the life of our meetings: building community", and *QF&P* 10.11 has been circulated by the clerk. He also writes, "We hope to arrange children's activities for the day. Please contact the clerk before 10 September if you are interested in this provision. Enquiries about Regional Meeting should be addressed to Robert Card, 248 Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, RG40 3PA. 07584 905819. cardrm1972@yahoo.co.uk."

If you're thinking of attending the next meeting and wanted to head over together from Oxford, I might take the 9:36 am train that day (£5.60 return).

CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER 2012 *All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Sunday 2	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Friday 21	7 pm	Young Adult Friends' book group
Thursday 6	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Saturday 22	10 am - 4:30 pm	Spirituality and Sustainable Living — see below
Saturday 8	10 - 12:30 & 2 - 5 pm	Open Doors	Sunday 23	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Sunday 9	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Sunday 23	10:15	Fairtrade stall (TBC)
Wednesday 12	7:30 pm	AM (<i>in Headington</i>) — see August issue, p. 6	Thursday 27	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults
Thursday 13	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Friday 28	7 for 7:30 pm	Friday with Friends — see p. 7
Sunday 16	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Saturday 29	10:30 for 11	Regional Meeting (<i>Banbury MH</i>) — see p. 6
Monday 17	4-6 pm	Poetry Group	Sunday 30	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Wed. 19	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing	Sunday 30	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch

Nathan Schöck



Spirituality and Sustainable Living

Garden Room,
Saturday **22 September**,
10:00 am - 4:30 pm

An interfaith event hosted by Oxford Quakers, with the Brahma Kumaris and the Qadiri Rifai Sufi Order

Lunch provided. No charge to attend, but numbers are limited. Donations welcome.

Please email: quaker@riachi.free-online.co.uk by **18 September** to express interest in attending.

Oxfordshire March for Justice

Saturday **6 October**, 10:30 am

Christian Aid welcomes everyone to join an 8.5-mile walk from Abingdon, finishing with tea, coffee and cake at St Michael at the Northgate Church in Oxford. They will be walking in solidarity with 100,000 landless people who are marching to Delhi in one of India's biggest-ever protests to demand land rights. For details call 01865 246818 or write to oxford@christian-aid.org.



MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

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

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.

Forty-Three is available online, at 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, and the same applies to calendar items.

Editorial Team: MARK EBDEN, PENNY ORMEROD, and BECKY RIDDELL (Joint Editing & Production); TINA LEONARD, DEBORAH FILGATE (Proofreaders); ALESSANDRO SIMARI (Distributor and Subscriptions)