



# FORTY-THREE

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

## NEWSLETTER

Number 413 (online version)

AUGUST 2013

40 pence

### Ending Well

On 15 June we attended the joint meeting for Elders and Overseers of OSAM (Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting), hosted by Faringdon Friends.

The day was introduced by Gill Palmer together with Liz Rothschild. The first speaker was Peggy Heeks, who spoke about 'Ending Well'. Peggy suggested that as we get older it is important to do a 'life review' – to look back over the past from the perspective of where we are now, to consider the need to mend hurts, to try to be reconciled with the living – and the dead. This may mean conversations that can be difficult to begin, but we might find that they give us rare opportunities for talking in depth with our family and friends. Peggy said that this could be the time to simplify our life, and to pay attention to our spiritual life; and she shared with us some 'Poems for Later Life', and some comments made by older people she had spent time with in the course of her research – here is one: "I am convinced that it is a great art to grow old gracefully, and I am determined to practise it. I am tremendously content to let one activity after another go, and to await quietly and happily the opening of the door at the end of the passageway."

We shared lunch, and were able to see the new disabled access to the Meeting House, and other

improvements. Then Val Jones told us about the work she does in Sobell House supporting bereaved people: she spoke movingly of the value of the work, and the encouragement she gains from it.

Liz Rothschild talked about the history of green burial in this country, and how she had, through events in her own life, become more and more aware of the importance of engaging creatively with the fact of death in our lives; this resulted in her and her partner creating a green burial ground on their organic farm near Watchfield. Liz helped us to see that it is possible for relatives and friends to be much more directly involved in burials, if they wish it, than is usually the case. There is no need to follow the traditional pattern. For instance, coffins can be made of wicker, cardboard or felt;

*Continued on page 2, column 1*

### From Quaker Faith and Practice

There is laid on all who are present the responsibility to translate their prayers for comfort and support into thoughtful, kindly and sustained actions that will continue to help those who have lost a loved one to face life anew with courage, and to adapt themselves to their new circumstances.

**QF&P 17.16** George Gorman, 1973

**Deadline for contributions to the September 2013 issue: noon, Friday 23 August**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), and items for the calendar on page 6 can be emailed to [alessandro.simari@keble.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alessandro.simari@keble.ox.ac.uk). Paper copy can be left in the newsletter pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

Continued from page 1, column 2

there is no restriction on the type of vehicle that can carry a coffin – you can use your family car if it is big enough. There is no ‘right way’. Family and friends will know what is best, if they are given the confidence to think that way.

Like Peggy, Liz stressed how important it is to open up the subject with the people closest to you, to start the conversation, however difficult it is. We need to give thought to the practicalities: what sort of care and support do we want when we are nearing death? She introduced us to the document *Advance Decision*. This is a legally binding document which details your wishes regarding healthcare to be enacted if a time comes when you are unable to make decisions yourself. It has the advantage that the people close to you can know your wishes when faced with a medical crisis. Liz also suggested that we consider making a note of ‘Advance Funeral Wishes’ to be kept with our will.

In the afternoon, some of us went out to Watchfield, where Liz showed us around the Westmill Burial Ground, and told us about plans for the future: it is intended that the site will eventually become a small nature reserve. It was a beautiful day, sunny and windy, the wildflower meadow was in bloom, the view stretched out over the fields to the White Horse in the distance, and the silence was filled with the sound of birds.



We appreciated the amount of work which had been put in to make this topic so interesting and relevant, and agreed that we would like to bring it back to our Meeting for discussion.

**Anne Durham and Dorothy Heapy**  
(Headington LM)

In the gaps between  
the words, silence arises  
and there God abides...

**Ruth Kim**

## Secret Knowledge

Let me ask a question: do you need secret knowledge to become a Quaker? I’m almost certain the answer is no – as far as I know, we’re not Gnostics and, if further proof were needed, I’m a Quaker and I definitely have no secret knowledge! But let’s try another question: do you need secret knowledge to be an active member of Oxford Meeting? Think carefully, dear Friends, before replying, because I’m increasingly convinced the answer is yes.

I can already hear the howls of outrage, so I’ll explain. From the first time I came to Oxford Meeting, I’ve felt welcome and very much at home. However, I’m not one to sit on the sidelines. I believe that Quaker is as Quaker does, so I feel impelled to become involved with the business of the Meeting. The problem is, the more I get involved, the more I feel I can’t do right for doing wrong.

I think the root of my problem is that we have no rules. Please don’t misunderstand me – I truly value how the Quaker way dispenses with rigid regulations and strictures. Yet I’m starting to discover that there ARE rules, albeit unwritten, that newcomers like me transgress at their peril.

These unwritten rules are the secret knowledge that governs how we are expected to behave in Oxford Meeting, and this secret knowledge is difficult for newcomers to access. You’ll be thinking, perhaps, “All he has to do is ask,” or possibly, “If he attended more business meetings, everything would be clear.”

Sadly, I must disagree. I recall, for example, asking a weighty Friend how to decide whether to take a suggestion to Elders or to the Business Meeting. The answer was that if I’d read Faith and Practice, I wouldn’t need to ask. Then there was the Elder who couldn’t answer my question because it wasn’t their turn on the bench!

It’s not even clear always that there’s a question to ask. The Meeting recently authorised me to undertake an activity that involved some expenditure. The clerk said I should have the invoice sent direct to the treasurer. I did, only to be chided (justifiably) by the budget holder for this particularly activity for not telling them. It never occurred to me that the budget holder might be anyone other than the treasurer!

As for business meetings, I do, of course, learn a lot by attending them. At my present rate of progress, however, I still think it will take me a decade or two, should I live that long, before I really know how Oxford Meeting works.

So, dear Friends, if you're one of the Oxford Meeting Gnostics with the secret knowledge, do please share. After all, I'm fortunate as it's easy for me to make my feelings known by writing about them, but how many are there in our meeting who are keeping their confusion to themselves or, even worse, thinking of leaving because they feel they'll never understand our hidden rules?

**Keith Wilson**

---

## Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



**Steve Brooke**  
talking to Tanya Garland

My early life was in Birmingham and I'm proud to be working class. I feel those are my roots and I know that the kings and queens of England are not my story.

I have an older sister by the same parents but my father left when I was six, and I have a stepbrother and stepsister from my mother's second marriage. I didn't like my stepfather although I grew to respect him as I grew older and realized that people do the best they can. But I was an unhappy teenager and spent time dealing with envy and thinking that other people had an easier life with options for furthering their careers. I left school after taking O-levels and felt bitter that my mother and stepfather didn't support me in furthering my education, going on to university, and it took me a while to work out what sort of life I could have. I'd been good at languages at school and had a passion for all kinds of music. I'd sung in the choir and played the piano so after leaving school I eventually left Birmingham to do a four-year piano-tuning course in London. I really enjoyed the first two years of the course on a general musical education, but was very disappointed when I was not selected to continue with the full four years as

there were a restricted number of places. That was a low point in my life.

However, one day I walked into the Regent's Park office and they took me on as a gardener and I then went to study Horticulture in Kent. That was enough study for me – I prefer to learn by doing – but I got my certificate qualification and when I became a gardener, life was good. I worked at Great Dixter in East Sussex for six summers and was inspired by the five-acre garden and the owner, Christopher Lloyd, who was a famous garden writer. It had been his writings that had drawn me there. He had a love for plants and nature, a playfulness with people, and a mischievous enjoyment of life. I needed humour as a young person. Lenny Henry was from Birmingham with a working-class angle on life and was a favourite of mine. Comedians get to the heart of the truth and are prepared to make a fool of themselves. He was probably the first black comedian in Britain and I admired his courage.

I had a succession of jobs with good teachers until in 2001 I was appointed Head Gardener at All Souls College in Oxford. I am still there.

Gardening has allowed me to express myself. I have an apprentice now and enjoy sharing my knowledge. I try to create gardens without imposing my will, allowing the plants space to grow naturally and display their natural beauty, seeding themselves and growing to their natural shape and size, and I also encourage other creatures into the garden. There is a woodland garden near Iffley, owned by the college, with foxes, hedgehogs and there's evidence of badgers there. I've allowed some of the lawns to revert to meadow with snowdrops, primroses, cyclamen, and cow parsley.

I was put off Christianity early in my life – the bible stories just didn't seem relevant to my life, and I don't need to describe the peace and contentment I feel in nature. A fellow gardener told me recently that when he is in the garden he doesn't have to justify who he is. He feels good enough. I understand exactly what he meant by that. I am aware of class distinctions and I don't like pretentiousness but working in an elitist Oxford college based on privileged education and

*Continued from page 3, column 2*

hierarchy doesn't intrude on my work in the garden. We are all equal really.

In my early forties I was led back to religion by my wife, Karima. I had a scientific, rational view of the world so it was quite a shift for me to be open to spiritual and mythological language. I can speak French quite well. On holiday in Morocco in 2011 we came across a plaque written in French in a garden created by Marcel François. Translated it read, "It is poetry which re-creates the lost paradise; science and technical know-how alone are incapable of doing so."

Karima took me to a Quaker Meeting and to the Moslem Sufis, and I was suddenly open to a religious worldview. I lost my cynicism and could stop asking for proof and listen with my heart.

Moslems talk a lot about experiencing life through the heart rather than the head and one of the Sufi teachers, Nasrudin, used to do things to make people laugh. There was a story about a disciple who had pledged to give a spiritual lecture every day, but when one day no-one turned up he didn't deliver it. His master scolded him saying he should have given the lecture anyway. I like the story because it points the finger right at me. If I were that person, I would give up too, so it challenges me to keep going and it says that what one does is not about others but about oneself – our own integrity.



## Public transport links to other LMs

From 12 August until November, when space will be limited at FMH, we're being encouraged to visit the eight other LMs in the Area. Here are details on the public transport available on Sunday mornings. Maps and addresses for these LMs are available at [www.osamquakers.org.uk](http://www.osamquakers.org.uk) and in our green book of Members and Attenders.

**Abingdon Meeting**, 10:15 am. Wheelchair accessible, no hearing loop. The nearest bus stops are on Vineyard or Radley Road. Three options with the Oxford Bus Company are the following:

- X3 leaves St Aldates at 9:22 am; arrives Stratton Way at 9:40 am via Oxford Road and Vineyard
- X13 leaves High Street (opposite Queens Lane) at 9:33 am, calling Carfax, St Aldates, Abingdon Road; arrives Stratton Way at 9:55 am via Oxford Road and Vineyard
- Bus 35 leaves St Aldates at 9:00 am and 9:30 am via Abingdon Road, Kennington and Radley; journey takes 20-25 minutes

Return journeys:

- X3 leaves Stratton Way at 11:30 am and every 30 minutes via Vineyard and Oxford Road, to Abingdon Road and Castle Street; journey takes about 20 minutes
- X13 leaves Stratton Way at 11:45 am and every 30 minutes via Vineyard and Oxford Road, to St Aldates and High Street; journey takes about 20 minutes
- Bus 35 leaves Stratton Way at 11:58 am and 12:28 pm via Vineyard and Radley Road

**Burford Meeting**, 11 am. Wheelchair accessible and hearing loop. Stagecoach bus options include using a combination of buses S1 and 233:

- S1 departs George Street stop A5 for Witney at 9:20 am; arrives Witney bus garage 9:57 am. Bus 233 Departs Witney bus garage 10:30 am; arrives Burford war memorial 10:44 am

Return journey:

- Bus 233 departs Burford war memorial at 2:17 pm for Witney; arrives Witney Market Square stop A. Bus S1 departs Witney Market Square stop D at 12:28 pm and every twenty minutes; arrives Oxford George Street 35 minutes later

**Charlbury Meeting**, 10:30 am. Wheelchair accessible and hearing loop. Rail options include:

- First Great Western service leaving from Oxford platform 2 at 9:18 am; arrives Charlbury station 9:34 am
- Return: First Great Western service leaving Charlbury at 12:25 pm; arrives Oxford at 12:45 pm



**Faringdon Meeting**, 10:30 am. Sadly, no bus service in time for MfW. However, on 4 August, 6 October, and 1 December, after MfW there will be study sessions at about 12 pm followed by a bring-and-share lunch (the topic for 4 August is, “Is money the root of all evil?”). Stagecoach bus 66 departs from Gloucester Green at 10:45 am and arrives in Faringdon at 11:26 am.

**Headington Meeting**, 10 am. Wheelchair accessible, no hearing loop. For detailed walking directions, visit <http://tinyurl.com/OxHdn> The Oxford Bus Company options include:

- Bus 8 leaves Castle Street at 9:10, 9:20, 9:30, 9:35 am, to Headington shops; journey takes about 12 minutes
- Return journey runs every 10 minutes

**Marlborough Meeting**, 10:30 am. Sadly, no bus service on Sunday.

**Swindon Meeting**, 10:30 am. Wheelchair accessible and hearing loop. Options through Oxford Railway Station include:

- First Great Western service leaving from platform 1 at 9:01 am to Didcot Parkway, arriving 9:16 am. First Great Western service leaving from Didcot platform 1 at 9:30 am to Swindon, arriving 9:47 am
- Return: First Great Western service leaving Swindon at 12:11 or 12:41 pm, change at Didcot Parkway, arriving back in Oxford 12:55 or 1:30 pm

**Witney Meeting**, 10:30 am (but 10 am on the first Sunday of each month). Wheelchair accessible, no hearing loop. Stagecoach bus options:

- S1 departs George Street stop A5 at 9:20 am; arrives in Witney High Street at 9:55 am
- Return: S1 departs Witney High Street at 12:00, 12:20, and 12:40 pm, to Oxford city centre; journey takes 39 minutes

**Lis Burch**



## August Informal Get-together

During the building work on the meeting house it might be more difficult for us to keep in contact with one another and get together as a community. We hope you'll be able to come and catch up with other Friends informally on Sunday **25 August** from 12:30 pm in either the garden or garden room (depending on weather). Everyone is very welcome, including people who haven't been at meeting for worship in Oxford that morning. It will probably be a bit more informal than a bring-and-share lunch, and we ask that you bring your own food. In September we'll resume the normal bring-and-share lunches.

**Overseers**

### Improving the Meeting House

We will be moving all the furniture from the meeting house to the garage and to 43 on Sunday **11 August** after the 11 o'clock MfW finishes. If you could help us in any way, please contact Steve Brooke or me ([ursula.howard@pop3.poptel.org.uk](mailto:ursula.howard@pop3.poptel.org.uk)) or leave a message in our pigeonholes. There will be trolleys for moving heavy items. Refreshing drinks will also be welcome!

Starting the next day, our meeting house will be renovated until November, but MfW will continue at the usual times. Information about room changes and other advice can be found on page 3 of the May issue of *Forty-Three* and in the new leaflets available in our lobby.

**Ursula Howard**



Gwithian Doswell's blog about her experiences earlier this year as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine and Israel can be found here:

<http://springtimeinpalestineandisrael.wordpress.com>

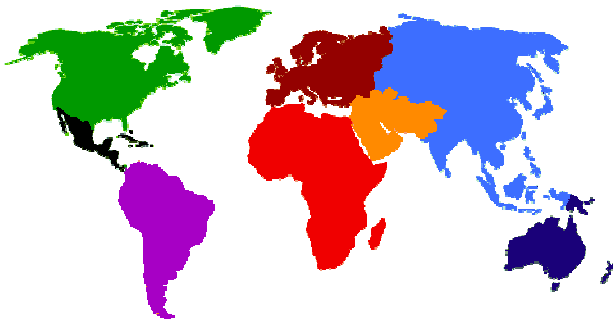
## CALENDAR FOR AUGUST 2013

*All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated*

Sunday 4	2:30 pm	OX1 gathering (in Abingdon) — see July issue, p. 4	Monday 12	—	Beginning of building works — see p. 5
Sunday 5	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Monday 12	4 - 6 pm	Poems in the Library — see below
Tuesday 6	2 - 6:30 pm	Quaker Vigil (in Aldermaston)	Sunday 18	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Saturday 10	4 pm	Memorial Meeting for Maretta Stark	Wednesday 21	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 11	11 am	Friendly Bible Study	Sunday 25	11 am	Friendly Bible Study
Sunday 11	12 pm	Furniture removal — see p. 5	Sunday 25	12:30 pm	Bring-your-own lunch — see p. 5

**19 August** is World Humanitarian Day, an opportunity “to advance a powerful and proactive idea: People Helping People”, according to Ban Ki-moon.

[www.un.org/en/events/humanitarianday](http://www.un.org/en/events/humanitarianday)



### Three hours by train....

I've just spent a relaxing and peaceful weekend with the Quaker Community, who send their greetings. Worship occurs twice daily, and on Sunday mornings they host MfW for Hope Valley LM. Their website is [www.quakercommunity.org.uk](http://www.quakercommunity.org.uk)



**Mark Ebden**

There will be Poems in the Library on Monday **12 August** and Monday **9 September**, from 4 till 6 pm. All welcome. **Stephen Yeo**

### 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](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, 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)*