



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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In the Silence

What happens in the silence of a Meeting for Worship (MfW)? What's supposed to happen? I searched high and low for answers, but they were hard to find and when I found them, I wasn't sure what they meant. Now that I've attended Quaker meetings for some time, however, I can at least try to answer the first question – speaking, of course, entirely on the basis of my own experiences.

I'm not suggesting others will have similar experiences or that my experiences are in any way right or wrong. I just remember that when I started attending Quaker worship, I would have welcomed information about someone's experiences – in fact, anyone's experiences – but I wasn't yet confident enough to ask a Friend face to face.

As I settle into a MfW, I usually find I've brought with me some topics that seem worth thinking about. I've read that you shouldn't do this but, for me, it's hard to avoid. Sometimes, one of these topics will open out as I think about it and I'll gain useful insights, but more often my mind begins to wander. Then, almost always, comes the "shopping list" session, where day-to-day trivia crowd my mind. I try to move gently away from these thoughts.

So far, so mundane, but often something else happens. At one MfW, for example, I suddenly became aware how much I loved my wife. That may seem strange – we've been married over 40

years so it's rather late to discover I love her! But this was something different – a warm and very intense feeling I can't really describe. If it had been just that, and not directed toward Kath, I would probably have said that I'd felt the love of God. Maybe I did, but if so, His love was certainly encompassing both of us.

This week was very different. I was just progressing beyond the shopping list when suddenly a realisation exploded – that's the only fitting word – in my brain. I realised that I have a problem. I'm much inclined to ignore other people's input and advice. In fact, I sometimes go out of my way to ensure that advice and support isn't offered.

Possibly everyone who knows me well was already aware of this but, until that sudden insight in the MfW, it was not something I had properly understood or accepted. Being aware of the problem is not particularly comfortable, because I now have to do something about it, which means changing the habits of a lifetime. I wonder if this might be the experience that I've heard described as "standing in the light"?

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.

QF&P 2.35 George Fox,

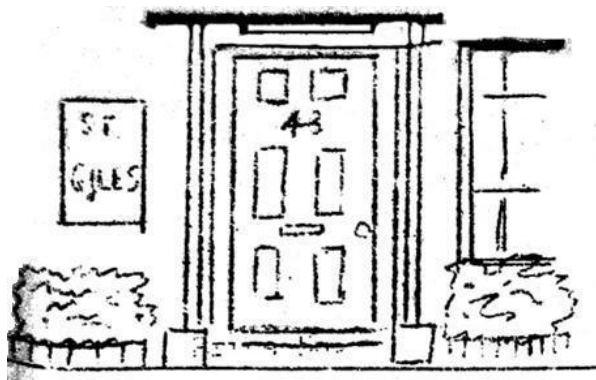
Deadline for contributions to the July 2013 issue: noon, Friday 21 June

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 the newsletter pigeonhole at the Meeting House. For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

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I've no space to describe the other interesting and almost always unexpected experiences I've had in the silence but, if you're new to Quakerism, you now at least know about one person's adventures during MfW. And, if you're a more experienced Friend, I would welcome your comments about the second question I posed at the start of this article: what is *supposed* to happen in the silence?

Keith Wilson



Reviewing key aspects of P&F's work

Over the summer, the Premises and Finance Committee (P&F) is planning to review some aspects of our work, to help develop our practice into the future. The review was endorsed at Local Meeting for Business in May (see minute 36/13). As part of the process, we would like to consult with as many Oxford Members and Attenders as possible.

P&F will be looking at:

- Wardenship and our roles and responsibilities as employers: this is good practice, it is not about individuals
- The management of our premises, including lettings
- Our relationships with our Meeting community, and what we can expect of each other and those we employ
- How we can be more welcoming, inclusive and accessible to the wider community
- What developments to Oxford Meeting's premises would we like to see, in the light of our sustainability work and the needs of a diverse community of people
- How P&F's work can underpin the spiritual life of our Meeting.

Outcomes: We hope the outcomes of the review will be practical and specific and reflect what the

Meeting wants, our priorities now and over the coming years.

How will we go about it? A Steering Group has been set up to conduct the review, made up of: Dave Dight (warden), Jill Green, Ursula Howard (convenor) Ruth Mason, Dennis Price, Elisabeth Salisbury, Simonne Samuelson and Janet Toye.

Open Gatherings: As agreed at LMWB, there will be two open gatherings at FMH, at 12:30 pm on Sunday **23 June** and at 7:30 pm on Friday, **19 July**. We very much hope you will be able to attend one of these meetings and share your views and ideas. We will offer refreshments. The meetings are not part of a series, but an opportunity for Friends to participate. If you can't do so, you're invited to write a note to the group via me.

We will complete the review by mid-Autumn, to include sharing recommendations at LMWB.

Ursula Howard on behalf of P&F

Addendum

P&F is taking forward the decision taken at Oxford LMWB in May to make a full survey of accessibility and inclusion in the light of current legislation: during 2013 we will draw up a list of priorities. We'll consult as widely as possible to find ways of improving accessibility for all. Oxford LM fully accepts its responsibilities under the disability and inclusion acts, has agreed to keep this on our Local Meeting agenda as a standing item, and would like other LM committees to do the same.

Our first practical step is to provide a more appropriate temporary ramp and place it outside before all our Meetings for Worship as a matter of routine, and remove it afterwards. I'm working with Dave to identify a robust but light model as quickly as possible. The ramp should be kept in an easily accessible place for our hirers and information about it provided in our lettings agreements. Our Meeting hopes that the wardens and welcomers will take responsibility for ensuring it is in place. And awkward as it is, until the new one arrives, we ask for everyone's help and patience while we use the wooden ramp.

Introducing Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting



Chris White

talking to Tanya Garland

I used to run a lot of therapy groups and one question I asked was, 'Of all the parents you could have chosen, why did you choose yours?' As I've grown older, I've noticed how much my parents have influenced me.

One key influence was the Royal Air Force as until I was twenty, I saw my father going to work in his RAF uniform every day. We lived all over the world and had a privileged and an adventurous lifestyle. By the time I was eleven, I had spent two years in Bahrain and three in Malta, and was a confident swimmer and sailor.

From my father, I gained a clear message that planes were safe, life was to be enjoyed in the fresh air, and anything mechanical that broke could be fixed. This approach to life has permeated my adult life. From my mother, I gained a real sense of caring and sociability. Paradoxically, my father was a very difficult man, at times stubborn, opinionated, critical and unkind, and during my teens and twenties, I avoided him a great deal. It was the difficult, unpleasant parts of my father's personality that led me to become a reflective teenager with an interest in people's psychological make-up.

I boarded at Reading School, while my parents lived on the outskirts of Reading. Although I didn't like the school's ethos, I enjoyed this time of independence and separation from them. Two great epiphanies came when I was fifteen. The first was when I volunteered for Community Service in a large psychiatric hospital for people with learning difficulties instead of joining the Cadet Force. For three years I spent Friday afternoons in the children's ward, working over the holidays as well. The second turning point was when I was suspended from school and in trouble with the police for smoking marijuana. On my return to school, only one master welcomed me back – he was a regular Attender at Reading Meeting.

I spent a year working in the Cambridge Night Shelter before starting my degree at Durham

University, and completed my degree in Sociology and an MA in Counselling and Psychology. I loved the Northeast of England, and lived in the small mining villages around Durham until I was 30. I'd spent my early years living a privileged life abroad, and was aware of the great social and economic disparities in the world. This remains an abiding concern of mine.

During these years I felt a strong spiritual calling that didn't fit with conventional Christianity. I had gone on Buddhist retreats but then a friend suggested I go to Durham Meeting. For me that Sunday in September 1979 was one of the greatest turning points in my life. Durham Meeting was tiny – maybe six people – with not even a Preparative Meeting. I felt immediately at home and became a Member. From 1979 until 1991 I was very involved with Quakers and was the first Quaker Chaplain for Durham University. After spending a year in Miami, I joined Hammersmith Meeting where, for two years, I was also Clerk of Westminster Monthly Meeting.

In 1991 things changed. I moved to Hertfordshire and struggled to settle in Hitchin Meeting, attended very sporadically and enjoyed having no role to play. Eventually, I grew to love it and involved myself in the Children's Meeting and the Monthly Meeting Camp with my first son, Richard.

In 1998, for family reasons, I moved to Thame. I struggled with the large Oxford Meeting with its extensive amount of ministry, and in 2000 I stopped attending and thought about resigning my membership. This changed in 2008. Catherine and I decided to marry and I felt I needed to return with her and the children and decide about being a Friend or not.

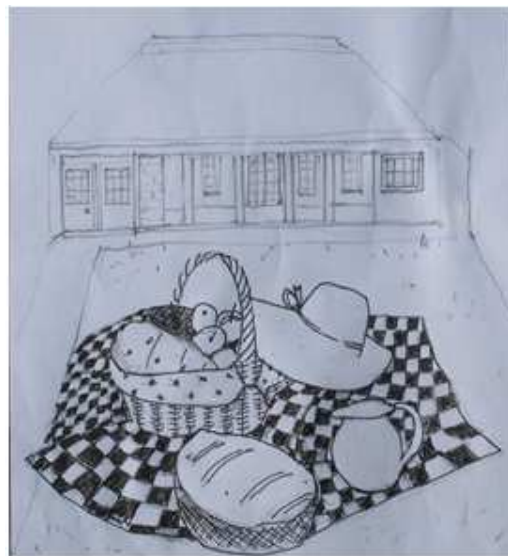
We had a wonderful wedding in the Meeting House, which exceeded all expectations of the special magic of a Quaker wedding. I have been involved with Meeting regularly since then, especially with our twins, Beatrice and Daniel.

For the last 29 years, I have been a Mental Health Social Worker in various capacities; working with children, and adults and with older adults for the last three years. Since 2001, I was based at the Littlemore and Warneford Hospitals, and now I'm in Manzil Way.

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For the first twelve years of going to Meeting, my faith felt vital and exhilarating. It enabled me to get in touch with the most elemental parts of myself and others, but the last twenty years have felt different.

I refuse to call myself a Christian, as I see it as a label that sets me apart from people of other faiths, and I have never had a personal relationship with Christ. I've gained a greater scepticism for organised religion, which has extended to the Society of Friends; and whilst I often value ministry and give ministry myself, it is the gathered silence of a Quaker Meeting for Worship which for me has the most transcendent quality to it.



Jill Green

Sustainability Picnic

Sunday 14 July, 12:30 – 4:00 pm

Friends willing to speak to the Media

Please let us know if you'd like to join our list of those to contact when the media requests to speak with Oxford Friends.

We also wish to be more proactive in approaching the media ourselves. To this end, please let us know if you'd like to join a list of Friends willing to speak who have expertise in specific subjects/areas of concern. (You'll be asked for your mobile number as well.)

Any Friend accepting an invitation to speak needs to emphasise that, except on matters covered by our testimonies, there is a broad range of views within Quakerism.

Sandra Figgess and Judith Atkinson
(clerk@oxfordquakers.org)

Friends in Print

Page 14 of the 5 April issue of *The Friend* contains 'Truth, lies and paradox' by **Dave Dight**.

Peggy Heeks and **Jill Green** contributed articles to the May issue of *Quaker Voices*: 'Get a life: Make a life', and 'A personal journey with the conflict in Israel/Palestine' respectively. *Quaker Voices* have been gradually printing the four 'Lessons from the Oncology Ward' by our late Friend **Maretta Stark**, and this issue includes her last, 'The Joy of Simple Things'. The four lessons are also available on the *Forty-Three* webpage, in the issues spanning last August to November:

www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

In August 2011, Britain Yearly Meeting committed itself to becoming a sustainable community. We invite you to join a celebration of what we have achieved two years on, and together seek inspiration for the future from each other and the wider Quaker community.

This all-age occasion will include:

- A bring-and-share vegetarian lunch (and the opportunity to experiment with making a vegan dish if that idea appeals)
- Singing together (any suggestions for appropriate songs would be very welcome)
- An upbeat review of ways in which we, as individuals and as a Quaker Meeting, have already cut our carbon footprint
- A display of the plans for forthcoming alterations to the Meeting House and its premises
- Brainstorming of new ideas and solutions to any difficulties we've encountered as individuals or as a community
- Circle dancing

Planning for the event is ongoing, so if you have suggestions to contribute, please contact any member of the planning group:

Alan Allport: alan.allport@psy.ox.ac.uk

Jill Green: quakers@greenfig.org.uk

Sue Smith: wishingchair@btinternet.com

Janet Toye: janettoye@phoncoop.coop

Meetings and Notices

Invitation from Headington Meeting

We'll be pleased to welcome Abingdon and Oxford Meetings on Friday **21 June** at 7:30 pm. The evening will consist of a (cold) bring-and-share supper, preceded by very brief talks by Sister Marie Ann about the Priory and her Order, and by Leslie Durham about the history of Headington Meeting. We meet in the Priory at 85 Old High Street, Oxford. There are only a very limited number of parking spaces, so please use the car park behind Waitrose nearer the traffic lights in the same street (£1.30 – no change given).

Best wishes,

Stewart Jeffrey, Clerk of Headington Meeting

Economic Justice Group

We meet next on Wednesday **19 June** at 7 for 7:30 pm in the Garden Room. The main subject under discussion will be the newly published book *The Burning Question* by Mike Berners Lee and Duncan Clark on the latest developments concerning climate change.

Economic growth maintains the world's precipitous slide into damaging climate change and must therefore be replaced by a sustainable form of economy, which would cap emissions.

Dennis Price

Friday with Friends

Friday 28 June

Meeting House, 43 St. Giles

Tea and cake from 7, talk at 7:30 pm

Being an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine and Israel

Our Friend Gwithian Doswell has just returned from three months' service with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). She will speak about her experiences and what she witnessed, and share ideas of small actions we can all take that will help to bring about a just and sustainable peace in the region. The presentation will be followed by discussion, finishing at 9:30 pm. All welcome.

Gwithian has started a blog and is gradually uploading her EAPPI newsletters plus one or two other articles.

Recycle Week: 17 - 23 June, focusing on metals, plastics, packaging, textiles and food waste. www.recyclenow.com

Oxford's annual Friendship Walk: Thursday 13 June, from 5:30 for a 6:15 start

Starting from the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre, Richmond Road; walking via the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, High Street; and ending at the Central Oxford Mosque, Manzil Way.



Photographs from last year's walk are at www.oxcof.org.uk

CALENDAR FOR JUNE 2013

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 2	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Wednesday 19	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 2	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 19	7 for 7:30 pm	Economic Justice Group — see p. 5
Tuesday 4	2 - 6:30 pm	Quaker Vigil <i>(in Aldermaston)</i>	Thursday 20	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults
Wednesday 5		World Environment Day: www.unep.org/wed	Friday 21	7:30 pm	Bring-and-share meal <i>(in Headington)</i> — see p. 5
Thursday 6	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults	Sunday 23	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study
Friday 7	7 for 7:30 pm	<i>Kierkegaard: Exposition & Critique</i> , FwF — see May issue, p. 4	Sunday 23	12:30 pm	Open Gathering — see pages 1-2
Sunday 9	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Thursday 27	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults
Thursday 13	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Friday 28	7 for 7:30 pm	EAPPI FwF (Friday with Friends) — see page 5
Thursday 13	5:30 for 6:15 pm	Annual Friendship Walk <i>(from Oxford Synagogue)</i> — see p. 5	Sunday 30	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study
Sunday 16	10:15 am — 1 pm	Fairtrade stall in lobby	Sunday 30	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch



OXFAM WATER WEEK

Monday 1 July to Friday 5 July

www.oxfam.org.uk/waterweek

Space Needed

Owing to major work on the Meeting House from mid-August for about four months, furniture will need to be kept elsewhere. Dry storage space is therefore needed for items currently kept in the car park garage. Can anyone help with this? Use or part-use of a garage for this period would be ideal.

Dave Dight, Warden

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.

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