



FORTY-THREE

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

NEWSLETTER

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MAY 2013

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Poverty Then and Now The work of OxFAP

Nearly 25 years ago, in 1989, Members of this Meeting formed an anti-poverty group which became OxFAP (Oxford Friends Action on Poverty). The founders of OxFAP were outraged by the failure of Margaret Thatcher's government to address poverty and provide social services, while reducing the rate of income tax. The injustice of the poll tax had sparked public outrage. Beggars were appearing on street corners in major cities, and in Oxford there was growing concern that the affluence of the 'dreaming spires' masked a completely different Oxford, where poverty was growing.

Fast forward now to post-recession 2013 with the 'bedroom tax' and radical changes to the benefit system. You don't need me to tell you that things have gotten worse: the facts speak for themselves. Twenty years ago it was shocking to learn that one in five children in Oxford was living below the poverty line. Today it is one in four, according to the 2013 survey from the Child Poverty Action Group. A national survey showed that the gap between rich and poor in Oxford has widened, and that over 8,000 children are living in poverty. (This was defined as either living in households with annual incomes of £16,000 or less, or in families not working or in receipt of benefits.)

People ask me sometimes what a small fundraising project such as OxFAP can do in the face of such a huge problem. What is the *point* of OxFAP? Well, the point is partly that a little money can go a long way. During the course of writing this article, OxFAP has agreed two requests for grants from the

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Yearly Meeting is not, in the last resort, made up of a body of experts. People who know a great deal about the matter in hand may do most of the talking, central committee members familiar with the complexities of translating convictions into practical terms may appear to be leading the meeting. But a few halting yet sincere hesitations, uttered by a Friend from a small meeting in a distant county may, in fact, be of more significance in revealing a matter in its true setting than all the sophistication of the committee worthies. Again and again on deep issues it is reality as known and experienced by the simple and single-minded meeting, that does not know too much to have lost its simple faith, that guides the Society; and the central committee or its administrator who knows that its service is, in the end, related to the life of the local meetings in the country, will have a deep respect for the weight of Yearly Meeting.

From *QF&P 6.08*, Roger Wilson, 1949

Deadline for contributions to the June 2013 issue: noon, Friday 17 May

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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No Second Night Out team, who work with rough sleepers at O'Hanlon House: £30 for T shirts, underwear and a jumper for a male client who arrived without any basic clothes; £50 for electricity for a woman found rough-sleeping, so that she could return to her accommodation.

Our funds may be small, but working closely as we do with local agencies, we are flexible in how we operate and can respond quickly. The £5,000 that we raised (you gave!) last year was spent partly on one-off donations to individuals or families facing often urgent needs like the ones above, normally less than £120. The balance went in larger grants to some of the key organisations themselves.

But OxFAP isn't just about money. OxFAP is important because of what it says about us, about Quakers, about Oxford Meeting. It says that even though the task is overwhelming, we are prepared to give it a go, to do something rather than nothing. It says that Quakers are about community, our whole community. Above all, OxFAP matters to you, Members and Attenders of Oxford Meeting. We know this, because in the past you have given so generously and we hope you will continue to do so. Please do tell us of any new initiatives or projects that we should know about.

Jo Dobry, on behalf of the OxFAP committee,
Matt Godwin, Sue Smith and Ros Weatherall

Yearly Meeting



Yearly Meeting will be at Friends House in London from **24-27 May**. It's not only the annual business meeting of Friends in Britain, but also an opportunity to educate and inform ourselves and

connect with each other. It can also be an exciting and fulfilling part of our spiritual journey and is for all members of our community.

Even if you are not able to attend Yearly Meeting, you can still think about the themes beforehand, and uphold the Meeting as it considers the issues. One of the themes this year will be 'trust in the spirit'. We have been asked to consider three questions:

"Disciplined use of time, energy and material goods frees us for greater attentiveness to God and simultaneously moves us into more just and loving relationships with the community..." Patricia Loring, *Listening spirituality, vol. 1: Personal spiritual practices among Friends*.

1. How have you discerned the right way forward in your own life?

"Friends' meeting for business is the corporate effort to turn over governance of ourselves to God, at a variety of levels." Patricia Loring, *Listening spirituality, vol. 2: Corporate spiritual practice among Friends*.

2. What experiences have you had of Quaker Meetings being guided by the Spirit when making decisions?

3. What do you value about the ways in which Friends work together?

We have set up a meeting on **12 May** to look at these three questions as a Meeting. It will take place from 12:30 to 3 pm. Please bring your own lunch to sustain you!

Information on other topics during Yearly Meeting can be found in the Documents in Advance from www.quaker.org.uk/ym

Lis Burch and Tina Leonard



Recognising your spiritual gifts

The workshop will be held twice this summer, on Saturday **18 May** and Saturday **20 July** at FMH from 10 am to 4 pm. More details are in the December 2012 issue of *Forty-Three* or from me.

Tina Leonard





Gathering of the UK Nontheist Friends Network

I attended the annual gathering of the UK Nontheist Friends Network (NFN) at Woodbrooke on the first weekend in March. This group is now a recognised informal group of Britain Yearly Meeting. Because of my re-thinking of my own beliefs over many years, I was present at the first gathering two or three years ago. This year I was asked to run a workshop on John Macmurray's philosophy as it relates to nontheism – defined by most members of the group as a doubt about the truth of the traditional concept of God. Nontheist Friends are clear that they are Quakers first and nontheists second, and they have no desire to change the beliefs of others, but do wish to be able to be open and honest with Members of their Meetings about their own beliefs.

The group of about 50 came from various parts of Britain and both parts of Ireland (one from the North and two from Cork in the Republic). There were several former clergymen present, including the keynote speaker, Michael Wright. Sometimes nontheist Friends are told they should join the Humanists, but Michael Wright said that though he has conducted humanist funerals, the fact that he is willing to include hymns and prayers, if asked, meant that he was struck off the list of recognised Humanist officiators. The latitude for variety of belief amongst Humanist groups was equally narrow in the experience of some others present.

Nontheism is, for a number of Quakers, the removal of an impediment in their religious life. They come to Quakers seeking a way of life and a community which they value and wish to continue in (or they would not still be here). Some are pillars of their Meetings. They ponder what worship and prayer mean and, like all Quakers, have a variety of views about many aspects of the religious life. Further information about the NFN can be found on their website at www.nontheistfriends.org

Jeanne Warren 3

Meeting for Worship from August to November

From 12 August until November, the Meeting House where we normally meet for worship on Sundays will be closed for renovation. We'll meet in the Garden Room, the Garden (when it's warm enough) and the Long Room instead. Children's Meetings will be held in the Library and the Warden's office. Coffee and Tea won't be served after 9:30 MfW to avoid overrunning and congestions, but will be served after the 11 am MfW. Our monthly bring-and-share lunch and Local Meeting for Worship for Business (LMWB) will be held in the Garden Room.

Friends who haven't already done so are encouraged to sign up to our Clerk's email notices circulation for this period; those not on email might like to have a 'buddy' on email who will ensure they are kept informed. More details are also available in our LMWB minutes, including minute 15/13, and we're willing to make changes to any plans as needed, depending on how things work out.

Elders, the Children's committee and P&F members have given a lot of thought to the plans and many people contributed ideas which helped us during LMWB in March. It has been a happy process working together on this and I hope the new and different ways of gathering over the Autumn, including getting to know more people from other Meetings, will be enjoyable.



Ursula Howard, Mark Ebdon and
Premises and Finance Committee

Poems in the Library

Dates for the Spring-Summer season are
29 April, 20 May, 1 July, and 12 August.

All are at 4 till 6 pm in the Library at FMH.

Stephen Yeo

Fellowship of Reconciliation

Since 1935, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) has brought together several religions in a network of faith-based nonviolent action. During my visit in April to the Darvell community in East Sussex (www.bruderhof.com), I learned about the next FoR event, intended for young adults but older friends are welcome. It will be held in Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire, from **4 to 6 May** and the theme is 'Called to be Peacemakers: Peace Inside and Out'. The weekend will end with a pilgrimage and protest from Yardley Hastings to Downing Street to present a Drones Quilt to Number 10. The all-inclusive cost is £50 but bursaries are available. Contact Jessica@for.org.uk for more details.

Mark Ebdon



**Bring and share
your heart and soul
and some local
food if you can**

Abingdon Friends invite Oxford and Headington Friends to supper in the Garden Room, 43 St. Giles, on Friday **3 May** at 7 pm.

We want to get to know you better, so most of the evening will be talking time. Will you bring something you care about to share over the meal with others who recognise a like mind or a kindred spirit?

Many Abingdon friends share an interest in growing food, so we will provide enough to eat to sustain us all. But we hope you will add to the feast by bringing a local speciality of your own.

This is part of the Strengthening our Area Meeting Study Project.

Rosie Page

Fridays with Friends

Garden Room
From 7 for 7:30,
finishing by 9:30 pm

QCEA and militarism in the EU Friday **10 May**

Chris Venables, Peace Assistant at the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) will speak about defending Europe: military cooperation, security research and inflatable robots. This will be followed by discussion. To find out more about Quakers in Europe and their work on peace across the EU, go to the QCEA website, www.qcea.org or look in the library in FMH for the latest QCEA newsletter.

Discussion of Daphne Hampson's *Kierkegaard: Exposition & Critique* Friday **7 June**

The author writes: *I am privileged to speak about my new book. Several Friends have expressed an interest in Kierkegaard (or they simply want to hear what I've been up to).*

5 May marks the bicentenary of Kierkegaard's birth. There will be a jubilee conference in Copenhagen and it will be celebrated the world over. One of the greatest and most original thinkers of the nineteenth century, Kierkegaard is held to be the Ur-father of diverse movements of thought, from existentialism to dialectical theology, in the twentieth.

Matters to discuss range from Kierkegaard's famed 'leap of faith' in advocating the case for Christianity, to his understanding of subjectivity as truth, to the nature of the self, the origin of angst and despair, and the concept of love as agape. Not the least cause of fascination is what different presuppositions an intelligent European could hold, oh so recently.

There is no presupposition whatever that you will have read the book. If you do want a copy, it is available at 20% discount: £20 for a hardback book. You can either go to the Oxford University Press website and put AAFLY4 in the promotion code box, or email daphne.hampson@theology.ox.ac.uk. There is a borrowing copy and a reference copy in the FMH library. Best to look at it before buying!

Meetings and Notices

Area Meeting

This will be held on Saturday **11 May** at **Burford** Friends Meeting House at 10:30 am. The AGM of the Charitable Company of the Oxford and Swindon Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain will be held at 12:30 pm. Following lunch (provided), we'll hear a talk by Sean Beane from the Equality Trust.

Robert Stocks

robert.stocks@btinternet.com, 01235 832147

World Fairtrade Day

The Abingdon Chamber of Commerce Fairtrade Group will be holding an all-day afternoon tea to promote World Fairtrade Day on Sat. **11 May**. There will be Fairtrade teas and coffees, and cakes made using Fairtrade ingredients.



Economic Justice Group

We'll meet on Wednesday **15 May** at 7 for 7:30 pm in the Long Room to discuss 'Globalization, Climate Change and Economic Injustice — brainstorming for future action'. All are welcome to attend.

Dennis Price

Wednesday **15 May** is

International Conscientious Objectors Day

www.ppu.org.uk/coday

University Lectures

Here are a few of this month's lectures at the University of Oxford; some are intended for specialists, and some for a general audience. For details, do a text search on the lecture title in *The Gazette*: <http://tinyurl.com/LecturesMay>

- *Is atheism 'normal'? Reflections from the cognitive science of religion* (8:30 pm, **2 May**)
- *Christ and the Human Condition — Dying and 'death before death'* (5 pm, **2 May**)
- *Combining freedom and diversity: the challenge of religious difference* (5 pm, **3 May**)
- *What makes a belief believable?* (5 pm, **14 May**)
- *Is dignity a religious idea?* (11 am, **16 May**)
- *Is there a place at the science–religion table for mathematics?* (8:30 pm, **16 May**)
- *Remembering Christ: on the practice and politics of memory* (5 pm, **16 May**)
- *Moral theology and social anthropology: on the prospects and problems of an everyday ethics* (5 pm, **23 May**)
- *Is universalism ethnocentric?* (5 pm, **28 May**)



Becky's Bicycling

We bid a temporary farewell as our Friend cycles 3,415 miles across the USA. You can follow her progress at <http://riddellcycle.webs.com> and sponsor her at www.justgiving.com/BeckyandRogerRiddell
Good luck, Becky — we'll miss you!

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2013

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 2	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Wednesday 15	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Friday 3	7 pm	Bring-and-share meal — see p. 4	Wednesday 15	7 for 7.30 pm	Economic Justice Group — see p. 5
Saturday 4 - Monday 6		FoR (<i>Northamptonshire</i>) — see p. 4	Thursday 16	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults
Sunday 5	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Saturday 18	10 am—4 pm	Recognizing your Spiritual Gifts — see p. 2
Sunday 5	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Sunday 19	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study
Tuesday 7	2 - 6:30 pm	Quaker Vigil (<i>in Aldermaston</i>)	Monday 20	4-6 pm	Poems in the Library — see p. 3
Thursday 9	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults	Thursday 23	7:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Young Adults
Friday 10	7 for 7.30 pm	Friday with Friends — see p. 4	Friday 24 – Monday 27		Britain Yearly Meeting (<i>in London</i>)
Saturday 11	10.30 am	Area Meeting (<i>in Burford</i>) — see p. 5	Sunday 26	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study
Sunday 12	11:00 am	Friendly Bible Study	Sunday 26	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Sunday 12	12:30—3 pm	Preparatory Meeting for Yearly Meeting	Thursday 30	7:30 pm	MfW for Young Adults

Wireless internet access is available in FMH. Those needing to use it can get the required information from me. **Dave Dight**, oxford@quaker.org.uk



12-18 May

www.caweek.org

Save the date: Sunday 14 July
Summer Picnic in the Garden, Celebrating Sustainability
Details from Alan Allport

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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