

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 444

April 2016



Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Listen



On my desk sits a little painted stone that quietly reminds me to...listen. Giving a report to Premises and Finance is all part of the job but at last month's Business Meeting I felt it was time to begin a new conversation with the whole Meeting – to listen to *you* more. Waving about a welcome mat and wielding a brand new toilet brush may have caught your attention, but listening to what you all have to say is what matters. The last year has seen a lot of change in and around the Meeting House and we need to communicate that better. It's sometimes simply a matter of letting you know where we've put things as we try to use the space we have more efficiently. For example, there's now a Fairtrade 'Shop in a box' – it's actually in a cupboard in the hall, but open when you want and able to sell you Fairtrade goods we buy for the Meeting House at cost price. Did you know that if you are a bit cold you can make use of

fleeces kept in the garden room cupboards instead of switching on the heating? "How cool is that!" someone exclaimed confusingly.

We are trying to make our home available, welcoming and safe for the widest cross section of folk who use it through the week. Friends on Duty have been a wonderful addition to our Quaker presence in this work. We are about to do a disability audit to see, feel and hear how we shape up in providing the best help for those with greater need. All this is practical ministry – part of the day to day running of this busy place – but we can't do this without your input. You need to tell us what you want this Meeting House to be and do over the next few years. We need to be relevant to the whole community we serve and that includes YOU! So if you have a bright idea, come and share it. If you have a little niggles – tell us, then together we can try and sort it. And let's try and enjoy what we do and who we are – it may rub off on others too.

Deb Arrowsmith

From Quaker Faith and Practice

Love is the hardest lesson in Christianity; but, for that reason, it should be most our care to learn it.

William Penn, 1693

QF&P 22.01

Deadline for contributions to the May 2016 issue: noon, Thursday 21 April

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 office@oxfordquakers.org. Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.
For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org

"We will not fight": A programme of events in Oxford about resistance to war



Saturday 14 – Saturday 28 May, 11am – 2pm,
New Road Baptist Church, Bonn Square

Exhibition: 'The world is my country'
Posters and stories that celebrate the people and movements that opposed the First World War

Emily Johns' beautiful art work and Gabriel Carlyle's informative text illustrate the stories of the courage and chutzpah of the people and organisations that opposed the war and took action to stop it, bringing their stories alive for our generation.

Sunday 15 May 12 noon – 1:30pm,
Peace Plaque at Bonn Square

International Conscientious Objectors' Day Commemoration event. Testimonies, poems, readings, and music from Sea Green Singers. This event is organised by the Oxford CND branch, oxfordcnd@phonecoop.coop.

Thursday 19 May, 7:30pm,
Old Court Room, Oxford Town Hall

Play: *We will not fight*, Conscientious Objectors in the First World War. The play tells the story of what happened to the men that refused to fight, because they felt that war was wrong and they could take no part in it. The play focuses on the fate of two men, tells us who supported them, how their rights were established, and recreates their tribunal appearances. The 'conscience clause' was groundbreaking in establishing individual liberties and strength of commitment to human rights in Britain. The performance will be followed by an audience discussion.

Thursday 26 May, 7:30pm,
New Road Baptist Church, Bonn Square

Conscientious objection, then and now: speakers' panel and audience discussion. The speakers will be Symon Hill, author and activist for peace and nonviolence, Annette Bygott, local peace campaigner, and Hannah Brock from War Resisters International. These three speakers will present the picture of conscientious objection as it was in World War I, in World War II, and how it is now. They will then host a panel discussion with the audience about the issues raised.

Saturday 16 July – Saturday 8 October, The Gallery at Oxford Town Hall

Exhibition: *We will not fight*: Oxford and conscientious objectors in the First World War

Henry Gillett and Harry Waddle were Oxford conscientious objectors. We will explore what happened to them and other COs, from arrest to prison or alternative war service, why they objected, and the impact of their beliefs on their lives and families. This is part of *Oxford's Great War* exhibition organised by the Museum of Oxford.

These events are organised by the *Commemorating Peacemakers* group. They are supported by *Oxford Quaker Meeting*, *Fellowship of Reconciliation*, *Movement for the Abolition of War*, *Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting*, the *W.F Southall Trust* and the *Radley Trust*. For more information email me.

Sue Smith, sueandali@gmail.com



Friendship

None of us really ever walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let our open, outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.

Elizabeth Tarbox



Champagne for the Pretty Lady

I have the great good fortune to work alongside a young Romanian colleague. Her ready wit and lively mind mean that conversations with Oana are always interesting and stimulating, not least when her comments

illuminate some aspect of Englishness that I might otherwise have never thought about. I was reminded of this today when I saw the photograph accompanying this article, which she'd published on a social media site – Twitter if you really wanted to know – to acknowledge a gift from her boyfriend.

It wasn't the picture that caught my eye, but the caption: "Champagne for the pretty lady". I have a feeling that there are very few English people who would have written that caption. Referring to yourself as pretty? What vanity! Isn't beauty a judgement for others to make? I haven't asked Oana about this, but based on conversations we've had in the past I'm sure her response would be something like, "But I am pretty, Keith, so what is wrong with saying so?"

How very un-English! But I think she's right – not just about being pretty, but also about owning up to it. I believe that many English people – and I include myself – are all too ready to belittle or even conceal their gifts. Which is a shame, because it often means that those gifts are not used to their full potential.

Let me give you an example. I'm good at writing but, as I'm English, I feel very uncomfortable making that statement without qualifying it. However, most people in our Meeting have somehow come to know about my writing ability. But how many know that I'm also quite good with Photoshop? I don't talk about this because I don't want to appear vain. And because I'm English, which means that modesty – false modesty, even – is programmed deeply into me.

Let's think again, friends. Shouldn't we acknowledge our gifts and talk about them? Even

to members of the nominations committee? Shouldn't we do this to make sure that our gifts can be used to their full potential, whether in the service of the Meeting or elsewhere?

As I write these words, I can hear friends saying, "Vanity is a sin! Remember that pride goeth before a fall and it's the meek that shall inherit the Earth." I wouldn't want to argue, but I will just point out that, for me, there's a clear difference between acknowledging our gifts and flaunting them. I don't think that acknowledging a God-given gift is vanity – in fact, if you were to press me, I would say it's more like a duty.

With this in mind, might it not be time to live adventurously and confess our talents? Who knows what we might achieve! And it's definitely time to thank Oana for her refreshingly Romanian perspective, without which this article would never have occurred to me!

Keith Wilson

Rota Folk coffee morning (with cake)

Now everyone loves coffee and cake so, if you are on any of the Sunday rotas – from flowers to coffee, welcomers, openers-up or Elders even – please come along on Saturday 23 April from 10:00am to noon. We'll show you some things we've done to make life easier and together we'll chat over how we can make it even simpler so you get to enjoy the worshipping community more. We have much to do to make the Quaker way open to all. It's exciting but our work will be more effective if we speak clearly, confidently, openly and honestly. This begins in the Meeting with each other. Being unafraid to try new approaches and admit when we fail is a start. Not everything we do will work – after all, it's all part of learning and growing – but let's try. For every bright idea we share we'll have several that will never see the light of day – but conversation has a funny way of leading to those unexpected serendipitous moments of inspiration shared. Oh, and by the way, if we *are* to be open to new light we could make a start by cleaning the inside of our windows – literally...anyone want to join in a window cleaning morning? Or is it just me?

Deb Arrowsmith

Berkshire and Oxfordshire Regional Meeting

Saturday 23 April, 10:30 am for 11:00 am, Reading Meeting House, 2 Church Street, Reading, RG1 2SB

All Friends in Banbury and Evesham, Chilterns, Mid-Thames and Oxford & Swindon Area Meetings are welcome. The theme will be criminal justice.

Imprisonment offers some protection to society by removing the offender. But consider how limited that protection is compared to what it could be. It puts the offender against property into a place where he is deprived of opportunities to practise the social rules about property; it puts the violent man into a subculture which is governed by violence; it puts the defrauder into a power system where corruption is rife; it puts the sexual offender into a place where sexual relief is only obtainable by substitutes; it puts those who need to learn to take control of their lives into a situation where all significant choices are made for them; and it puts the offender who is likely to reform into a milieu where most of the influences on him or her are criminal ones. **John Lampen, 1987 (23.10)**

The programme for the day will be as follows:

- 10:30 Hot drinks available
- 11:00 Worship
- 11:30 Morning session: Frances Crook (Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, oldest penal reform charity in UK)
- 12:15 Discussion in small groups
- 13:00 Lunch (please bring a packed lunch)
- 14:00 Afternoon session: we shall hear from some Quaker prison chaplains about their work
- 14:45 Plenary questions and answers
- 15:00 Administrative matters
- 15:30 Tea and departures

Friends not in formal membership are very welcome to attend Regional Meeting. We hope to arrange children's activities for the day. Please contact the clerk as soon as possible, and certainly no later than 8 April, if you are interested in this provision.

Enquiries about Regional Meeting should be addressed to the clerk, Robert Card, 07584 905819, Robert.card@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

Friday with Friends

Marriage and close relationships

Friday 8 April, 7:00 for 7:30 pm, Garden Room

As part of our series of occasional meetings for all Friends and attenders to come together for Reading *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Iain Maclean will be focusing on chapters 16 and 22.

In our programme of reading our book of discipline, *Quaker Faith and Practice* (QFP), the committee charged with revising it asks us to consider these questions:

- how do I react to this material?
- what does this material, and my reaction to it, tell me about the history and development of Quakerism?
- what authority do I give to this text?
- how does this speak to me today?
what spiritual benefits do I gain from reading and reflecting on this?

Not everybody in a close relationship can get married, and not everybody may want to, but the two chapters obviously go together. The chapter on marriage has been totally rewritten since Quakers got the permission we had been seeking since 2009, to celebrate same-sex marriages in our meeting houses on the same basis as opposite-sex marriages. Chapter 16 is not yet in the printed book, but it can be read on line in the Internet version of *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

Chapter 16 is a remarkable mix of the spiritual and the technical. The technical detail will normally only be read by couples intending to get married, and our Registering Officers. It seems extraordinarily complex, with its mention of Forms A to H, and the provision of the only fixed set of words in the whole of our worship, namely the forms of words that the couple must use to take one another in marriage. Why this complexity? There is a spiritual reason, and it goes back to George Fox's ringing declaration of 1669, which is at the head of Chapter 16:

For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance and not man's; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses.

Quakers have always been clear that marriage is the Lord's work. Therefore they flatly refused to have their marriages solemnised by priests or magistrates – i.e., either by the establish Church or the state. For a century this enabled greedy people to claim that Quaker marriages were invalid, that the children of these marriages were bastards, and that therefore the claimant could acquire all the Quakers' property. We got complete protection from this in 1753, when a law requiring every marriage in England to be solemnised in a Church of England church allowed only two exceptions: for Jews and Quakers. That law still shapes all modern marriage law, although other religions and the state may now also solemnise marriages. Therefore, when we decided at Yearly Meeting 2009 that we were witnessing the Lord's work in the joining in marriage of same-sex couples, we had to get the 1753 law updated to reflect this. Initially, same-sex marriage was to be a civil ceremony only, but after many talks and deputations to the Government Equality Office, the Bill was amended to allow us to do them in our way and report them to the state in the same way as opposite-sex Quaker marriages. So, Forms A to H, and the set form of words, are there for a good reason: a historical and a spiritual one.

Iain McLean

Ank Faber-Chabot

The recently-published book *War and women across continents*, has a chapter that features the mother of Marieke Faber Clarke. Drawing on family materials, historical records and eyewitness accounts, the book shows the impact of war on individual women caught up in diverse and often treacherous situations.

Marieke's chapter tells how her aunt, Ank Faber-Chabot, sheltered several Jews and anti-Nazi activists (shown in the photo, together with Faber family members) during the Second World War. Marieke's chapter particularly concerns Ank's support to Gerda Bloch, one of two daughters of a German Jewish architect. Richard Bloch, with his family, took refuge in the Netherlands before the War but was forced into hiding after the Nazi invasion. Both Bloch parents died in concentration camps. Both daughters survived, thanks to brave Dutch people. Marieke is not here writing as a pacifist, but as an historian who happens to be related by marriage to the central character in an



important story. It is perhaps significant that Adriaan's father, Marieke's grandfather, was a deeply convinced lifelong Christian

pacifist whose commitment was sorely tested during the Nazi Occupation. He finally agreed to Adriaan's request to store weapons for the Resistance in his house. As Gerda Bloch used to say when she talked about her war experiences: "What would you have done?"

War and women across continents is edited by Shirley Ardener, Fiona Armitage-Woodward and Lidia Dina Sciama. It is published by Berghahn Books and available at 50% discount till 30 April.

Marieke Faber Clarke

Shakespeare on Immigration

This is Thomas More addressing a London anti-immigration mob baying for strangers to be deported, in the banned play, *Sir Thomas More*.

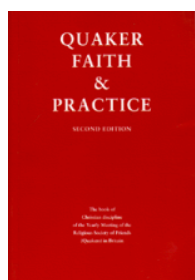
*You'll put down strangers,
Kill them, cut their throats, possess their houses,
And lead the majesty of law in lyam
To slip him like a hound; alas, alas, say now the
King,
As he is clement if th'offender mourn,
Should so much come too short of your great
trespass
As but to banish you: whither would you go?
What country, by the nature of your error,
Should give you harbour? Go you to France or
Flanders,
To any German province, Spain or Portugal,
Nay, anywhere that not adheres to England,
Why, you must needs be strangers, would you be
pleas'd
To find a nation of such barbarous temper
That breaking out in hideous violence
Would not afford you an abode on earth.
Whet their detested knives against your throats,
Spurn you like dogs, and like as if that God
Owed not nor made not you, not that the
elements
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
But charter'd unto them? What would you think
To be us'd thus? This is the strangers' case
5 And this your mountainish inhumanity.*

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 3	12:30 pm	Meeting for Worship for Business	Wednesday 20	1:45pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Friday 8	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends— Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> (see page 4)	Saturday 23	10:00 am - 12 noon	Coffee Morning for Sunday Rota Folk (see page 3)
Wednesday 13	11:00 am - 12:00 noon	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> in the Library		11:00 am - 3:30 pm	Berkshire and Oxfordshire Regional Meeting (see page 4)
Monday 18	4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library (see below)	Sunday 24	12:30 pm - 2:00pm	Bring and Share Lunch
Tuesday 19	7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	SEE Justice	<h2>Poems in the Library</h2> <p>From 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Mondays 18 April - the theme will be Air 16 May - the theme will be Fire 16 June - theme to be decided All are welcome!</p>		

Reading *Quaker Faith & Practice*



All Friends are asked by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group to join in reading the current Quaker Faith and Practice.

Suggested chapter for April:
 Chapter 11: Membership and
 Chapter 12: Caring for one another
 and Chapter 17: Quaker funerals and memorial meetings.

Further information and support can be found at <http://qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading/>

Anne Watson

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

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

Mondays at 7:00 pm Young Adult Friends
(followed by baked potato supper)

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 am at 43 St Giles
(followed by breakfast at 8 am)

Wednesdays at 12:15 pm at 43 St Giles
(followed by tea and coffee)

Headington LM worships on Sundays at 10 am
at The Priory, 85 Old High Street, OX3 9HT

Office News

We will shortly be saying goodbye to Anbara Khalidi who has been our Resident Assistant since October 2014 and whose contract comes to an end in early May. Huge thanks to her for all her good work in helping to sort out the office over the last 18 months. We'll miss her! Luckily Anbara will remain on the team along with Max Howells covering evening and weekend duties as required.

We are continuing to improve the kitchen with new labels on the drawers so you can find stuff more easily – and it might help us all keep it cleaner?!

Our Fair Trade trolley is proving popular in the lobby helping to extend our hospitality to all who pass through during the week, and helping to shorten Garden Room coffee queues on a Sunday.

Deb Arrowsmith

Editorial Team: BECKY RIDDELL, KEITH WILSON and SUE SMITH (Joint Editing & Production); ANBARA KHALIDI and DEB ARROWSMITH (Distributor and Subscriptions)