



Number 442

# Forty-Three

Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles · Oxford · OX1 3LW

## NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2016

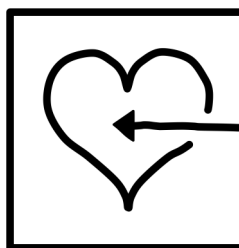
40 pence

### 20,000 Welcomes: An Advent Vigil for Refugees

On 8 December representatives of churches and other faith groups met at St Margaret's Westminster, the parliamentary church, for a vigil organised by the Churches Refugee Network (CRN). The vigil was intended to offer a welcome to refugees and to demonstrate to parliamentarians the concern of faith groups about current asylum policy. There was a shifting population of participants throughout the day with perhaps 150 in total, including some parliamentarians such as the shadow minister for overseas development and his aides, and at least one member of the House of Lords.

There was a wide range of speakers, some of whom had parents who had been refugees or immigrants. Others had forebears in this country going back generations. All were united in their concern and action for refugees. Shuaib Yusaf from Muslim Aid, asked to speak from a Muslim perspective, said there was only one perspective – that of humanity.

The most devastating testimonies came from asylum seekers who had fled death, torture and danger in their home countries and had then experienced detention and the harsh dealings of our asylum and migration policy. "I thought I would find protection," said one, "but I was criminalised, traumatised and enslaved."



Christian Mesnil, a volunteer for Secours Catholique in the camps of Calais, described the shocking conditions in which the refugees survive and the lack of action by the French state. He also signalled the

growing European solidarity movement.

Rabbi Helen Freeman from the West London synagogue pointed out the many times that the exhortation to welcome the stranger is to be found in the books of Moses. There is a human temptation to be hostile to 'the other' and Jews have known what it was to be 'the other' for much of history. There is a religious duty to 'repair the world', to take action.

*Continued on page 2 column 1*

### From Quaker Faith and Practice

In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God's will for ourselves and for the gathered group. It is this belief that God's will can be recognised through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus. We have a common purpose in seeking God's will through waiting and listening, believing that every activity of life should be subject to divine guidance.

**QF&P 3.02**

**Deadline for contributions to the March 2016 issue: noon, Wednesday 17 March**

*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 [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org). Paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any Editor.*

*For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

Continued from page 1 column 2

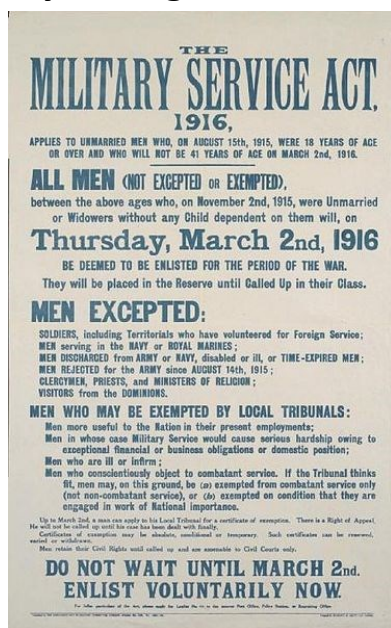
Helen Tetley, minister of St John's Methodist Church in Whitstable described the initial hostility that her church met in its support for refugees, and how this shifted and hearts and minds were changed. Media images of a drowned child awakened compassion.

During the vigil we were asked to light a candle, praying for migrants as they journey in search of safety and seek to make a home in a foreign land. We put our signatures on a 'Refugees Welcome Here' banner and wrote messages on postcards expressing support for those working to alleviate the suffering of migrants in Eastern Europe.

The closing prayers spoke of 100,000 welcomes and we were asked to see God in the faces of the new Britain.

**Bridget Walker and Bob Nind**

## 100 years ago this month...



This month Quaker Peace and Social Witness is commemorating a notable anniversary, but the occasion does not seem to be a positive one. In January 1916 the Military Service Act became law. All single men aged 18 to 41 were called up to be soldiers in the First World War, with some people exempted (those in essential war time employment, those deemed medically unfit, religious ministers). However, the 'conscience clause', inserted after last minute lobbying by the No-Conscription Fellowship and sympathetic MPs, gave those opposed to war and killing the right to claim exemption from military service. Many men

suffered in the process of turning that principle into good practice, but it was also a significant moment in recognising this human right for all British citizens, regardless of religious affiliation.

Conscription as a way to provide manpower for the armed forces has been gone since National Service was abolished in 1960. However, organised killing has continued unabated through the countless wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Preparations for war and the manufacture and sale of weapons are still facts of life. We cannot deny the war machine our participation as we did in the First and Second World Wars. So how can we continue to object to war making, now that we are no longer directly and individually involved?

This is where the Peace Tax campaign comes in. We are all 'conscripted' into killing through our taxes if not our bodies. We pay tax to a government spending millions on its military machine. It researches, designs, manufactures and uses weapons. It trains soldiers to use them. It sells them to other countries, including those with appalling human rights records.

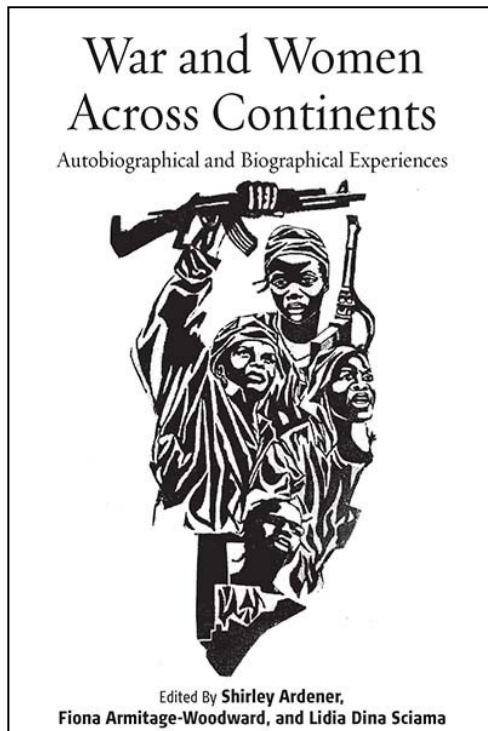
If we oppose war, how do we register our conscientious objection? **Conscience: taxes for peace not war** is a campaigning organisation working to create a world where taxes nurture peace rather than pay for war. It campaigns for the legal right of those with a conscientious objection to war to have the entire military part of their taxes spent on peace building. It campaigns for an increase in the amount of UK tax spent on peace building, and a corresponding decrease in the amount spent on war and preparation for war.

**Conscience** is introducing a Bill into Parliament in early March 2016 to allow present day conscientious objectors to divert that portion of their income tax from military to non-military forms of defence and national security. In the lead up to the debate **Conscience** is calling on all those who oppose war and killing, to support the campaign – by lobbying their MPs, by donating to the campaign, by asking for a speaker, or to register themselves as conscientious objectors. Could this be you? The Oxford Quaker First World War Commemoration planning group will be asking our Meeting to support the campaign and we'd like to hear your views – at Local Business Meeting, or in any other way you'd like to communicate them.

# War and Women Across Continents

Autobiographical and  
Biographical Experiences

Edited by Shirley Ardener, Fiona Armitage-  
Woodward, and Lidia Dina Sciama



Drawing on family materials, historical records, and eyewitness accounts, this book shows the impact of war on individual women caught up in diverse and often treacherous situations. It relates stories of partisans in Holland, an Italian woman carrying guns and provisions in the face of hostile soldiers, and Kikuyu women involved in the Mau Mau insurrection in Kenya. A woman displaced from Silesia recalls fleeing with children across war-torn Germany, and women caught up in conflicts in Burma and in Rwanda share their tales. War's aftermath can be traumatic, as shown by journalists in Libya and by a midwife on the Cambodian border who helps refugees to give birth and regain hope. Finally, British women on active service in Afghanistan and at NATO headquarters also speak.

Of particular interest is Chapter 2, Ank Faber-Chabot, A Dutchwoman who Sheltered Jews in World War II, written by Marieke Faber Clarke

Copies of *War and Women Across Continents* are currently available at [www.berghahnbooks.com](http://www.berghahnbooks.com) at 50% off with the code ARD131, which is valid until 30 April. Or contact **Marieke Clarke** for more information.

A message from Mark Ebden, who many will remember for his editorial role on *Forty-Three* and for the many other contributions he made to our Meeting.

Dear Oxford Friends,

Since flying to Canada in August, I've missed you but I'm enjoying my time here as well. I'm worshipping mostly with Toronto Meeting on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings. One member, Jo Vellacott, is the author of our beloved QF&P 20.05 ("...It is as if I opened the blinds in my house for only an occasional hour..."), and another member, Ursula Franklin, writes powerfully on "Pacifism as a Map" and on the social effects of technology.

Toronto's meeting house is a three-storey quasi-Georgian style building at the edge of a university, with many guestrooms available for about £15 per night. It's a bit like a hostel and parts of the building will shelter Syrian refugees very soon as well. If you're coming, please let me know as I'd love to catch up. I hope you're all well.

**Mark Ebden**

[markebden@hotmail.com](mailto:markebden@hotmail.com)



## Extract from *Words at Wharram Percy*

by Peter Didsbury

*No silence here.  
The place is loud with peace.*

A nice description of a gathered meeting!

**Chosen by Yvonne Dixon**



## Reaching Out

I'm re-reading *A Month with Isaac Pennington*, an anthology compiled from his letters. It's a good way to enter a new year that seems beset with problems, from flooding to migration, with the homeless and lonely on our doorstep. Despondency is an easy option, a self-indulgence that helps nobody. However, as Pennington makes clear, there is always something positive we can do.

Alongside the Pennington, I have gone back to *A Day-book of Counsel and Comfort*, a selection of George Fox's epistles, compiled by L V Hodgkin. Both Pennington and Fox were often writing from prison. They were very limited in what they could do, but they wrote letters: letters of encouragement, support and advice. Pennington, for example, wrote from Aylesbury Goal in 1667: "So, my dear Friends, be encouraged to wait upon the Lord ... and ye will see and feel he will sweep and cleanse and purify ... and then ye shall become his full dwelling place, the place of his delight ... and he will be your perfect dwelling-place for evermore."

If Pennington and Fox, in the squalor and bleakness of a prison cell, could turn to nurturing the souls of others, surely we, in our comfortable homes, can find time for a similar task. George Fox believed that each of us is serviceable. This is so true, even if we find earlier energy ebbing away or circumstances limiting that service.

Let us reach out to others, by letter, phone or email, entering imaginatively into their needs, as Pennington and Fox did.

### Peggy Heeks



## A Very Quakerly Date



*We live in a world full of trouble and pain and, quite rightly, most of the items we publish in Forty-Three reflect this. However, I'd like to think we occasionally have room for something lighter. With that in mind, I hope friends won't feel I've too greatly abused my editorial position by submitting this short piece about the most significant event in my life.*

Do you remember your first date? I do. It was on 22 October 1965, exactly 50 years ago. The girl I dated is someone you know well – Kath. I'd known her for a week, but we'd never met. A mutual friend put us in touch, and we talked on the phone every night that week, Kath standing in a phone box as she had no phone at home and, of course, mobiles didn't exist. We enjoyed talking and we arranged to meet at the supermarket where Kath worked for my father.

She was almost two hours late. She'd taken shorthand dictation and couldn't read it back, so my father made her stay until he'd dictated his letters again and she'd typed them. I often wonder whether, if it hadn't been my first ever date, I would have simply given up and left. But I waited, and eventually Kath was walking down the aisle (the supermarket aisle, that is!) toward me. I remember thinking how lovely she was. She says she's forgotten her reaction to me, but maybe she's just being diplomatic!

My thoughts about Kath's loveliness were quickly displaced by rising panic. I was on a date, with a real girl; what was I supposed to do? It was around 7:00 pm and, in 1965, that meant the coffee shops were closed. We were too young to go to a pub and I couldn't afford to buy a meal. Then

inspiration struck – let’s go for a walk! No matter that it was a dank, cold, foggy night and we were in the (then) industrial West Midlands, we would walk.

And walk we did, for miles. Only many years later did Kath reveal that her feet bled for days afterward, as her shoes – chosen to create a favourable impression – rubbed her badly. As we walked we talked and I believe we were even bold enough to hold hands for a while. We discovered we got on well together and the rest is history!

So why was this a Quakerly date? Well, the evening was certainly in line with our testimony to simplicity. There was equality – we definitely saw each other as equals, as we still do. Peace? The foundation for our evening was love and caring. Truth and integrity were also there as we started to learn about each other. And, of course, our date had minimal environmental impact. It would be pleasing to say all of our actions over the last half-century have been equally Quakerly but, in truth, they haven’t. Nevertheless, we keep trying!

Keith Wilson

## Poetry Reading and Poems in the Library



Philip Gross, Quaker poet, winner of TS Eliot prize, author of *Love Songs of Carbon* (2015) will read from his work in the Meeting House on Saturday evening 20 February at 7:00 pm. He will be accompanied by some Oxford Back Room Poets, with whom he will have conducted a

masterclass that afternoon in the Garden Room, to which Friends and all others are invited. Collection for Oxford Friends Action on Poverty. Further details from [stephen.yeo@phoncoop.coop](mailto:stephen.yeo@phoncoop.coop)

Poems in the Library will be on Monday, 15 February from 4:00 till 6:00 pm. All welcome. (For your diaries, also on Monday, 14 March from 4:00 till 6:00 pm)

Stephen Yeo 5

## Churches Together in Central Oxford



We have agreed to support the establishment of a Chair in Peace Studies. Some people might like to make an individual contribution towards this project. For more information, please contact Liz Carmichael, the co-convenor of OxPeace, on 01865 611589 or at [Liz.Carmichael@sjc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Liz.Carmichael@sjc.ox.ac.uk)

## What is Happening to your NHS?

The **National Health Service** is being quietly transformed.

Filmmaker **Peter Bach's 'SELL-OFF'** exposes the two decade covert privatisation that has occurred without public mandate and against the public interest.

There will be a public screening of the film, followed by a Q&A session with **Dr Bob Gill**, chaired by **Professor Chris Redman**.

Friday, **5 February** 2016  
(doors open 6.30)

Film **7-8 pm**, Q & A **8-9 pm**  
Friends Meeting House,  
43 St. Giles  
Oxford OX1 3LW

[www.selloff.org.uk](http://www.selloff.org.uk)



Oxford Quaker SEE Justice Group

**NHA**  
National Health Action party

# CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 4	7:00 - 9:00 pm	Exploring Quakerism (see November issue)	Monday 15	4:00 - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library (see page 5)
Friday 5	7:00 pm	“Sell-off” NHS Film show (see page 5)	Wednesday 17	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sunday 7	3:15 – 5:15 pm	Etty Hillesum A portrayal by Susan Stein (see January issue)	Thursday 18	7:00 - 9:00 pm	Exploring Quakerism- Quaker discipline, Quaker speak (see November issue)
Thursday 11	7:00 pm	Exploring Quakerism– Worship and Ministry (see November issue)	Saturday 20	2:00 - 5:00 pm & 7-9 pm	Philip Gross Masterclass followed by evening poetry reading (see page 5)
Friday 12	7:15 pm	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> : Chapter 1 led by Peggy Heeks	Thursday 25	7:00 - 9:00 pm	Exploring Quakerism– Journeys in Quakerism (see November issue)

## Office News

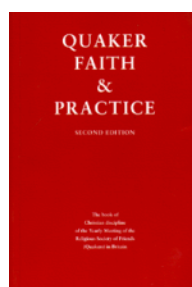
We will shortly be advertising for a part-time (20 hours) assistant manager. Please contact the office if you would like details. It is being advertised in *The Friend* and *Daily Info*.

You will notice the piano in the Long Room has gone to the East Oxford Community Centre, which having been painted orange and grey, will now be auctioned for charity. We are hoping to acquire a lighter and more moveable keyboard.

Timely reminder to Friends – please close or lock the back car park gate **quietly**.

**Deb and Anbara**

## 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 February: Chapter 3 – General counsel on church affairs

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

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