

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 447

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Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Building bridges after the referendum

The outcome of the EU referendum and the campaigning that led up to it have shown up and sometimes exacerbated divisions within and between our communities.

There is now a great need for bridge-building, for reaching out to one another in love, trusting that below the political differences lie a shared humanity and a wish for flourishing communities.

Inequalities run deep in society and some are exposed by the vote. Quakers in England, Scotland and Wales are committed to working together and with others - including Quakers across Europe - for a peaceful and just world. In the coming year our Quaker Yearly Meeting will focus on building movements with others locally and globally. We refuse to prejudge who is or is not an ally.

Turbulent times can be frightening, but the Spirit is a source of strength for all, guiding us in who we are and what we do. We take heart from the knowledge that with change comes opportunity. We will look for creative ways to find common cause, to listen, to influence and to persuade. As the status quo is shaken we and our neighbours must look to one another for support, wisdom and above all ways of healing divisions.

Britain Yearly Meeting
(from quaker.org.uk)

Books do furnish a room

That's how the saying goes but my experience also is that people furnish a life. This has come to me strongly in the past few days. I meet a man on a bus. He comes to Oxford Meeting, and we talk about his hopes for further qualifications – oddly enough in the very northern city that I'm bound for today. I see a Friend in the bank and we exchange news and promise to meet for coffee in Blackwells. After 9:30 Meeting someone I'm beginning to know tells me of her lecturing engagement in Scotland and I tell her of my music holiday in Suffolk.

In all these cases we're talking about everyday happenings, but underneath we're building deeper links. From each encounter I emerge with my sense of identity strengthened and a clearer feeling of
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From Quaker Faith and Practice

"Do you welcome the diversity of culture, language and expressions of faith in ... the world community of Friends? Seek to increase your understanding and to gain from this rich heritage and wide range of spiritual insights. Uphold your own and other yearly meetings in your prayers."

Advices and Queries 16

Deadline for contributions to the August 2016 issue: noon, Wednesday 20 July

*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*

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belonging. Our Quaker community is important, for here we find people who furnish our lives and help us understand that we are not isolated individuals, but part of something greater.

Community is not a new concept. St Paul spoke of our being part of one body. George Fox urged us to “be in the light, that you may be kept in peace and love in the power of God” and John Winthrop, 17th century governor of Massachusetts, had a similar message. “We must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.” So, Friends, let’s seek to build community. Human beings are social animals, and people do furnish a life.

Peggy Heeks

Barua kutoka Nairobi Letter from Nairobi

As we prepare to return to Oxford, we reflect on our experiences of living in Kenya since September last year. Katherine has been doing voluntary medical work – termed a ‘missionary’ by Kenya’s immigration department – at the Gender Violence Recovery Centre of Nairobi Women’s Hospital: a centre for survivors of sexual assault, abuse and domestic violence. She has been upscaling the medical aspects of the centre, leading to improvements in forensic medical examinations and documentation. Matthew has been doing postgraduate studies in psychological trauma at the University of Nairobi. Through our work and study we have learned more about violence endemic in the community, and hope we have done something, in a very small way, to understand and respond to it. As Kenya prepares for elections in 2017, we hope and pray for a peaceful outcome, without the inter-ethnic violence that followed the 2007 election.

A source of strength for us has been the ‘silent meeting’ at Friends International Centre Nairobi, who practice unprogrammed worship in a similar style of worship of Britain Yearly Meeting. We are a small community often with around ten to fourteen people at meeting, with Friends originally from Burundi, Britain, Cuba, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and the USA, as well as frequent visitors passing through Nairobi from all over the world.



Members of Nairobi silent meeting standing in front of a peace-themed kanga

As far as we know, our meeting is the only unprogrammed meeting in east Africa. Our small size is a stark contrast to the two huge programmed services every Sunday on the same site.

Quakerism was first brought to east Africa in 1902 by three American Quaker missionaries, and today, Kenya has the most Friends of any country in the world: around 134,000 Friends, in 16 Yearly Meetings, mostly in western Kenya. The vast majority practice programmed worship – with services led by a pastor, with preaching, Bible readings, hymn-singing and spoken prayers – and theology is considerably more evangelical than what is currently usual amongst liberal British Friends. Whilst Nairobi is not in western Kenya, where Friends are especially prevalent, Nairobi Yearly Meeting is a large and active community. Quakers in Nairobi face challenges not dissimilar to those of Oxford Friends, for example weighing up the needs to act as stewards of the financially valuable land on which the church compound is built, whilst remaining true to Quaker principles.

Over Christmas and New Year we were very kindly hosted by Friends in their rural western Kenya homes, in the Friends Church heartland. Many villages have a Friends Church, as well as numerous Friends’ schools, hospitals and other facilities. We visited a number of Friends Church services, including a monthly meeting Christmas carol competition on 25 December, where each village meeting put forward teams to sing two Christmas carols and recite a Bible passage in unison.

We will be back in Oxford in August, and hope to tell you more about our experiences!

We send loving greetings from Friends in Nairobi Yearly Meeting, Chavikali Yearly Meeting and East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends (North)

Matthew and Katherine Gee

Deaths



It is very sad news that **Judy Hicklin** died unexpectedly and suddenly on 12 June. She had travelled to Brussels with Miranda to be with her other daughter Laura and her grandchildren when she fell causing severe trauma to her head. Judy died soon after in hospital with all her family around her.

Miranda and Laura ask for your love to be sent to Judy and for your prayers too. On **Saturday 2 July** there will be a service to celebrate her life, at St Matthews Church, Marlborough Road, arrive at 2:45 pm for a 3:00 pm start. Some time within the service will be allocated to a Quaker style period of silence and possible ministry. Judy's daughters ask friends to bring a written memory or reflection about her or a photo of yourself with her to include in an A4 book for them to treasure.

Tanya Garland

Please come to a Meeting for Worship to celebrate the life of our dear Friend **Maureen, born Mary Maureen Dale** in 1926, married first to Joel Mandelstam and after his death to Joe Abramson.



To be held at on **Sunday 31 July at 3:00pm** at 43 St Giles. The Meeting for Worship will be followed by tea at 3:45pm. All who knew Maureen are very welcome, whether Quakers, another religion or no religion. For offers or help with refreshments or more information contact Linet Arthur: larthur@brookes.ac.uk or Gwithian Doswell: 01865 557373.

A Quaker Memorial Meeting for Worship

Two Quaker Elders are responsible for introducing and ending the Meeting. At the beginning, there will be an explanation of what will happen during the Meeting before everyone settles into expectant silence. After the introduction, the silence may be broken by anyone (including those who are not Quakers) who feels moved to stand and speak – perhaps to offer a memory or to share a prayer or reading. Finally the Meeting will be closed by the two Elders shaking hands, giving an encouragement for everyone else to do so.

What is the Friends Fellowship of Healing?

The Friends Fellowship of Healing (FFH) is an informal group within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. It attracts much interest and support, in particular at Yearly Meeting where it offers a healing service.

It has prayer groups attached to many Meetings, and also postal groups to enable isolated people and those who may be unable to join a local group, to cooperate with others in the service of healing prayer.

A magazine – *Towards Wholeness* – is produced three times a year on aspects of healing. It contains details of supportive groups, e.g.: Postal Groups that offer distance healing and support and Immediate Prayer Groups with phone links for urgent requests. These groups give prayer support to people seeking reassurance, as many can be isolated. The Mother and Unborn Child Group is a channel of support through pregnancy and the birth of the baby. (Sylvia Button, an Oxford Friend, was deeply committed in this area). Our own local Oxford FFH is the one I know most about. Others nearby are in Witney and Reading.

The Oxford Friends Fellowship of Healing was started in 1959 by Grace Sutton, then a Friend in Oxford Meeting. She was convenor until 1987. Sylvia Button came to Oxford in 1985: from that time she supported each succeeding convenor of this group. She had a wide experience of prayer and healing including by correspondence and telephone. When she died aged 91 in 2000 her family donated her healing related books. The Library Committee kindly freed a shelf for these in order that they could be borrowed or used at our Meetings.

The current pattern of the Oxford FFH Meeting is as a Meeting for Worship for Healing. Being attached to Oxford Friends Meeting there are many F/friends who ask for this support. When we gather, we review these, also adding new requests and giving thanks for those who are feeling better. All requests are received in confidence. After a short related reading there is first a time of silent worship. Then some F/friends are Silently Held in the Light and others in particular need are spoken

out loud while being surrounded with Loving thoughts.

The Oxford FFH is held on the third Wednesday of each month after the Wednesday lunchtime Meeting for Worship.

We like to remind ourselves of a quote from Quaker Faith and Practice, 21.73 by Jack Dobbs: "As we open ourselves to become the channel of God's healing grace we shall find that healing is given to those who pray as well as those for whom we are praying."

We hear with sadness that dear Judy (Hicklin) has died. She has been a valued part of our group for many years and we give thanks for the grace of God in her life.

Mary Fear

Review of *We will not fight* Oxford Town Hall Court Room



We will not fight is the real-life First World War story of Bert Brocklesby, a 25 year-old teacher, Methodist lay preacher, and pacifist. Oxford-based *UnderConstruction* theatre company brings to life under-used and historic spaces, and the gloomy wood-panelled Court Room was the perfect venue for this vivid drama. The four company members enacted the drama of Bert's struggle for official recognition of his objection to war, and his determination, against the odds, to refuse to fight because the Bible means what it says, 'thou shalt not kill'.

This was a compelling production, recreating the experience of many conscientious objectors in the First World War. The company brought to life the court room drama of Bert's tribunal. Bert faces opposition from his mother, sneering disbelief from the Tribunal he faces to prove his honest conviction, rough treatment from the Richmond Castle prison guards, and the terror of being taken to France to be shot. Fenner Brockway and Clifford

Allen of the No-Conscription Fellowship patiently explain to his anxious mother what is likely to happen to Bert. A scene in Parliament shows a fiery debate between supporters protesting the conditions in prison, and opposers who believe they are traitors to their country.

Bert loses everything, his job, his fiancée, and his connections with Conisborough, the Yorkshire town where he grew up. In the final scene, before he joins post-war relief to feed the starving in Vienna, he reflects on his experience. His faith is as strong as ever. The play ends with all the actors singing 'Guide me O thou great Redeemer', a moving reminder of how hymns were solace to men like Bert facing this extreme individual test of their beliefs.

The loneliness of Conscientious Objectors, and the warmth of contact they sometimes had with other COs even in prison, was a theme in the post-show discussion. In prison they saw each other only rarely, but shared their news via secret newsletters, such as the *Winchester Whisperer*, constructed from smuggled bits of pencil, on scraps of paper including toilet paper. They communicated between cells by banging their bars to keep time in joint hymn singing. They met sometimes in chapel, where the human contact of the pressure of another COs knees from behind, when kneeling in prayer in chapel, was of immense comfort to some. In our discussion we were reminded that the isolation and poor treatment of some British COs was as nothing compared to treatment in other countries such as Germany, where there was no recognition of special status, and men were simply shot for 'desertion'.

The play is based on a script created by the Amnesty International group in Canterbury. It was commissioned by the Oxford 'Commemorating the Peacemakers' group, as one of a series of events for International Conscientious Objectors day. This year is special as the centenary year of the Military Service Act which for the first time forcibly conscripted men to fight in the First World War. A 'conscience clause' was added to the Act at the last minute.

A video of the event will be available soon. For further information contact me.

Sue Smith, sueandali@gmail.com

Wow! THAT'S annoying!



What are the things commuters find most annoying? Not long ago, the Evening Standard published the results of a poll designed to provide the answers. I would probably have forgotten about this, had it not been for a recent conversation when the subject of annoyances in Meeting was mentioned.

That set me thinking: what are the most annoying things that happen in Meeting? It wasn't hard for me to come up with my personal number one annoyance – it's those infernal concerns and thoughts that buzz around in my head and make it difficult for me to participate fully in the Meeting. This is, of course, an internal annoyance that only I can address, but some of the other annoyances are definitely external.

There's that bench that groans like a tormented soul if the occupant moves by so much as a millimetre and then, it has to be said, there are the mobile phones that all too often interrupt our stillness. I know I'm not alone in being disturbed by these. There's hardly been a Meeting in recent months without a buzz, a bleep or an improbable ringtone and I've heard many comments about this, none of them favourable!

To be fair, the stillness is rarely complete – there's coughing, shuffling, the clearing of throats, the rustling of coats and even, from time to time, gentle snoring. None of these sounds, however, seems to me as intrusive as the ringing or buzzing of a mobile phone. There's a reason for this. The other sounds are incidental, whereas the sounds produced by mobile phones are intended to attract attention – and they do.

It should be easy to end this annoying annoyance. All that's necessary is for those attending Meeting to turn their phones off before taking their seats. Alternatively, most mobile phones have an "airplane" mode, often identified by an icon in the form of a jet plane. (If your icon is a bi-plane, by the way, it's definitely time to upgrade your phone.)

Selecting "airplane" mode should silence the phone without the need to turn it off completely. This can be advantageous for friends who

occasionally use their phones to make notes of thoughts (inspirations?) during Meeting, as I occasionally do. You see, whatever you thought, I wasn't texting during Meeting!

OK, I've probably said enough, but it would be wonderful if people would try to remember to pause at the Meeting House threshold and make sure that their phones are effectively silenced in one way or another. This is surely an easy fix. I'm not so sure, however, about how to tackle the more recalcitrant problems of the groaning bench and my headful of random thoughts!

If, by the way, you were wondering what it is that commuters find most annoying, the Evening Standard says it's fellow commuters with "poor body hygiene", closely followed by those who cough and sneeze without covering their mouths. I'm so glad I no longer work in London!

Keith Wilson

Office News

Over the coming weeks, we will be implementing a new key card entry system in at 43. This system will replace existing keys, and instead allow doors to be opened and locked using allocated cards. As well as improving our security, this system allows us to permit selected group access to the building when we are closed – meaning we are able to extend our hiring hours! This won't affect you entering the building as normal during our open hours but if you have any questions about how this might affect you at other times, please drop by the office to talk to Deb or Jacqui.

We are now offering the Meeting House for the use of the Oxford Syrian Kurdish Alliance (OKSA) on Sunday afternoons. We are delighted to be able to support their mission of promoting resources and education for members of the community. Anbara has arranged for interested members of the group to attend free English lessons on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, provided by volunteers from her workplace at British Study Centres.

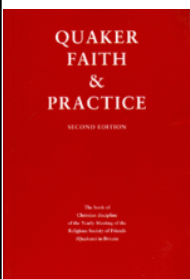
The first-floor flat at 43 – formerly Anbara's residence – is undergoing some cleaning and renovation with the aim to offer the space for a variety of meditation and counselling consultations that require greater privacy and a longer booking time. So don't be alarmed if you see people going in and out of the flat during the day!

CALENDAR FOR JULY 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Friday 1	7.00 pm	Friday with Friends Reading QF&P - Ch.23 with Laurie Michaelis		10:00 am	Area Meeting at Burford including AGM
Saturday 2	3:00 pm	Service to celebrate Judy Hicklin Barlow's life (Marlborough Church, see page 3)	Saturday 9	2:00 pm	Talk: How we do Outreach
Sunday 3	12.30 - 2.30 pm	Local Meeting for Worship for Business	Monday 11	4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library Theme: marriage/union
Tuesday 5	7:00 pm	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> Group	Wednesday 13	11:00 am	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> Group
Wednesday 6	10:30 am - 12 noon	Midsummer Coffee Morning	Wednesday 20	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Friday 8	7:30 pm	Friday with Friends Low Carbon Hub Com- munity (see May issue)	Sunday 31	3:00 pm	Memorial Meeting for Maureen Dale (see page 3)

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 July:
Chapter 26: Reflections

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

Anne Watson

Exhibition: Oxford's Great War

16 July to 8 October

open every day 10:00 am to 4:30 pm
Museum of Oxford Gallery

An exhibition about the experiences of Oxford people in the First World War

Photographs, documents, oral history and objects from local research projects including Oxford's Conscientious Objectors: Henry Gillett and Harry Waddle.

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

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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