

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 445

May 2016



Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Quaker belief in action: conscientious objectors in the First and Second World Wars



A booklet of memories from members of Oxford Meeting was published last year. This is the first of further stories told since then.

My father was called Liberty Llewelyn Lasenby – what names! His mother called him Berlew, taken from his two given names from his godparents. Berlew was ten years younger than his brother Jack

who trained as an officer and went to the front in 1916. At this time, as a junior officer, Jack had a life expectancy of two weeks. But he survived. He was wounded twice and then returned to the war front only to be shot through his right eye three weeks before the war ended. He suffered serious brain damage and after 1927 was committed to a psychiatric hospital for the rest of his life. It was because of this that Berlew was taken away from Radley School at the age of 15. His father said he would not pay for another son only to become cannon fodder. Berlew and very many of his friends were members of the Peace Pledge Union,

a secular pacifist organisation. Berlew became a conscientious objector (CO).

In 1934 when war broke out, Berlew was invited to join three other London neighbours on 'Pops' (Sydney) Clough's wooden motor cruiser *Roma*. They were all volunteers and worked for the River Emergency Service. Their non-combatant task was to use *Roma*, a wooden boat though with a metal engine, to buoy magnetic mines in the Thames Estuary. This was done to prevent other shipping from being blown up by the German magnetic mines that were starting to cause significant ship losses.

After about 18 months this volunteer service was taken over by the Royal Navy and Berlew, not wanting to work in a combatant service, resigned and applied to face a Tribunal. In those days Berlew had no religious connections. He found it difficult to persuade the Tribunal that he was sincere in his refusal to fight.

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From *Quaker Faith and Practice*

Do you try to make your home a place of friendliness, refreshment and peace, where God becomes more real to all who live there and to those who visit it?

QF&P 22.20

Deadline for contributions to the June 2016 issue: noon, Wednesday 18 May

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, would be appreciated to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org, and items for the calendar on page 8 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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They failed him the first time but when he re-applied they allowed him to choose work as a farm labourer.

At the outbreak of war the family was evacuated to West Sussex and lived in a very damp cottage with no electricity. To start with, Berlew was a pig man at 49 shillings a week. Later, for a little more money, he moved to another farm where he spent time ploughing the Downs to increase the acreage for foodstuffs. He was then injured in a fall and had to take a more sedentary job. He became an unqualified teacher and remained in that field after the war. He was worried that he had chosen to be a CO only because he was afraid of facing military risks. However, he was exposed to danger working in the River Emergency Service.

The thing that impressed me most about my father's pacifism was a personal action rather than his war service, which he never talked about. One day when I was a child, I watched a lad knock a cigarette out of his mouth. He did not hit back, but just bent down and picked it up. I noticed the shock on the lad's face. I also knew that my parents, having been members of a socialist group, would not survive if Hitler invaded but I still thought it was better not to fight.

Sarah Lasenby

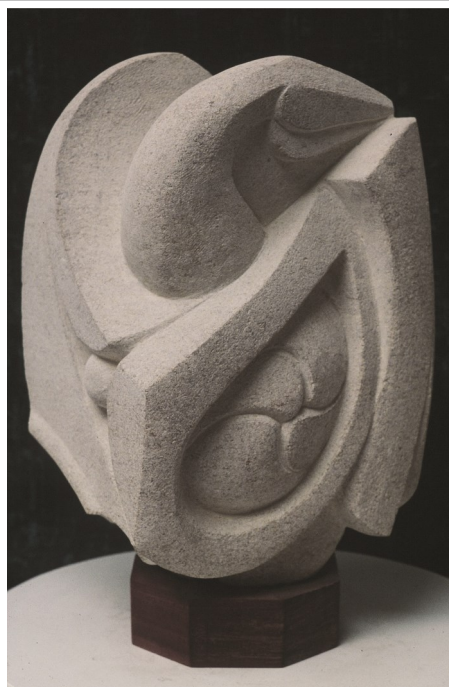
Comes the Light

By the time this newsletter is published, March will have seen the clocks moved forward, and will have brought the Spring Equinox, when day and night are equal in length. The Celtic people of this land celebrated the new energy generated by this season with singing, dancing and reflection. Those who still follow this wheel of the year see the equinoxes as times when light and dark are balanced, and look for a similar integration within ourselves.

We notice the return of the light in practical ways, but we can also focus on the metaphorical implications. Light was a key metaphor for 17th century Quakers, who called themselves 'Children of the Light'. They were helped – as we are today – by the words of George Fox: "I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love flowed over the ocean of darkness."

Central to the experience of early Friends was the guidance of the Inner Light, available to all. It is this which shows us our darkness and inspires us to hold ourselves and others in the Light. Pierre Lacout (QF&P 2.12) affirms that "It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which the Light may shine out." There is an echo of George Fox's positive view of the power of light in the prayer at 18.20. "May the light prevail over the darkness: may those who are here speak for all; the children of the Light, to the needs of other times as well as their own." May that be our experience as we ponder the mysteries of crucifixion and resurrection.

Peggy Heeks



Hugo Powell 1920 – 2014

Shapes and Meanings: A Retrospective

**North Wall Gallery, Summertown,
27 April – 21 May**

Monday – Friday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm,
Saturday 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Hugo Powell was a sculptor who lived and worked in Osney for over 40 years. The exhibition is a retrospective which includes material from the 1930s to his death. Powell's sculpture explores themes of spirituality, symbolism, nature and form, working in stone, clay, wood, bronze, and using found objects. This retrospective brings together work from his whole career for the first time, from early abstractions in wood, through to

the magnificent bronze *Dancing Phoenix* completed two weeks before his death in 2014, aged 94. Exhibited alongside the sculpture are sketches from his time as a field nurse and conscientious objector in the Second World War, maquettes and papers demonstrating his rigorous working practices, and documentary footage of his studio.

He attended Leighton Park School in Reading in the 30s where he was profoundly moved by Quaker beliefs. This led to his arduous service in the Friends Ambulance Brigade, alongside the Free French and the Hadley Spears Ambulance division, in Africa and the Middle East during the Second World War. His father's accounts of attending to war casualties as an ear, nose and throat surgeon also moved him to early pacifism. He was passionate about his tools and his craftsman's approach. It gave him great pleasure when people who wouldn't normally go to see 'art' responded directly to his work.

Powell's work has been selected for the Henry Moore Institute's archive and is represented in several respected private collections, including an early self-portrait in the Ruth Borchard Collection. This exhibition showcases the career of a dedicated and passionate sculptor. Visit www.hugopowell.co.uk for more information.

Liz Peretz

Inside the Echo Chamber

Philip Gross writes a response to this sound installation by Fiona Kam Meadley and Dominic Thomas:

March 2016: "The first gift you can offer, in an art work or a conversation, is space. In a generous space, we feel received but free to have our own reactions, to stay or to go. We have a choice. Choice is at the heart of *The Echo Chamber*: the historic choice whether to fight when the state commands but your conscience refuses, and the struggle for the right to make that choice. At first, the space looks anything but generous: a white octagon that might suggest a tent, a field hospital, maybe, because, look, the walls are bandaged, painstakingly stitched. The joins are visible. They could be wounds or scars.

Equally, it could be a cell, this space in which you can choose to sit or to pace. It could be a Quaker



Photo: Ruth Davey www.look-again.org

Meeting. The room is small, but opens upwards into a great spaciousness of light. That's the second gift: the light. The third gift is silence – not one silence but the breaths, the hesitations, the reflective pauses, that open between the words around you.

This might seem strange, to mention the words last, when each voice is eloquent, each a testimony to making that almost unthinkably demanding choice. Inside the chamber, you can choose to move round, attending to each voice, or you can listen to them all together, with their overlaps, counterpoints, moments of near babble... then one or two contribute a silence in which other words rise, exposed and raw.

Sometimes, too, quietness brings in sounds around us. I first heard this installation in a railway shed, with now and then the rumble of a passing train. Or the sound might be traffic in the Euston Road. Or even birdsong. The world is very much with us. We still have, and have to exercise, the choice. "

Volunteer Stewards Required

Echo Chamber will be at Friends House, London from Thursday 18 August to Friday 2 September. The *Quaker Arts Network* is looking for volunteers to help steward the exhibition from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm daily. It would be helpful if volunteers could do at least two half shifts or a whole day. Travel expenses of up to £50 will be reimbursed.

The exhibition comprises a sound installation and a photography exhibition, inspired by WWI conscientious objectors.

Inside a bandaged shelter, voices come and go. Bathed in natural light from the skylight, it glows

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slightly, and is translucent, so you can see people moving about from the outside. The piece is composed as a score for four voices that runs on a 20 minute loop. The sounds are extracts from interviews with Conscientious Objectors (four from WWI and a modern day Israeli CO).

Seating is built into the work, to invite people to linger and listen together, as if to overhear conversations which could be happening right now. It may not be immediately obvious that these voices are echoes from the past, released into collective consciousness perhaps for the first time.

The look is deliberately minimal, with no written instructions/explanations, although there will be a free exhibition catalogue and reading material made available.

Photographs will be hung in the internal corridors of the Light. Portraits of WWI COs held by their relatives, each with brief details of both the dead and the living.

What Would Stewards Do?

We need three stewards on duty throughout, to take it in turn to sit outside to welcome visitors, and sit inside to watch them. Stewards might engage with visitors to answer questions about the history of COs or the Quaker peace testimony. We'll ask you to keep records for an evaluation (e.g. visitor numbers, estimated average length of stay, feedback/conversations with visitors).

If the artist is not present, stewards will be trained to do some light technical duties (i.e. turn on speakers at the beginning, off at the end, and remove them to charge on the mains overnight).

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the *Quaker Arts Network*:
Jill Green, 01865 580121, quakers@greenfig.org.uk

Inviting All Children and Their Parents

Come along to a bandaging workshop with the artist and Jill Green dressed as an extremely fat WWI Nurse from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm on Saturday 20 August inside the exhibition. **Jill Green**

Recycling

I have lots of clean jam jars with and without tops to give away to anyone who would like them for jam-making this summer. Please get in touch if you would like them. **Gwithian Doswell**, gwithian@btinternet.com

Money and our Meeting

Oxford Meeting is one of the largest in Britain and we are blessed with spiritual, human and practical gifts. We are a thriving community, with six meetings for worship a week and a wide range of other Quaker events. We benefit in all sorts of ways from the endowment of our meeting house and from its character and location.

The meeting also contributes to the wider community in Oxford, through our involvement in local interfaith, peace and other groups. We provide meeting rooms at affordable prices, and give financial and other support for specific work, especially OXFAP, MEET and the Oxford Peace Studies network.

Owning a substantial listed building in the centre of Oxford brings challenges – in managing the premises, our finances and our carbon emissions, and in sustaining healthy, spirit-led relationships with these and with each other. This is the second year following our move from resident wardenship to having a non-resident meeting house manager. We are continuing to learn and experiment to find structures and ways of working that truly support the Meeting and its ministry.

Over the coming months, members of Premises and Finance Committee hope to hold a conversation in the Meeting about our relationship with money and our premises. This has several purposes:

- To enable Friends to understand better how the meeting raises, invests and uses money
- To involve the Meeting in thinking about choices we have to make together including
- How we can best use our resources to further Quaker concerns – including our current concern about supporting refugees in Oxford.
- How we invest our reserves – including the question of fossil fuel divestment and ethical investment.
- How and when to rebuild the Garden Room, and how to finance it.
- How to use the flats formerly occupied by the warden and assistant warden.
- To support Friends in thinking about their own relationship with money, including their investments and their choices about giving to the Meeting and other Quaker causes.

We will try and approach these in bite-sized chunks, beginning with the presentation of our 2015 accounts, expected at Local Business Meeting on 1 May. Then we have invited Sunniva Taylor of Quaker Peace and Social Witness to speak to us about fossil fuel divestment at a special Local Business Meeting on 5 June, which will look at our financial reserves and investment policy. We hope to be able to say more soon about arrangements for other aspects of the conversation.

Laurie Michaelis

Clerk, Premises and Finance Committee

Would you like to invest in a renewables-based energy system for Oxfordshire?



Low Carbon Hub is a social enterprise based in Oxford, working for a massive change in the UK's energy system.

We think we need to get much more local about our energy system, and much more renewable, so that the benefits from renewable energy generation strengthen local communities. Our surplus revenue (after costs and investor returns are paid) is ploughed back into our mission to create a renewables-based energy system in Oxfordshire, reduce energy demand and alleviate fuel poverty.

On the 18 April 2016 we launched a Community Energy Share Offer to raise local investment in 19 new renewable energy projects in Oxfordshire, including a hydro project at Sandford Lock on the Thames, and 18 solar PV projects on schools and businesses across the county. Investors can expect to see a financial return over 20 years of more than 5% (based on a return of 3% above retail price inflation). Investments start at £250.

We are feeling very optimistic that many of the components of the new system we have been dreaming of are now either there or within our grasp. If you would like to help shape Oxfordshire's energy future, you can invest in these projects at www.lowcarbonhub.org/invest.

Exhibition of Quaker Art and Craft – 'Experiments with Light' Saturday 7 May – Sunday 15 May

The Meeting House will be open to you and to the general public from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm from 7 to 15 May (excluding Sunday 11 and Sunday 13 May) and from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm on Friday 13 May, for a show of creativity around the subject of these experiments by our members and attenders. Some items will be for sale. Twenty per cent of money raised from sales will be given to Oxford Meeting. There will also be postcards illustrating some of the work available for sale, all proceeds to Oxford Meeting.

We hope this will be an occasion for celebration of the connections between our spirituality and our creativity, and that all friends will be moved to come along to take a good look. Like last year, it is a real opportunity to reach out to newcomers to Friends, and we expect that people will be at least as interested in Quakers as they are in the art work on show! The 2D work will remain on display in the Meeting House during Meetings for Worship on both Sundays, but we will hope to do much less in the way of moving chairs and benches to protect all of our backs. Fliers for you to give to friends and family and posters for you to put in your workplaces are available from Deb. We hope this is an enjoyable experience for everybody.

Deb Arrowsmith and Jill Green

Save the Dates

Please make a diary booking now for two future enjoyable events at 43 St Giles. These are:

Saturday 25 June: Discussions, entertainment and shared lunch.

Wednesday 6 July: From 10:00 am, coffee & cake.

Transport costs can be reimbursed. There will be more details in the June Newsletter.

The Merry Cemetery



My colleague Oana arrived at work looking pensive and a little sad. “They died so young,” she said, “and there were so many of them.” While walking from the car park, she’d been reading the inscriptions on the gravestones in the churchyard adjacent to our new office and they do indeed highlight the shocking level of infant mortality in Birmingham during the first half of the 19th century. “Yes,” I said, “Our churchyard is probably sadder than many, but aren’t they all sad and gloomy places?” Oana paused for an instant and then said, “You’ve obviously never heard of the Merry Cemetery!”

I hadn’t but, as I was sitting in front of my computer, it took just an instant to type “Merry Cemetery” into my search engine – and when you get the opportunity, I suggest you do the same. You’ll find that it’s a cemetery in the village of Săpânța in Romania, which has bright colourful tombstones decorated with naïve paintings. I can’t read Romanian, but Oana tells me that the inscriptions are, in the main, light hearted and poetic, describing the persons who are buried there and telling stories from their lives.

I didn’t know what to make of this, but after a little reflection, I became convinced that it was an excellent idea. After all, I don’t remember anyone saying that, after they had died, they wanted me to feel sad and miserable every time I thought about them; they were much more likely to say that I should remember the good times. Surely that’s what the Merry Cemetery is all about?

With this in mind, I started to think about my mother, who died many years ago. But instead of focussing on the grief of her passing – she died very suddenly – I thought about the fun we’d had

together when I was growing up. My mother was, most of the time, a very ‘proper’ person, but just occasionally, a wickedly naughty sense of humour would show itself and, for me, this was a great treat. Those were the times I brought to mind, and it was a really good way to remember my mother. It’s very trite, I know, but I genuinely do believe that’s what she would have wanted.

I’d never suggest that cemeteries could or should always be happy places. When the loss of a loved one is fresh, they can surely be nothing other than sad. But do they have to be gloomy in perpetuity? I think the inspirational Romanian example proves that they don’t and, while I can’t really see the idea catching on here, I’m glad to know about it because it’s helped me to think in a much more positive way about the loved ones I’ve lost, and I hope it might do the same for others.

Keith Wilson

Reading *Quaker Faith and Practice*: Session Two in Oxford Meeting

Yearly Meeting has invited all Local Meetings to work through our book of discipline over a twelve month period. This isn’t necessarily with a view to the revision of QF&P; rather, we are encouraged to get to know the book better by reflecting in detail on its contents. Oxford Elders have devised a timetable and invited us to facilitate a day on Chapter 2: *Approaches to God*, Chapter 19: *Openings* and Chapter 26: *Reflections*. Preparing this day was a discipline in itself, requiring us to be highly selective in our choice of passages to work on. There were so many more we should have liked to include!

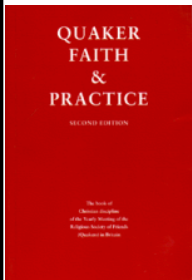
Twelve Friends joined us on 19 March for what proved to be a rich and rewarding day of readings and reflections interspersed with silent worship and worship sharing. The morning was given entirely to Chapter 2. First each Friend read a passage of her/his choice, followed by reflections from the group on that passage. Then we took time to walk round the room reading quotations from different passages, looking for ones that spoke directly to us. We did this work partly as a group and partly in pairs. In the afternoon, we concentrated on a smaller number of (previously chosen) passages, using Sacred Reading and

6 Worship Sharing.

What did we gain? What did we give? We heard the voices of Friends speaking to us from different times and places. We made the effort to listen attentively to what this group of Oxford Friends were saying about the readings. We felt enabled to focus closely on the timeless spirit in which the words were offered and what they might mean to us today.

Judith Atkinson, Steven Brooke, Tina Leonard

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 May: Chapter 16: Quaker marriage Procedure, and Chapter 22: Close relationships

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

Anne Watson

Fridays with Friends

A conversation about our experiences of sugar addiction

Friday 6 May, 7:00 pm for 7:15 pm, Garden Room

An opportunity to share our experiences of sugar addiction. What have we learned? What does *Quaker Faith and Practice* have to offer? How can we support each other?

Laurie Michaelis

Living Our Faith in the World

Friday 13 May, 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm, Garden Room

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) will be focusing on living our faith in the world. This is an opportunity to benefit from the theme, even if you are not attending BYM itself. Participants will be invited to address questions about what hinders us in talking of things eternal and how our stories can be shared to take our meeting forward. Also, participants will be invited to report on times when they felt spoken to in a Meeting for worship, and what helped in recognising a nudging of the Spirit.

John Mason

Paying for weapons of war: what do we owe Caesar?

Friday 20 May, 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm, Garden Room



conscience
TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR

Shaughan Dolan is Campaigns and Communications Officer for 'Conscience: Taxes for Peace not War'. He will talk about their bill to establish the legal right of those with a conscientious objection to war to have the military part of their taxes spent on peace building. This has just been launched in Parliament and they hope the bill will come before Parliament in May.

Stephen Yeo of this Meeting will put the right to object to paying taxes for war in a wider context. He will help us to consider what as a Society we are willing to let the State decide for us (e.g. taxes) and where we might want to withhold permission.



Living, loving and engaging with each other and the world together: parents, sons and daughters

**Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre,
Friday 3 June — Sunday 5 June**

I am leading a course with my dad, Roger, at Woodbrooke in June. It would be lovely if some local Friends would be there. Please get in touch if you would like to talk to me about it.

It is a participatory course for parents and adult children, which aims to help and support participants to understand and deepen their relationship with each other in different "stages" of their lives, and engage in the wider world. Rooted in Quaker values, the course will draw on a range of literature, as well as insights from the Tutors' own relationship. Non-Quakers are welcome. Booking must be in parent and adult children pairs.

For more information: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Becky Riddell

CALENDAR FOR MAY 2016

All 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Sunday 1	12:30	Meeting for Worship for Business	Friday 13	7:30 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 7)
Tuesday 3	7:00 pm	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> Group	Monday 16	4:00 - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library — the theme will be 'Fire'
Thursday 5	7:00 pm	Nominations Group	Wednesday 18	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Friday 6	7:15 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 7)	Friday 20	7:30 pm	Friday with Friends (see page 7)
Saturday 7 - Monday 16		Quaker Art and Craft Exhibition (see page 5)	Sunday 29	12:30 pm	Bring-and-share lunch
Saturday 7	10:30 am	Area Meeting - Charlbury	Every Monday	7:00 pm	Young Adult Friends
Wednesday 11	11:00 am	Reading <i>Quaker Faith and Practice</i> Group			



Yearly Meeting 2016

Yearly Meeting 2016 will be held over the late May Bank Holiday weekend in Friends House, London **27-30 May**. We will be continuing to look at how we live out our faith in the world, starting through hearing our stories. And we will look at how we recognise and respond to the promptings of the spirit to act in the world, and how we know and use our gifts.

Please register your intention to attend Yearly Meeting here <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/bym/> (offsite link). Follow Yearly Meeting on Facebook at www.facebook.com/bymevent and on Twitter #YM2016.

To give a bursary go to www.quaker.org.uk/give to help others attend Yearly Meeting. Please email anp@quaker.org.uk to confirm your donation to the Yearly Meeting Bursaries Fund.

Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 is from 29 July–5 August 2017 at University of Warwick.

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.

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