

# Forty-Three newsletter

Number 479  
March 2019



Oxford Friends Meeting  
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

## **Sustainability, Oxford Meeting, and Nurturing a Quaker Concern**

In early 2001, a conversation at our Tuesday morning breakfast meeting led to the first gathering of what became the Group on Sustainable Living (GOSLings). Over the following seven years we met most months, taking turns over a shared vegetarian meal to speak about our journeys with sustainability, and supporting small groups in projects from leafletting to tree planting.

Soon after GOSLings got off the ground, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust gave me a grant to start Living Witness Project. We held six-monthly gatherings and offered workshops in local Quaker meetings to nurture this Concern within our national Quaker community. By 2007 about 100 meetings were involved. Oxford Meeting was the hub, providing office space, funding, and a management group that launched Living Witness as a charitable trust.

In 2008, sustainability programmes were launched at Woodbrooke and in Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Living Witness moved into a background role, supporting the work in Britain Yearly Meeting and the Quaker Council for European Affairs. I moved to live in the Quaker Community in Bamford partly because I had no clear sense of what to do next.

Meanwhile I was part of planning the 2011 Yearly Meeting Gathering in Canterbury where we made the Minute 36 commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. After 2011 several Living Witness trustees and I were part of successive groups set up to provide leadership and co-ordination in the Canterbury Commitment – most recently the BYM Sustainability Group, clerked by Lis Burch of Oxford Meeting.

Quakers have gone further than most faith groups in facing up to climate change. Friends see it as a key challenge in letting their lives speak. Quaker meetings have greened their buildings and disinvested from fossil fuels. Friends are involved in climate-related art and activism, and engaging with the Government on its policies. Our Quaker UN Office provides quiet listening spaces for government delegates at the climate negotiations and encourages delegates to address human rights and other Quaker concerns in the talks. But like society as a whole, we are far from treating the climate emergency with anything like the energy and determination required.

Many Friends are frustrated that we aren't doing more - and have clear ideas of the priorities. The trouble is, trouble is, these priorities are often different from one individual to the next. Some think we pay too much attention to climate change and should focus on developing our relationship with nature. Others want to persuade Friends

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**Deadline for contributions to the April 2019 issue: noon, Friday 22 March**

*Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to [newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org), or a paper copy can be left in the pigeonhole of any editor. Items for the calendar (on the last page) can be emailed to [office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:office@oxfordquakers.org). For information: tel. 01865 557373 or visit [www.oxfordquakers.org](http://www.oxfordquakers.org)*

to be more involved in civil disobedience or to adopt ultra-frugal lifestyles.

Last November, Meeting for Sufferings agreed to lay down the BYM Sustainability Group and encourage meetings and committees to set their own priorities. We have yet to see what will emerge, and whether there will be any real effort to build and sustain unity in our witness.

In 2019 Living Witness is continuing to provide some support within BYM – through contributions at Yearly Meeting itself and by organising a regional sustainability gathering in the South West. But we have also entered two collaborations. First, we are a core partner in [Living the Change](#), an international, interfaith initiative for 1.5°C living – currently signing up Quakers to be part of an exploration of what it means to move to zero carbon. And second, we are [launching a programme](#) with [Global Ecovillage Network](#) to support young adults engaging with climate change. It would be good to explore whether and how Oxford Friends might like to get involved in these.

**Laurie Michaelis**

### **Enquiry from Charlbury Refugee Action Group**

Do any Oxford Friends know of anyone local who is taking donations for refugees across the channel to Calais? We're collecting donations from the area around Charlbury to go to the Help Refugees distribution point in Calais, and we'd like to find a collection point somewhere nearer than Stratford or Didcot.. If you have any information please contact me on [angelagwatkin@uwclub.net](mailto:angelagwatkin@uwclub.net)

**Angela Gwatkin**, Charlbury Meetin

### **Time is Running Out!**

Friends, we are all in this together. There is no one that climate change won't affect, and our children and grandchildren will be affected most. Please consider joining me to go to London on Monday 15 April, where we can give support to other climate-concern actions happening then. Some Extinction Rebellion activists will be from abroad. We aim to persuade the Government to act on the Paris agreement to lower CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

Numbers will be important, and we will form a block of standing people somewhere near to the nonviolent civil disobedience actions. If we form a block of about 50 protesting completely nonviolently, the police have a duty to give us some time to protest peacefully. I shall be organising a coach costing between £8 and £20 per person, leaving from St Giles at 9:00 am. Do bring folding chairs if you want to and placards. For further details, and to book a place on the coach email [sarahllasenby@gmail.com](mailto:sarahllasenby@gmail.com) David Attenborough says "*climate change will destroy civilisation unless it is tackled quickly*". Time is running out.

**Sarah Lasenby**

### **Poems in the Library**

The March Poems in the Library will be on Monday 18 March from 4:00 till 6:00 p.m. The (voluntary) theme will be SAINTS: ST PATRICK AND ANY OR ALL OTHERS. All welcome.

(Advance notice for your diaries: two exciting Poetry events in the Meeting House 6:30 till 9:00 pm on Saturdays 5 & 12 October. Details to be a revealed nearer the time. Free, with collections for new Garden Room Building Fund.)

Stephen Yeo

[stephen.yeo@phonecoop.coop](mailto:stephen.yeo@phonecoop.coop)

**Oxford marks its 15th Fairtrade Fortnight 25 February—10 March**  
**For more information see <https://oxfairtrade.wordpress.com>**

## **The Archway Foundation, Oxford and Abingdon**

Sue Saville is a volunteer and trustee of the Archway Foundation, which serves people hurt by loneliness in and around Oxford and Abingdon.

The people using Archway's services are referred to as friends and the unpaid workers are known as volunteers. Archway hires the Garden Room at 43 St Giles to train volunteers in the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil a range of roles within the organisation. These include driving friends to and from meetings, serving refreshments, buddying individuals and providing one-to-one support in the community.

Each year Archway is in contact with over 300 adults between the ages of 18 and 90-plus, who need help in accessing regular, supportive, meaningful social contact. Sue joined as a volunteer in 2012. She helps with the training of volunteers, assists at group meetings, and provides one-to-one support to a lady whose health and caring commitments make it hard for her to attend group meetings.

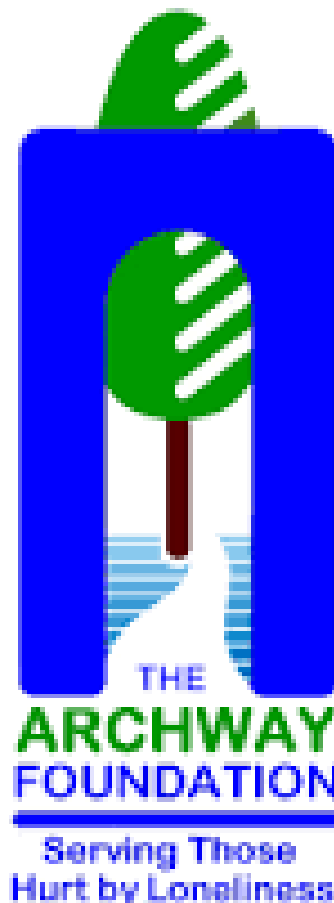
She says: "The training is absolutely essential. It helps the volunteers understand the complex needs of the people they will be working with and equips them with the skills they will need to be effective. We attract people who volunteer because they are eager to help others, so it's important that they understand the nature of the service offered by Archway and the importance of personal boundaries. They also need help to manage difficult conversations including talking with some friends about their suicidal thoughts. "

Anyone who might benefit from a link with Archway can make contact with the office directly (01865 700552) or via its website ([www.archwayfoundation.org.uk](http://www.archwayfoundation.org.uk)). Most people are referred by a health or social care professional,

another voluntary group, or a family member. Each person is seen individually to explore if and how Archway may be able to help, and where appropriate to signpost to other services.

Friends who prefer daytime social contact and can travel independently have a choice of the Daytime Call-In Café on Wednesday Mornings in central Oxford, or the afternoon group twice a month in Abingdon. In addition to tasty refreshments, including porridge, fruit, and toast on Wednesday mornings, there is also the option of a wide variety of board games. The evening social groups provide a more structured setting of refreshments followed by an activity, which may include quizzes, chair exercises, table games, talks, dancing, and performances by local choirs, musicians, and singers.

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## Invitation to Spring Open House Party

Saturday 23 March, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Loneliness is just as prevalent in the younger age groups as in the older ones, so a new service is in its early stage of development to serve those aged 18 to 30 years. Archway's volunteers are of all ages, and include students and young professionals, parents of young families and people who have retired recently from paid employment. Archway's surveys demonstrate that volunteering is rewarding to the volunteers themselves. It builds skills and self-confidence, reduces loneliness, and gives an enormous sense of giving something back to the community. As the demand for Archway's services continues to grow, more volunteers are needed. There is a particular need for volunteer drivers, one-to-one support volunteers, and refreshment servers.

There is no doubt that Archway has had a huge positive impact on the lives of many people who otherwise would have lived isolated lonely lives. Its most recent friends survey demonstrated that:

100% reported feeling valued and cared for by Archway.

89% reported an improvement in their confidence and self-esteem.

83% felt more able to talk to their health care professional about their needs and get the support they required.

83% also reported an improvement in their mental and emotional well-being.

81% reported they now felt more able to help other Archway Friends.

77% also felt that they were now more able to help other people in their community.

78% reported they had made new friends within Archway.

Individual comments included:

"Last week when I was in a really dark place Archway was my Samaritans"

"I always feel welcome here."

"It's the only thing in the week that I enjoy doing."

"It's my family."

"It has kept me alive."

**Glen Williams**

The recent strap line for Quaker publicity has been "in turbulent times...be a Quaker". Well heaven knows the turbulence continues! It's important that we get the message across about all the things that we are involved in at Oxford Meeting House. That's why on Saturday 23 March we are holding an Open House Party. We are inviting people from all our user groups to attend, along with councillors, MPs, our neighbours, and friends of Friends. Also invited are Friends from the local meetings in our area.

There will be short presentations about Quakers and our concerns, including Oxford Friends Action on Poverty. The groups who use our premises will be invited to give brief 'one minute wonder' accounts of the work they do. There'll be a look at our plans for the future, and a chance to see our revamped website with some video clips to bring it to life.

For local meetings (and anyone else) not able to attend we hope to take a presentation out to them over the Summer. Our guests will get a welcome from our Friends on Duty, and they won't leave empty handed. Goodbyes are important and going home with a Quaker goody bag essential! It's all part of getting the message of our Worship and Witness across. We hope you will all feel like joining in.

**Deb Arrowsmith**





## Waking Up on the Edge of the Roof

People have warned since the 1960s that our civilisation is headed for collapse. Material consumption cannot increase indefinitely on a finite planet. But there have been many ways of evading that truth. Other realities have seemed more urgent and immediate – and easier to act upon.

Last July we held a two-day meeting of the trustees of Living Witness, the little Quaker charity that emerged from our Oxford Group on Sustainable Living. Conversations turned around societal collapse. We were struck by a line from Rumi: "*Sit still and listen, for you are drunk and we are on the edge of the roof*".

Perhaps we are in the midst of a kind of sobering up. The news keeps bringing home how close we are to the edge, with the precipitous decline in insect populations and the fragility of our systems of food production. Global warming beyond 1.5°C is likely to be catastrophic for hundreds of millions of people and for other life on Earth.

But waking up is hard. Perhaps the hardest thing is that we can only take care of the planet in collaboration with others. So we need a lot of people to face what is happening, be willing to change themselves, and find a way forward together.

Extinction Rebellion may be part of what is needed – aiming to involve large numbers of people in civil disobedience, calling on government to declare climate emergency, and organising citizens' assemblies to try and develop responses.

Quakers in Britain have declared climate emergency, in words at least, several times – perhaps first at Yearly Meeting in 1988 (see *Quaker Faith & Practice* 25.02). Yet we are barely on the path of the commitment made at Yearly Meeting in 2011 to become a "low carbon sustainable community".

As people face existential crisis, they tend to want immediate solutions, to persuade everyone to



adopt some big idea. Working with Quakers and others, I have perhaps learned more about what doesn't work than what does. I've seen gifted people burn out trying to make change happen. I've seen more people turned off by encounters with zealots who want to change them.

Quaker discipline can be helpful:

- Being open to transformation. This means standing still in the Light, letting it show us our darkness and bringing us to new life.
- Answering that of God in every one. This means a willingness to sit still and listen, and to allow ourselves to be changed through relationship with each other.
- Sincerely seeking unity. This means being willing to let go of our own positions and perspectives as we unite with the 'sense of the meeting'.

But Quaker discipline does require time and patience. Perhaps I'm not very good at it. Yet I find that much of my own work now is in trying to offer this discipline in the other groups I'm part of.

Some of the best Quaker work I've seen involves creating the spaces and conditions for people who are struggling with big complex urgent problems to really sit still and listen. For example, dinners for climate negotiators are hosted by the Quaker UN Office. I wonder whether we might have something similar to offer here in Oxford.

**Laurie Michaelis**

## Help Us to End the London Arms Fair!

Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) is a huge trade show bringing together 1,500 arms companies with representatives from around the world. Some of the world's largest companies market tanks, planes, drones, rifles, ammunition, surveillance technology, training, and a huge array of other weapons.

*Roots of Resistance*, a Quaker grassroots network, working with Quaker Peace and Social Witness, is aiming to build a creative, vibrant, and radical response from Quakers. Two hundred fifty of us held a Meeting for Worship at the last arms fair, and *Roots* is hoping that one thousand of us will join a much bigger Meeting for Worship at the London Arms Fair this September. That would be ten from every Area Meeting in the country! The mass Meeting for Worship will be on Tuesday 3 September (*No Faith in War Day*) outside the Arms Fair in East London.

I hope we can get a group together to attend from Oxford and our Area Meeting. It would be inspiring to do some creative action as part of our peace



witness! There will be a **planning meeting 2:00 - 4:00 pm on Tuesday 19 March in the Garden Room, Oxford Meeting House, to talk about what we in our local and Area Meeting might do.**

We come from a long and lively tradition. Quakers have taken a stand against the arms trade for a century or more. The end of the First World War marked the beginning of a peace movement in Britain. Quakers were very much involved in setting up the League of Nations, whose purpose was to create the conditions for peace by providing a forum for resolving international disputes. Ninety per cent of the 11 million people who voted in the Peace Ballot of 1933, believed

that the "sale and manufacture of arms for private profit" should be stopped.

Public opinion is not so different now. Today there is significant public opposition to the export of arms to repressive regimes. Public opinion polls in the UK show that the majority of people oppose selling weapons to regimes that abuse human rights, and that 76% of people say British companies selling military arms and hardware to Libya is the wrong thing to do.

For more details see:

<https://rootsofresistance.org.uk/> or

Campaign against the Arms Trade:

<https://www.caat.org.uk/events>

**Sue Smith**

([sueandali@gmail.com](mailto:sueandali@gmail.com))



## The Friend

We have an amazing treasure in *The Friend* – the weekly Quaker magazine that has been in continuous publication since 1843. As of January 2019, it has a new editor, Joseph Jones, and great new colourful design. Paper and online subscriptions are available, as well as digital archives. For further information, subscription rates, and free 30-day trial, please see <https://thefriend.org/>

## Spring Can Be A Strange Time

A poem by **Paddy Allen**

'Look, they've put the cattle out!  
See, just above that line on the hill,'  
my friend says, pointing to black dots  
that range across the khaki slopes  
to the conifer ridge, scratched  
against the snow-streaked crags of Ben Eich.

And I worry a bit.  
What if the wind slices down those slopes  
scalding tender skins with ice again?  
What will happen  
to the lambs I saw in Glascorrie  
shivering on crumpled legs against their mothers'  
flanks?  
Or the tender leaves wrinkling open  
on the tips of my plum tree?

Spring can be a strange time  
as we hold in the body the memory of pain,  
and peep out into the fleeting warmth  
only to shrivel back from the slap of cold rain.

I wish I had the courage of the old man  
I met in Musselburgh, stepping carefully  
across the green from the council houses  
to hospital, his face screwed up  
in bliss at the blue March sky,  
who called out to me:  
'What a day! What a day!  
Will you just taste that air!'  
as he unclenched stiffened joints  
in his loose jacket  
and opened his heart to summer.

Paddy added: *"I have always held in my mind the memory of the old man whose pilgrimage was now apparently limited to the green patch between his house and the hospital..."*

Submitted by **Yvonne Dixon**



## Britain Yearly Meeting 24-27 May at Friends House, London

The theme for this year's meeting is *Privilege*, and assumptions of Privilege, and how this affects our ability to act on Quaker concerns. If you are interested in going but want to talk to someone about what it entails, any Elders can help, or Jenny Buffery who attends every year.

There will be two preparatory meetings for BYM on the evenings of Thursday 2 May and Friday 10 May at Oxford Meeting in the Garden Room, at 7.30pm. More details will be in the April newsletter. Meanwhile a booklet about BYM can be found in the Elders' pigeonhole - let the Office know if they run out. The booklet can also be found at: [www.quaker.org.uk/ym/spiritual-preparation](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/spiritual-preparation). On that site you can also find the pamphlet 'Owning power and privilege' which will be used during the preparatory meetings. Copies will be available for Oxford meeting.

**Anne Watson and Jenny Buffery**  
on behalf of Elders

## Report from the Quaker All-Age Outreach Conference

"Go to where people are, and dance their dance" were the opening words from the All Age Outreach conference that Paul, Aurora, Aiden and I attended from 15 to 17 February. Given the demographics of Quakers (estimated average age 64, more than 95% white) we have an existential need to reach out to others. But the conference was less an outreach how-to, focusing more on the barriers to inclusion.

We heard from Kevin and Lucy Vento, who contrasted Kevin's experience coming from an Afro-Caribbean background and following a journey exploring Islam, Buddhism, and branches of Christianity before arriving with Friends, to Lucy's upbringing in a Quaker family. They discussed diversity in Meeting as a source of strength, and the challenges of worshipping as a family. Lucy made the point that the Children's Committee is the whole Meeting's responsibility, not just parents'.

Some of our customs may unintentionally erect barriers, such as greeting an unfamiliar face with, "Is this your first time to Meeting?". This actually



signals “I don’t recognise or remember you”. A better icebreaker might be asking how the ministry spoke to someone, or what they thought of the Meeting.

A workshop on digital inclusion pointed out that web groups and apps have done a lot to enable people who are isolated to make connections, and Young Friends are leading the growing use of digital communities.

We’ve had a blessing of babies (is that a collective noun?) in Oxford Meeting recently. In the Outreach to All Ages workshop, Friends were very interested in the Oxford experience of running a weekday Parent and Baby group as a form of outreach. We were able to sing the praises of Virginia Alport, Anthea Clarke, and Elisabeth Salisbury for running the group, and providing such a welcome and support for new parents in the Meeting.

We also discussed how Friends might set up baby and toddler groups in their Meetings for participation beyond the Quaker community, advertised to all new parents. In the face of Children’s Centre closures around the country, and increasing need for Baby Banks (like Food Banks, but for baby items) there are opportunities here for social justice as well as outreach.

As Nim Njuguna said in his ‘Stories and Journeys’ talk, “until everyone is included, we are not equal”. So for me, inclusion and outreach to enable people to feel included is part of our Testimony to Equality. Nim asked us about the first picture that comes to mind when thinking about Africa, and contrasted those sometimes stereotypical images with scenes of high-rise Nairobi, to make the point that preconceived ideas and unconscious biases affect us all, particularly when we come from a position of privilege. He said, “People in positions of power don’t get to decide what is oppression. White people don’t get to decide what is racism. Christians don’t get to decide what is anti-Semitism. Men don’t get to decide what is sexism. When an oppressed group speaks, we need to listen.” This can feel uncomfortable, but discomfort can be necessary to bring about change. Do we *genuinely* enable others to feel included, remaining aware of people who are different to us and experience the world in ways that we don’t know anything about?

## Growing Up in the Meeting All-Age Worship and Lunch - 31 March

*Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. ... Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?*

- *Advices & Queries 9*

As we reach the first birthdays of our meeting’s six babies, our Spring All-Age Worship is a chance to rejoice in the presence of children and young people. Some children will share prepared ministry in words or pictures exploring the theme ‘growing up in the meeting’. As a preview, the accompanying photo is a sculpture that one of our current children made in Children’s Meeting whilst we were reflecting on the theme.



There will also be an opportunity for older Friends to contribute. Perhaps you have reflections on what being a child, young person, or parent in a Quaker meeting has meant to you? Perhaps you have watched or supported children and young people growing up in the Society of Friends? Perhaps you have prayers, hopes or words of wisdom to offer to the current babies, children, and parents?

This all-age worship will be part of the 11:00 am meeting for worship on Sunday 31 March. We very much hope Friends who usually worship in other Meetings for Worship in Oxford will join us. Afterwards everyone is invited to a special bring-and-share lunch at 12:30 to celebrate the babies’ first birthdays.



# Calendar for March 2019

All at 43 St Giles unless otherwise indicated

Fri 1 March	7:00 for 7:30 pm	Friday with Friends Garden Room Plans update
Sun 3 March	10:30 am	Single Combined meeting followed by Business Meeting at 12:00 noon
Tue 5 March	7:00 pm	First Tuesday Group
Wed 6 March	7:00 pm	Enquirers evening 'Our spiritual journey and what led us to the Society of Friends'
Thu 7 March	11:00 am	Funeral for Shelagh Ranger in the Meeting House
Fri 8 March	7:00 pm	Friday with Friends: Quakers and Education
Sat 9 March	2:00 - 4:00 pm	Freedom from Torture Meeting
Mon 18 March	4:00 - 6:00 pm	Poems in the Library - St Patrick and other Saints
Wed 20 March	1:45 pm	Friends Fellowship of Healing
Sat 23 March	11:00 am - 2:00 pm	Oxford Meeting Open House Party
Sun 31 March	11:00	'Growing up in the Meeting' and shared lunch

***Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of nonviolent resistance available.***

***Quaker Faith & Practice 24.10***

## MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

### **1st Sunday of each month**

10:30am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

### **2nd 3rd & 4th Sunday of each month**

9:30am & 11:00am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by tea and coffee)

### **Monday**

7:00pm Young Adult Friends at 43 St Giles  
(followed by baked potato supper)

### **Tuesday & Thursday**

7:30am at 43 St Giles  
(followed by breakfast at 8:00am)

### **Wednesday**

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

### **Headington LM worship on Sunday**

10:00am 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.

*The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.*

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