

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 496
August 2020



Oxford Friends Meeting
43 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LW

Friends for Life Oxford Friends of the Earth

The city of Oxford is host to several environmental action groups. Friends of the Earth began operating here in the late 1970s, and for many years has held its monthly meetings in our Garden Room or our Meeting House.

Karl Wallendszus joined Friends of the Earth while an undergraduate at Oxford University, and is now Treasurer of the Oxford branch. He recalls: "I attended my first Friends of the Earth meeting in the Garden Room at 43 St Giles in 1990. I soon became involved in putting up posters and helping at talks and concerts as part of a Rainforest Festival which the group organised."

Looking back on the past three decades, Karl feels that Friends of the Earth has helped to bring about some important achievements: "Globally there have been major initiatives leading to international agreements to combat climate change. At the national level, in 2008 the UK parliament passed the Climate Change Act, which commits the government to reducing carbon omissions by 80% by 2050. The UK was the first country in the world to introduce such a law."

"At the local level," he says, "we work with a wide variety of partners, including the City Council,

academics, nature groups, faith groups, the Natural History Museum, and also with gardening organisations and nurseries.

"One of our many campaigns has been the protection and promotion of bee populations, which are vital to agricultural productivity and also contribute to healthy biodiversity. We established a wildflower patch, dubbed the 'Oxford Bee Word', in the large grass meadow at the Kidneys Nature Reserve, which is now thriving. The campaign also called for an international ban on neonicotinoid pesticides, which the European Union adopted in 2018."

Karl is greatly encouraged by the recent rise of the Extinction Rebellion campaigning organisation: "XR has injected a lot of energy into existing campaigning activities. It's also the case that David Attenborough, Greta Thunberg and the school strikes have helped greatly to raise public awareness and pressure on governments."

Oxford Friends of the Earth has also led campaigns to tackle Oxford's continuing air quality problems. In 2018 they launched the Oxfordshire Clean Air Charter, which highlights the need to change how we travel, to cut car use, and to support people to walk and cycle more. As we emerge from the Covid19 crisis, these transport issues are critically important.

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Deadline for contributions to the September 2020 issue: Monday 17 August

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to 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.

A major initiative of the Oxford branch of Friends of the Earth was the publication in October 2019 of the *Fast Forward Oxfordshire* report (<https://www.oxfoe.co.uk/fastforward/>). This thoroughly researched, ground-breaking document takes a novel approach: first, it fast-forwards to life in Oxfordshire if we make real progress on tackling the climate crisis, and then links this scenario with the policies we need to achieve it. The report then looks in detail at six key areas of environment policy: housing and settlements, transport, work, energy, food and nature.

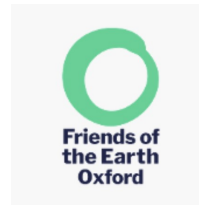
Chris Church, campaigns officer for Oxford Friends of the Earth, who produced the report in collaboration with a group of experts, says: “We wanted to show that there are solutions to the problems we face, and that if we are ambitious and can mobilise the political will that is needed, we can create a strong and healthier zero carbon society. We’ve delivered a copy of the report to every city, county and district councillor and have had many positive responses.”

I asked Karl Wallendszus what faith groups such as Quakers can do to help protect the environment. He replied enthusiastically:

“Faith groups can do a lot to support initiatives such as Oxfordshire Trees for the Future (<https://www.oxtrees.uk>), which aims to double tree cover in the county through the involvement of community groups, local authorities, schools, land-owners and faith-based organisations. This will be highlighted through National Tree Week in November.

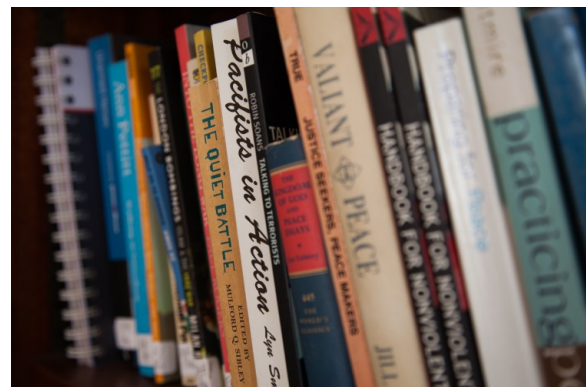
“Tree cover in Oxfordshire,” says Karl, “is only 8.9 percent of the land area of the county, compared with the regional average of 15 percent. But it’s not just a matter of going out and planting trees. First it’s necessary to identify who owns low-grade land that isn’t suitable for planting crops but could be planted with trees. Some parish councils have pledged their support, but more is needed. Faith groups such as Quakers could play a big part in expanding tree cover in Oxfordshire. Like other community-based organisations, they can apply for free supplies of tree seedlings and also training in how to plant them and look after them properly.”

Anyone interested in becoming involved in Oxford Friends of the Earth can get in touch with the group in a number of ways. Monthly meetings, to which everyone is welcome, are held in the Garden Room at 43 St Giles on the second Wednesday of each month, starting at 7.30 p.m. Alternatively, please visit the group’s website (www.oxfoe.co.uk); or email the coordinator, Fiona Tavner, at info@oxfoe.co.uk; or follow them on Twitter (@OxfordFOE1) or Facebook (@OxFoE).



Glen Williams

Meeting House Library Re-opens for Borrowing



Quaker bookworms will be pleased to learn that it is once again possible to borrow books and pamphlets from the Library at No. 43. It will not be possible for you to go in and browse, so we have published the ‘handlists’ – categorised lists of the holdings – online on the [Using our Library](#) page. Simply browse through the list (or lists) relevant to your interests and make a note of the title(s) in which you are interested. Then complete the online form, which will be sent automatically to the librarian, Catherine Hilliard. Catherine will pick the book(s) from the shelves and put them in a bag in the foyer for you to collect. Happy reading!

Liz Matthews

Haikus of Hope

Entering our mind
In time of strange quandaries
Joy of laughter flows

Take me to the heart
Where darkness reaches for light
And stars become souls

Place me in the palm
Of nature's benediction
Breaths of bright clear air

Flight of butterflies
Towns with wild things running free
Claiming their planet

Yellow pierces gloom
High above dark frowning clouds
Wild geese are flying

Bees will never know
Stillness of a fading life
Golden nectar flows

Sun slants through window
Touches gold rays in her hair
Illumines bright hope

Mirth begins to surge
Roar of triumphant laughter
Vanquishes the dark

Carol Macfie Lange



Reply to 'A Modest Proposal'

I'm afraid I do not agree with the suggestion by Elisabeth Salisbury reported in the last '43'. I'd like to explain why I have to say this to a Friend with whom I usually agree wholeheartedly.

Just before I took my final exams for an Oxford University BA in Modern History in 1962, I started to explore the possibilities of moving to Amsterdam to study another subject. My Dutch family expected me to go to a university in the Netherlands (though I'd have been the first Faber woman to do so). But I learned that my Oxford degree would give me no advantage and I'd have to start from the beginning again on what could be a seven year undergraduate course.

While I was deciding what to do, a family member took me to see a building in Amsterdam where maybe I could rent a room. What a difference from North Oxford where I had for two years been a lodger in the quiet home of a friendly young professional couple! My college, Somerville, did not have space for all its students, so it found alternative accommodation for some of us second and third year students. I liked this lifestyle: semi-detached from college, but safe.

The room in Amsterdam was in an uninspiring block of flats three or four floors above ground level alongside other such buildings alongside a busy motorway. The room had no use of bathroom but did have its own washbasin. I don't remember the landlord.

I quickly decided it was not practical for me to come to Amsterdam, a city I love, to do a long second undergraduate course in an ugly noisy room, alone in a house among strangers. My Dutch family was disappointed, and I still occasionally feel the need to apologise.

I thought about this sad experience when I read Elisabeth Salisbury's article in the last '43' 'Silver Linings Part Two: A Modest Proposal'. The college is the centre of an Oxford student's experience. S/he gains entrance to the university by becoming a member of a college. The college provides her or him with a modest quiet room, essential domestic facilities, food, options for friendship, an intellectual community, teaching, a library, and physical safety. The gates shut and there are porters. The college accepts a duty of care for its students – even if they have to live out – and, in my experience in my own wonderful college, Somerville, supports

students in need. The college has a long history of welcoming students from far afield and is multi-ethnic and multicultural.

No doubt there are Oxbridge colleges where some students come from well-to-do white British families that take it for granted that their children can go to their parents' old university. Somerville was not one of those colleges when I went there in 1959: many of my contemporaries, including me, were the first members of our family to study. My father was sacked from his job just before I went to Oxford (with no reason given at a time when there was no redundancy pay). So I lived on scholarships throughout my student days. And principals of Somerville still emphasise that our college was established for the 'excluded'. Its senior staff make great efforts to encourage students to apply from parts of the UK that send few students to Oxford.

I hope I can convince you that, against this background, it is unreasonable and unwise for our meeting to ask the City Council to house formerly homeless people in colleges. The council already pressurises colleges to provide enough accommodation for all undergraduates and even postgraduates, so as to relieve the housing shortage in Oxford. Many people who are homeless have had very unfortunate experiences such as service in the army and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder before they become homeless. The college has a duty of care to its students and does not have the specific skills to support homeless people in a setting where many young people are learning to live and study for the first time. I think there are other and better ways for Quakers to encourage the British public to support homeless people.

Marieke Faber Clarke



Taking the Knee

Every Wednesday at 6, rain or shine,
we gather, gazing inwards
one knee bent, the other on the road
one fist raised high

Silence
for the 8 minutes 46 seconds it took
to kill George Floyd,
breathing stopped by chokehold,
knee on his neck

The gesture feels strong
seems to have weight
to bring solemn unity,
calls out for human rights for all,
regardless of race.

A motley crew
of mainly white bodies
form this demonstration
of peaceful resistance to violence
against black bodies and souls.

Wobbling a bit as cars pass by
sound supportive honks
hoping to raise public consciousness
while feeling
inner outrage and mourning

We know
that our raised fists can never be
exactly the same as yours.
We know
that racism lives on in us
that we are always privileged

And yet
after 'taking the knee'
as we stumble back to movement,
we feel in our hearts
solidarity – and a call to action.

Juliet Henderson
July 2020
(edited by Carol Macfie Lange)

Taking the knee: this takes place every Wednesday, 18:00, at the main entrance to Florence Park.
Do join us. Standing, or sitting on a folding chair, is also welcome.

Book review:
Quakers do what! Why?
by Rhiannon Grant

The title of this 75-page book could hardly be more apt. It is a succinct introduction to Quaker thought and practice, told in a lively, direct style, with flashes of humour. The author, Rhiannon Grant, is a staff member at the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke, the Quaker conference and study centre based in Birmingham and now operating online.

When I interviewed Rhiannon for this article, I asked how she came to write such an eminently readable, non-academic book. "It arose," she replied, "out of conversations I was having with people who were asking me basic questions about Quakerism, like 'Why do Quakers worship in silence?' and 'Why are Quakers so political?'. I was also addressing these issues through my teaching and research work at Woodbrooke."

The book addresses these and other issues through 15 short chapters, each starting with a question, for example:

"How many kinds of Quakers are there?"

"How do you know if something you're led to say is really from God?"

"What's this about Quakers who don't believe in God?"

I read Rhiannon's book at one sitting, and enjoyed it immensely. It is a refreshing change from some other recent books which sound the alarm bells about 21st century Quakerism apparently becoming increasingly secular and divorced from its spiritual origins in the 17th century.

It might be thought that a general introduction to Quakerism would avoid controversial topics, but that is certainly not the case with this book. One of the most interesting chapters addresses the thorny

issue of "non-theism", but does so in a sensitive, non-confrontational way.

A particularly interesting and helpful feature of the book is a list, at the end of each chapter, of sources of information (websites, podcasts, blogs, videos, books, articles and leaflets) – mostly available online – about the topic in question.

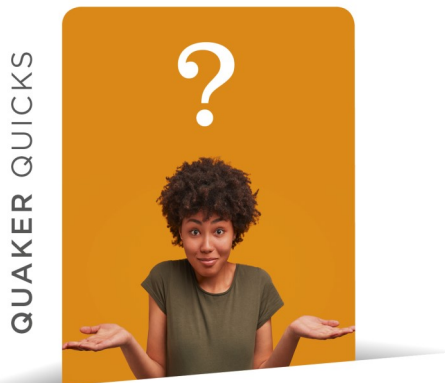
Although this book is intended mainly for a non-Quaker readership, I believe that it would also be eminently suitable for use by a discussion group consisting of (or including) long-standing members of our Meeting. The book finishes on an inspirational note:

"Quakers know from experience that, when we settle down and listen, we have access to something which gives us new perspectives, opens doors, sows seeds, gives rest, moves us to action, and enables us to do what love requires of us. Whatever Quakers do in future, it will come from this holy source, which is available to everyone, everywhere, at all times."

Glen Williams

How to order copies of this book

Quakers do what! Why? is published by Christian Alternative Books (www.christian-alternative.com). An online launch will be held on August 8 (<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/item/quakers-do-what-why-book-launch>). Copies of the book (£7 plus postage) can be ordered from the publisher's website: (<https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/christian-alternative-books/our-books/quaker-quick-quakers-do-what-why>). The book is also available in e-book format at £3.99 per copy. For signed copies please contact the author, Rhiannon Grant ([by email at rhiannon.grant@woodbrooke.org.uk](mailto:rhiannon.grant@woodbrooke.org.uk), [via Facebook](#), or on [Twitter at @bookgeekrelg](#)).



**QUAKERS
DO WHAT!
WHY?**

Rhiannon Grant

The Locks Come Down

what glory what joy and what fun
now the countdown to haircut's begun
i'll not fester in bed
with the weight of my head
but - oh no - it's a week till it's done

so i'm really not looking my best
(you could say that i look quite depressed)
and i thought that i would
feel immeasurably good
but it seems that i've lost all my zest

now the answer is clear – chocolate –
which is normally comforting but
it occurs to me now
i'll just eat like a sow
and my waistline will quickly go 'phut'

Val Ferguson



What Does the Pastoral Care Group Do?

"We are all to watch over one another for good and to be mutually interested one for another." — QF&P 12.18, Yearly Meeting 1850

As the Pastoral Care Group in Oxford Meeting we try to:

- foster a sense of community by organising and facilitating regular social events such as shared lunches, coffee mornings, discussion groups etc.
- keep in touch with, visit and support Friends when the need arises
- be warm and welcoming to newcomers and encourage people to sign up to the database
- be alert to problems arising from economic hardship, illness, disability, and bereavement within our Meeting and offer support
- be aware of safeguarding issues
- co-operate and work with Elders, the Children and Young People's Committee, and the Co-ordination Group
- regularly hold people in the Light, whether they are experiencing joy or sorrow.

We offer training and support to new members of the Pastoral Care Group.

Of course it is not realistic or desirable that those appointed to the Pastoral Care Group should be the only ones to be aware of others' needs within the Meeting. As a community we all aspire to be sensitive to noticing when others may need support or would welcome the sharing of joy or congratulation. Many Friends keep in touch and offer practical or other forms of support when the need arises as a matter of course. Much of the pastoral care in our Meeting happens in this informal way.

Together we all hope to build *"a community in which all members find acceptance, loving care and opportunities for service"* (QF&P 12.10)

Anthea Clarke
Jill Green (Convenor)
Ursula Kneisel
Johanna Longmore
Carol Saker
Glen Williams
Cath Wilson
Caroline Worth



OxFAP During Lockdown

The OxFAP committee expected to be extra busy during lockdown but we could not anticipate in what way people's needs might change. At the start of lockdown there was a lull in requests while caseworkers found new ways to communicate with their clients, so we sent out supportive messages to the agencies with whom we work and some block grants they could use for any backlog of immediate needs.

So far during lockdown people who are otherwise street dwellers have been in temporary accommodation, so we do not get so many requests about helping them, but this will change when their accommodation is reclaimed for tourism and we do not know how this will affect OxFAP.

Having tightened our criteria earlier in the year, our approach to giving has been to respond positively to all the requests we would usually agree to rather than introduce more stringent constraints. We are still helping with many needs arising from long term austerity, but also with new needs where people's difficulties have been exacerbated by not having

their usual lives, groupings, and ways of keeping going on an *ad hoc* basis. Our maximum grant is now £150, where a year ago we were able to operate with a maximum of £250. Even so we gave £3500 in June, about 50% more than last year, and we anticipate that July might be similar.

Here are some examples:

- A woman who has been out of work during lockdown has been recalled to her previous catering job. She lives in the same street as a man who raped her when she was 16 but was never prosecuted and, as you can imagine, she is anxious about coming home at night so she takes a taxi. As she has no money until she is paid, we have paid for her taxi costs until payday.
- We paid for several beds for children: one has been sleeping on a floor; one had a broken bed; one family had a bedbug infestation.
- A young mother of three has extracted herself from an abusive relationship but is traumatised and suffers from severe anxiety, making it hard for her to go out. We gave her money to help towards her brave efforts to help her children become socialised through swimming and dance lessons.
- A young mother with her first child, whose partner is in prison, is in her own accommodation for the first time, but with nothing but bare walls. She is also facing an unpaid council tax bill. Social care have paid for some furniture. She has been using a microwave for a couple of months but her daughter is weaning so we have paid for a cooker.
- A young Afghan refugee with indefinite right to remain who has serious mental health issues and needs a lot of support is unable to work yet and has no money for essentials in his accommodation. His home has been furnished from donations and from Emmaus but we have helped Asylum Welcome buy minimal white goods: fridge-freezer, kettle, and microwave.

Continued next page ...

- We helped with delivery costs for someone who had been given a much-needed sofa but had no means of transport for it.
- We paid for replacement spectacles for a Gatehouse client.
- We paid for a suitable buggy for a 5 year-old with autism who refuses to walk anywhere, making life very hard for the father, who is the main carer, and the siblings.
- We paid urgently for nappies and toiletries for a family when the Food Bank did not have any.

We have learnt that most of these people face multiple issues and we are moved by the patient step-by-step approach of the case workers. OxFAP plays a small part in this process and, given the level of need, hopes to continue. If this update has moved you to give more to OxFAP, remember that we are not a separate charity, so payment is made to Oxford Quaker Meeting via the office by your usual methods with a message to make it clear that the money is for OxFAP.

Thank you Friends,

**The OxFAP committee (convenor: Brigid Schroer)
Anne Watson**



Children and Young People's Committee News

Lockdown has made me all the more grateful for zoom contact with the Quaker families. I am digitally pretty incompetent, so it has been vital to have Matthew and Katherine Gee's sense of play and digital skills, as well as Anita Ghosh's creativity, to enable the helpers stay in touch with the Beansprouts (2-3 year olds) and Sunflowers (4-10 year olds). Since the children have missed their school and nursery friends, their loyalty to the Zoom group has been strong.

With themes of peace and then sustainability, we have had stories and lots of action. We've read Ferdinand the (peaceful) Bull; had an amazingly lively session about the Quaker banker who helped finance the Stockton-Darlington Railway; made moon rockets out of junk, and discussed the provisions you'd need for the journey; done scavenger hunts for clothes for 'The Gentle Giant'; and thought about Nature and drawn things picked from our gardens. One of the children brought moon biscuits not only for her rocket-crew members, but also for any aliens they would meet.

We have enormous fun every week, so please offer your services to the Children and Young People's Committee, via Nominations.

Virginia Allport

CALENDAR FOR AUGUST 2020

During the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, most meetings and events are being held via Zoom-Rooms.

Please contact the office for more details.

Email: oxford@oxfordquakers.org

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 557373



From Quaker Faith and Practice

Knowing and accepting ourselves

When we descend from our towers, and come out from our sanctuaries, and take our place in ordinary homes, and workshops, and are surrounded and jostled by our fellow-creatures, we find that our sensitive souls shrink from some of these contacts: that this man humbles our pride, and that one offends our aesthetic sense: that this woman takes our words amiss, and that one misconstrues and resents our actions. It is so much easier to feel enthusiasm for humanity, than to love our immediate neighbours.

Phyllis Richards, 1948
QF&P 21.13

MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Please note that for the time being, most meetings for worship are via Zoom-Rooms.

For more information, contact the office at
office@oxfordquakers.org
+44 (0)1865 557373

Sunday: Meetings for Worship
9:30 & 11:00

First Sunday of each month:
Meeting for Worship for Business
12:15

Monday: Young Adult Friends
19:00

Tuesday & Thursday: Meeting for Worship
07:30

Wednesday: Meeting for Worship
12:15

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. The same applies to calendar items.

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

Editorial Team:
SHERRY GRANUM, JULIET HENDERSON,
and ALEX SMITH
(Joint Editing and Production);

DEB ARROWSMITH, JACQUI MANSFIELD, and MAX HOWELLS
(Calendar and Distribution)