

Forty-Three Newsletter

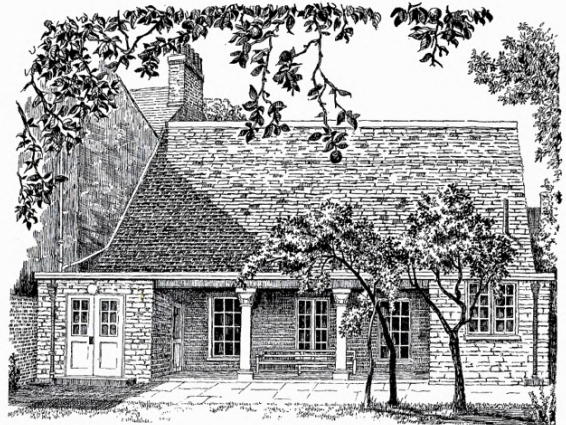
Number 540
April 2024

Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LW

+44 (0)1865 557373

office@oxfordquakers.org



Where the Light Gets In...

Anne Watson



Reading *The Friend* recently I found myself overwhelmed by two contrasting quotations. One was from Thomas Kelly's *Testament of Devotion* and had been quoted at the start

of Meeting for Sufferings. "Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Centre, a speaking Voice ... warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home into itself. Yielding to these persuasions ... is the meaning of true life ... is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it." This was a strong reminder of the direct relationship Quakers recognise with something Divine – not a surprise but an affirmation.

The second was a wonderful surprise, the words of Mick Lynch, who as a leader in the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers has been so often on our screens during recent rail strikes – straight talking, articulate, fair and passionate. He was that last speaker at Friends House during the 'And Still We Rise' climate conference. *The Friend* reports him saying: "it's appropriate that we are here in the Society of Friends because that's what we're trying to build - a society of friends - around the world. And it's great that we have the

peace banner at the back... because this organisation who are hosting us today has stood out for centuries in the name of peace, in the name of dissent, in the name of struggle. They're not perfect. None of us are. And they have their own history. But it's great that we're here in the Society of Friends trying to re pledge ourselves, if you like, to the work that we all do in our own ways, and for the society that we want to build for the future.”

It matters deeply to me that we are known in this way by an outsider; it matters that as a Society we can go to the Divine Centre that Thomas Kelly talks about and so ‘stand out’ for peace, dissent and struggle. It matters too that we can do this despite not being perfect. For me, the Light often gets in through the eyes, words and actions of others.

Quaker Writers Series 2024: John Mason on Writing Experience

Jimin Kang

For the second installment of the Quaker Writers Series 2024 (previously called 'Friends Young and Old Who Like to Write and Share Things') held on February 23, John Mason spoke to a room of fifteen or so Friends about what it means to speak—and write—about one's experience, especially of the fleeting and spiritual kind. 'Quakers advocate getting to know each other in the things that are eternal, by exchanging descriptions of experiences,' he shared. 'Testimonies are in the main descriptions of experience (not proscriptions or prescriptions of actions). But how might

descriptions of experience actually communicate across the barrier of divisive discourses?'

In the kind of 'task exercise' that John, whose professional background is in maths education, sets his students to help them become aware of ingrained manners of thinking that they might not otherwise explicitly know, Friends were given a series of poems and quotations to read quietly on their own. We were encouraged to reflect upon our initial promptings and responses to these texts, which we shared in small groups. Some Friends spoke about their attempt at finding patterns between the texts, others about how they approached the reading process with or without expectations for what they would encounter. John subsequently launched into a beautiful talk on what it means to be aware of one's awareness free from any social imperative or mores. He asked Friends: at what point do you become aware that you are waking up, for example? What does it feel like to be so keenly aware of a sensation without realizing that you are paying attention to it? How might you capture this particular moment?

This reflection—and more—prompted an avid discussion between Friends on 'pure experience'; how to 'put words to the wordless'; the limitations of labelling an experience (one Friend gave the example of an art gallery: do we read the blurb accompanying the artwork first, or look at the painting? What difference does the order make?), and how if we pay attention to anything closely enough, we might grow to love it deeply. We discussed what it means to search for echoes of common experience in disparate experiences, and how this—in the spirit of Quaker ministry

and faith—leads us to a sense of renewed wonder and mystery. All in all, it was a convivial and inspiring evening of great discussion. For those interested in listening to an audio recording of the session, you can do so [here](#) (and please get in touch with Jimin Kang if you have any issues).

The Quaker Writers Series is hosted on (most) last Fridays of each month, 7 for 7.30 until about 9, in the meeting house Long Room. Contact Jimin at jiminkang2021@gmail.com if you'd like to be added to the mailing list, where you'll find out about future discussions!

OSAM and the Slave Trade*

Ann Morgan's talk 'Facing Up To Slavery' on the 8/12/23 at Oxford Meeting House (see the previous issue of No.43), on Lancaster Quakers and their direct involvement in the 18th and early 19th Century slave, trade prompted me to conduct similar research into whether and to what extent any direct links could be found between Quakers from local Meetings now associated with OSAM and the slave trade. As a retired academic, I was able to devise a methodology that would allow a systematic study. For these purposes, the Witney Division of Berkshire and Oxfordshire Monthly Meeting Minute Books from the period was the main focus; these are held at the Oxfordshire Archives in Cowley. This is because it includes the Local Meetings presently constituted under the Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting. There was a secondary focus on Vale Monthly Meeting as Faringdon (the author's own Meeting) was in Berkshire at the time. The names of Quakers found in the minute

books and other relevant sources were then entered into the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database

(<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/>) using the Advanced Search function and a similar search of the Slave Voyages database, particularly that part of it focusing in on enslavers since many people invested in the slave ships (<https://www.slavevoyages.org/past/enslavers>), was also carried out.

A total of 295 names of Quakers were found in the relevant Meeting materials. In the majority of cases, there was not even a surname match in either database. Where there was a surname match, I have yet to find any evidence of a Christian name match. Indeed, a search of named individuals (not just Quakers) in the Database living in Oxfordshire yields only 37 names (in Wiltshire 95 and in Berkshire 81 names; many of these were not resident within the Area Meeting boundary), and the resulting reverse search double-checking of these names against the list of Quaker names yielded no matches either. A similar scenario was encountered with the Slave Voyages database, with it being very difficult to narrow down searches as a result of a lack of information concerning where the people mentioned on this database lived.

The Question of Oxford, and the Estate of Joseph Harris

In respect of Oxford in particular, of course the Meeting was very much in decline during the time period we are concerned with. Despite the first purpose-built Meeting House being "erected in the late 1680s behind 63–4 St Giles," by the mid-18th century local Quaker activity had moved to Witney. The number of Friends in Oxford dwindled, and the Meeting House was sold in

the 1860s” (<https://oxfordquakers.org/quakers-in-oxford-history/>). Indeed, I could not find any Minute Books for it from that period. The Gillet involvement came about in the 20th Century and indeed the bank itself did not establish a branch in Oxford until some fifty years after abolition; the family were original wool (not cotton) merchants. In regards to Faringdon, this was apparently the locus of a Monthly Meeting during the time period, subsequently described and catalogued in Cowley as Vale Monthly Meeting (NQ2 in the Cowley archives). A specific search of the Vale Monthly minutes yielded the following (NQ2/A1/3; ‘The Monthly Meeting Book for Faringdon, Berkshire’, p.209), recorded as a minute in the Monthly Meeting on 28/4/1785, held that month at Challow:

“The estate of Joseph Harris includes [...] 11 Books Entitled ‘The Enslavement of Negroes’ by Anthony Benezet.” Benezet, a French-American, is well-known as one of the prominent abolitionists and ‘founded one of the world's first anti-slavery societies, the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage’ (source: Wikipedia). He gave an address to London Yearly Meeting in 1748 on this topic, which became his first publication. We may wonder why Joseph Harris had 11 copies of the book at the time of his death. Either he was removing them from people, which seems unlikely, or he had purchased a number of the books and was distributing them. Given what we know of Quaker involvement in abolitionism, the latter seems most likely.

Conclusions

On the balance of probabilities and at least during the periods of key Quaker decision making in regards to Enslaved Peoples that this research has focused on, from the

evidence I have been able to uncover, it seems *most unlikely* (though not impossible), that Quakers from Local Meetings now within OSAM were directly involved in the Slave Trade. By which I mean, had a connection that is identifiable through the UCL database Advanced Search and Commercial Legacies functions, and the Slave Voyages database.

Of course, if we were to extend our deliberations to consider the general possibility of local Quakers being shopkeepers, i.e. local folk, who retailed (i.e. sold to the general public at the very end of the supply chain, as opposed to wholesaling or factoring higher up the supply chain closer to the source) tobacco, coffee, tea, cotton clothing, sugar etc, then we would be needing to say there is probably a connection. Even more so, were we to extend our deliberations to Quakers as members of the public who bought such goods in their weekly shopping. In addition, one cannot discount the possibility that Quakers might lie to prevent their links to the Slave Trade from becoming known to the Religious Society of Friends, but that in and of itself points to the distinction between individual culpability and the culpability of Quakers as a particular Meeting; there is a limit to what investigations can find out from people during any period in history, just as there is about people from any period in history.

However, to say either of these things is to say nothing meaningful at all, frankly, beyond an already existing appreciation of the complicit unawareness of people in general as they went about their daily lives. A complicity that has arguably led to all people who have ever lived in the country from those times to this, benefiting indirectly from slavery. What *we know without any doubt*, on the other hand, is that Quakers were

among the very first to realise the true horror of slavery as abhorrent exploitation of our fellow peoples, and importantly acted upon that realisation – for example in the way Joseph Harris of Faringdon Meeting did. Finally, therefore, it seems from this initial investigation that all may not be anywhere near as bad, what with the University’s *prima face* proximity to OSAM, as first we feared: There is no evidence I can find that suggests Oxford or any of the OSAM LMs needs to be responding in the way Lancaster - with understandable reason - has felt the need to.

*Dr Mark R Dibben; abridged version of a paper entitled ‘Initial research into evidence of Quakers within OSAM having direct links to the Slave Trade’ (19/02/24) written for the Oxford Local Meeting’s Quaker Committee Concerned with Slave Trade, Colonialism and Economic Exploitation Legacies. The full paper is available on request from markrdibben@gmail.com

EAPPI recruiting human rights monitors

Lynda MacInnes
Programme Manager Middle East
Quaker Peace & Social Witness

As I struggle with how to respond to the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine & Gaza, I wonder with Chel Avery “If our modern understanding of the peace testimony is a comparatively shallow and rigid one, one that prescribes what we must not do in terms of outward rules and reasoning rather than by inward understanding, and therefore leaves us unwilling to trust ourselves, and our inner guide, in

situations of conflict.” Lynda MacInnes (Chel Avery, [The Peace Testimony as a Questing Beast](#) 1995)

EAPPI, a programme of QPSW, are recruiting human rights monitors for 2025! Can you help us spread the word?

We rely on personal contacts to get our adverts out widely and find the people we need, so your sharing the advert makes a big difference.

Please do share the adverts we've posted on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and pass this email on to your networks/faith groups/community groups.

We call our human rights monitors Ecumenical Accompaniers, or EAs for short. EAs spend three months in Palestine and Israel witnessing and monitoring human rights violations and standing in solidarity with local peace activists. When they come home, they give talks in their local communities and advocate for an end to the military occupation of Palestine.

EAs need to be flexible, hard-working, physically and emotionally robust, open to hearing from different perspectives, and able to represent the programme in a professional manner. No previous monitoring experience is required. Expenses will be paid and a living allowance provided.

To apply, please see www.quaker.org.uk/applyeappi. The closing date is Sunday 14th April 2024, 5pm.

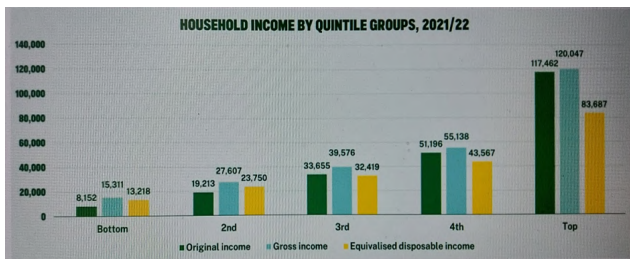
News from OxFAP

Karima Brooke

Our committee is in the midst of talking and consulting with others about change. Our individual grants represent around half of all our Meeting's transactions and have reached a level which has created pressure on our convenor, ourselves, and most particularly our staff and our Treasurer. We have temporarily paused your generous giving as we work and consult on a new system that should relieve some of the pressure.

We hope to share our decisions at business meeting in April..

Any thoughts about how we In Oxford Meeting can address the wider issues of poverty and inequality in this city and in Britain more generally would be welcome. Please send your thoughts to the committee by email to karimabrooke.oxfap@hotmail.com



A Message on behalf of Nathaniel Hibbs



Nathaniel Hibbs, grandson of Deborah Filgate, is seeking members of the Oxford Quaker Women's Group from the 1980s onwards. Going through Deborah's paperwork, he writes, he "discovered some interesting memories from the women's group along with a campaign involving MP Claire Short to remove page 3 models from the Sun Newspaper. Some of it might not be of interest however I wanted to see if the group was still active and if any of its original members might like to see some of the work they did in the 1980s." If any Friend would like to contact Nathaniel, please do so directly at nathanielhibbs@yahoo.co.uk or by phoning him on 07872013558.

Monthly Appeal April 2024 - Kennington Memory Club

KMC is a Day Care Centre for people living with dementia. It serves an area that includes Abingdon and its surrounding villages, as well as those to the south and west of Oxford. Its aims are:

- To provide safe and supportive day care for people with dementia.
- To allow individual strengths and abilities to flourish.
- To provide members with the opportunity to exchange memories and opinions.
- To provide members with the opportunity to take part in stimulating activities tailored to their needs and wishes.
- To enable members to enjoy the fellowship of shared meals.
- To give their families respite and the offer of support and advice.

There is a carers' support group which meets regularly. Kennington Memory Club meets twice a week, and is run by 3 skilled professionals and a number of volunteers. A carer's comment: "Just a big 'Thank You' for all you do. My wife is so happy to come to the Club, and the time she is there gives me such a valuable breather."

As a charity, the club receives some grants, but there is always a shortfall between total income and essential costs such as staff salaries and the premises rental, so donations and fund-raising events are vital.

Website:

www.kenningtonmemoryclub.org.uk

If you would like to donate by Bank Transfer, (preferred method) the details are:

Bank: HSBC

Sort code: 40-35-34

Account Number: 24148711

Account Name: Kennington Memory Club

Reference: your name + Oxford Quaker Meeting

If you would like to donate by cheque, it can be made out to Kennington Memory Club, adding Oxford Quaker Meeting on the reverse, and sent to the Treasurer:

Hugh Fleming

19 Bagley Wood Rd

Kennington

Oxford OX1 5LY

A New Way of Giving

Ian McLean

We have installed a machine for taking card donations in the lobby of 43 St Giles', following the lead of many other charities and churches. We hope it will increase our one-off donation income, both from Friends and from other users of our premises. It is set up to ask if you would like to add Gift Aid. If you pay UK Income Tax, you can increase the value to us of your donation by 25% if you do this.

The machine is linked to our account at Metro Bank, where we keep money earmarked for our anti-poverty concern OXFAP (Oxford Friends Action on Poverty). OXFAP raises money directly by asking Friends to considering earmarking some of their gifts. In 2023 and 2024 our Business Meeting has also offered OXFAP a guarantee (this year, to top up its direct donations so that it can disburse up to £75,000). So, money donated via the card machine helps OXFAP directly, and helps the Meeting's funds indirectly by reducing the amount that the Meeting would otherwise have to transfer to OXFAP.

Notices

What it cannot do, unfortunately, is accept gifts on behalf of other charities, e.g., the causes mentioned in our monthly appeals. The reasons are complex and boring but I need to explain them. If we collect money for another charity, then in law we are 'acting as agent' for them. Among other things, this means that it is up to them, not up to us, to collect any Gift Aid. Acting as agent causes nothing but trouble for both charities and their treasurers, which is why we have our current procedure of announcing the good cause of the month in notices with instructions on how to pay to it. This does not apply to the donations that OXFAP makes, because OXFAP is a direct concern of our Meeting, and it supports people (via social services agencies) in a way that is directly consistent with the charitable purposes of our Society under charity law. These are: sustaining our church and faith, supporting Quaker communities, witness through action, and promoting Quakerism.

Because of our guarantee to OXFAP, and other expensive commitments including the renewal of the Meeting House roof, we face a substantial deficit in 2024. We hope that Friends will consider increasing their 2024 level of giving, to this meeting and direct to central funds of Britain Yearly Meeting. Sarah, our Collector, and I will shortly be circulating all members and attenders of this meeting to outline our needs for 2024, and your possible ways of helping to meet them.

I know this is all nerdy and may be confusing, and I am happy to answer Friends' questions. I am often unable to come to Meeting for Worship because of the demands of my finance role, so it is best to send me any questions by an email to iain.mclean@nuffield.ox.ac.uk.

Oxford Quaker & Answer Back Next Month

If you are interested in featuring in the Forty-Three Newsletter's Quaker and Answer section, please email newsletter@oxfordquakers.org and we will be in touch. It is an opportunity to tell the wider meeting who you are and what you're doing!

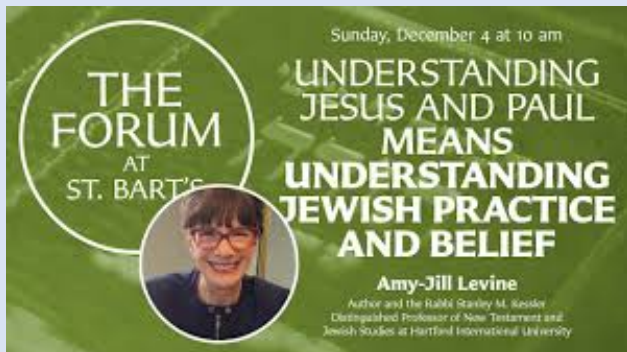
Call for photos/images

If any Friends have art work they would like to share in the newsletter, we'd be glad to receive it! We'd be especially grateful for any images of the Meeting House garden as we move into spring, or of Oxford, or simply of anything that moved your Quakerly spirit. Please send them to the usual address - newsletter@oxfordquakers.org.



Quaker Videos

Understanding Jesus and Paul means Understanding Jewish Practice and Belief



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqVRJuwjAYw&t=1820s>

Dr Amy-Jill Levine is currently Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace. She was previously Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot Associate Professor at co-educational Quaker institution Swarthmore College in the Department of Religion.

From Quaker Faith & Practice 22.16:

Close Relationships and Sexuality

“We affirm the love of God for all people, whatever their sexual orientation, and our conviction that sexuality is an important part of human beings as created by God, so that to reject people on the grounds of their sexual [orientation] is a denial of God’s creation... We realise that our sexual nature can be a cause of great pain as well as great joy. It is up to each one of us to recognise this pain, ... to reach out to others as best we can, and to reflect on our own shortcomings in loving others... We need to overcome our fear of what is strange or different, because we are all vulnerable; we all need love.”

Wandsworth Preparative Meeting, 1989

April 2024

Many meetings and events are held via Zoom. Link for all Oxford Meetings for Worship:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=Vkkya2ZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUTo>

9

Please contact the Office for more details:

Email: office@oxfordquakers.org Telephone: +44 (0)1865 557373

OXFORD MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings for worship are via Zoom and/or in person.

For more information, contact the Office at

office@oxfordquakers.org +44 (0)1865 557373

First Sunday of each month:

Meeting for Worship 10:30-11:30 (in person & Zoom)

MfW for Business 12:15 (in person & Zoom)

All other Sundays:

Meetings for Worship 09:30-10:15 (in person and Zoom)

11:00-12:00 (in person and Zoom)

Monday:

Young Adult Friends 19:00-21:00 (in person and Zoom)

Tuesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (in person only)

Wednesday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)

Meeting for Worship 11:30-12:15 (in person & Zoom)

Friday:

Meeting for Worship 07:30-08:00 (Zoom only)



Photo by Tas Cooper

HEADINGTON MEETING FOR WORSHIP

Headington Meeting meets each Sunday at 10:00
at Old Headington Village Hall,
Dunstan Road, Headington, OX3 9BY

For full details see

<https://headington.quakermeeting.org/>

The views expressed in **Forty-Three** do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.

Editorial Team

□ Tasha Alden □ Nicole Gilroy □ Jimin Kang
□ Luke Young

Office and Distribution

Jacqui Mansfield

Copyright 2024, Oxford Quakers. All Rights Reserved.

Please send newsletter contributions by the 15th of the month, the submission deadline.

Contributions, preferably of 500 words or fewer, can be emailed to newsletter@oxfordquakers.org or a paper copy can be left in the office pigeonhole of any editor.

For more information: tel. +44 (0)1865 557373 or visit www.oxfordquakers.org.