



# Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 548

December 2024

## Oxford Friends Meeting

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## Remembrance

Richard Seebohm

On Remembrance Sunday, Oxford Meeting's 'afterword' period was devoted to a free-form discussion of peace. These are Richard Seebohm's reflections on the event.

We concluded that the peace testimony of world Quakers was not being adequately heard. We had EAPPI testimonies. We can be seen (or heard?) at arms fairs. As one approach, the QUNO offices in New York and Geneva, given their unique access to politicians at world level, could be better fed with the concerns and stories of Quakers in the world, and hence they could be better resourced for publicising these.

As well as our near despair at the level of conflict and the human devastation now apparent, we shared some of the specific issues on our minds. One was the transformation of warfare from the personal combat uppermost in the remembrance agenda to remote killing by drone and missile, with civilians, sometimes deliberately, the primary victims. This included land mines, banned – but not by Russia – devastating to post war populations. Could we ban armed drones too? Personal combat was still present, but we had the impression that Russian soldiers were seen as biological units, cheaper than missiles. Putin might be seeing himself as serving the Russian people in the abstract but not people

as individuals. In parallel we tried fancifully to imagine the alternative of Netanahu responding to the Hamas incursions – perhaps he knew in advance – by an appeal to the International Criminal Court instead of blitzing Gaza.

Thinking further, I wonder whether the FWCC Sections know enough about what each other are doing, despite the recent World Plenary Meeting – we have EAPPI. I deplore the assassination of leaders to end chances of dialogue. And, we need to more about the carbon footprints of everything military.

But I for one welcome the numbers of Oxford citizens who lined the remembrance parade route while we witnessed from outside 43 St Giles.



Photo by R Seebohm

## Darned Ethics: A tangled thread of overthinking about the testimony of simplicity.

Nicole Gilroy

This piece started as a Facebook joke.

A lone adult in my household, I share small things often on social media in the way some people chat to their families. Hey! Do you like the way I painted the wall? Look at my new teatowel! So the post was a kind of hygge humble-brag of me darning my socks. “Tis the season!” I posted, with a picture of the fun little darning gadget that I was using to mend a hole in my woolly winter socks.

Our newsletter editor, having purchased her own darning gadget some time ago at my insistence, asked me to write a piece for 43 and include instructions on how to use the device. Ha I said, of course!

Now, on the surface, I’m striving for simplicity, sustainability, responding to the throwaway culture. Harking back to a simpler time when people spent winter evenings knitting and mending their clothes. These are nice socks. I bought them a few years back from a canal boat trader in Banbury who’d knitted them herself. 100% wool. They were about £12.

As socks go, they’re fairly ethical: natural fibres, purchased direct from the maker who set their own price (though unless they are a very fast knitter, I paid them well below national minimum wage). Compared with, say, a three pack of synthetic socks from Primark made in some dreadful factory in the far east, I think they’re ok. And they’ve lasted years, though have now developed a hole in the sole, as wool socks tend to. So, I decided to mend them.

At my work, we’ve had a bit of a thing for visible mending. My job entails mending old books, very old books, and the ethics of conservation over restoration means we make our repairs visible.

Some of us, inevitably crafty types due to our professional calling, had some fun comparing our work approach with our approach to mending our own clothes, and even ran a darning/mending class for new students as part of a wellbeing week

It’s fun. You get funky looking mended clothes that people admire. They admire the mend, not the clothes. It feels – good. I did an online darning class which I paid a fortune for and which came with a posted kit of tiny skeins of mending wool.

All good.



Photo by Nicole Gilroy

But recently I also [read a piece in Substack by Ann Helen Peterson](#) about a social media influencer called Hannah Neeleman. Neeleman is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, or Mormon, as we often refer to this faith. She trained in classical ballet at the Julliard school in NYC, which I’m informed is The Best. She now

lives “the simple life” on a 328 acre farm in Utah, raising organic beef and dairy cattle, chickens, pigs and sheep, doing cooking videos on her Aga, homeschooling her eight children and encouraging followers to emulate her homely idyll by purchasing her sourdough starter, beeswax, kitchen supplies and clothing range.

The critic was unhappy about the messages, both explicit and subliminal, that this person was expressing.

It turns out that 328 acres is nowhere near enough to scratch a living from a beef herd, let alone raise eight children in what appears to be a very luxurious manner. She also notes that the couple spent approximately \$8000 per acre on their farm, against the average cost of pasture land of \$1240. Which makes sense if it is being bought as real estate land in a beautiful area full of wealthy people’s second and third homes. But not as farmland. Buying pasture land at 5 or more times its market value pushes actual farmers out of business. Then posing as a farmer, with a business model so far from reality, is almost cultural appropriation.

The family bought then imported and installed an Aga, named Agnes, to complete their “frugal, simple existence.” The Aga cost £20,000. There is an interesting discussion about the origins of the Aga, as a labour saving, clean, efficient stove that doesn’t have to be stoked all day like an open fire. But what was historically a sensible investment created out of necessity has been adopted as a symbol of something it is no longer.

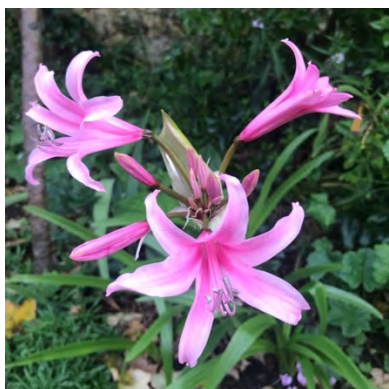


Photo by Caroline Worth, Garden of 43

This is all fine. The father-in-law of the ballerina founded a number of airlines, and the family have enormous independent wealth. So if they choose to spend it cosplaying as farmers then why not? I suppose the argument is against their influence as social media stars, in suggesting to other, less wealthy folk, that being a “trad-wife” and doing it all yourself, raising eight children without help, growing or rearing all your own food, home educating your children and sewing all their clothes, is a possible and feasible aim. While wearing designer clothing and taking ski holidays in the mountains when needed.

Hand-knit woolen garments are expensive, even without costing in the labour. I cannot buy the fabric to sew a garment for the cost of the finished item in a supermarket. Home-cooked food from scratch is often rejected by children, and this is an expensive risk when they will reliably eat pre-packaged junk. It is noticeable in parenting circles that the wealthier the parents the wider the variety in food their children will eat. Or they say that their children will eat. I’ve known many a mother bring hummus and veg sticks to toddler groups then pull out hula hoops in the car on the way home. Appearances matter.

What has this to do with anything? I suppose, I want to say that I am wearing woolen socks because I like them. I am darning them because I enjoy doing so and I enjoy making something last longer. I am not **honestly** doing it out of a testimony to sustainability because I also own plenty of supermarket clothes and my kids wear Primark socks because woolen socks are itchy and embarrassing when you’re a kid. And I can’t afford a full set of wool socks for all of us. Neither could I bear the time commitment to darning them. So when their socks wear out I chuck them in the bin and buy more.

Performative frugality can be a very painful thing to observe for those who are forced into true frugality, which looks very different and far less bucolic.

## RECORD OF REMEMBRANCE

JENNY BUFFERY

19 June 1939 – 30 April 2024



Oxford Meeting was truly blessed to have Jenny Buffery in its midst.

A lifelong Quaker, she'd been for many years a part of Oxford Local Meeting and Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting (OSAM).

She was an anchor of our community, and an important influence acting at every level from personal interactions with individual friends (guiding and supporting Friends, for instance, on their journeys into membership), to ever-widening circles of Quaker responsibility (e.g. as a local Elder for several triennia, and as an attendee at Meeting for Sufferings for many years).

And she brought her Quaker principles to the wider world – for instance as a volunteer visitor for at least two decades at HM Prison at Grendon, in Buckinghamshire.

Jenny was a joy to know. She was fun – often funny – and a very good sport. Her ability to make us laugh (and to use humour to make a serious point), the clarity of her spoken ministry, and her

wise observations all enriched any group in which she participated.

Never showy, humble almost to a fault, and occasionally still haunted by personal sorrows and injuries from her past, Jenny was nevertheless an individual of remarkable strength of character. Within the meeting she was a dependable model of stability, discipline, generosity, and loyalty.

Forthright and courageous in her ministries, difficult deliberations would sometimes be brought firmly back to an even keel by Jenny's reminder that we were 'not in right ordering'.

Jenny had been a history teacher. Many years after her retirement she maintained she wanted to be remembered *as a teacher who loved teaching*. Her tales of years in the classroom made evident her belief in the value of education and her deep devotion to the wellbeing of her pupils.

Ever the champion of the underdog, she often expressed scorn for unearned privilege, inequality, injustice, or pretension of any sort.

In young adulthood Jenny married Tony Buffery; they had a daughter Joanna and a son Iain. The marriage ended in divorce and Jenny stayed single for the rest of her years. Her love for Jo and Iain (and the extended family as it grew) was emphatic and solid and a core focus of her life.

Friends have numerous reasons to be grateful for the gifts of service Jenny brought us, her influence, her help, the examples she set us, and the many joys in knowing her.

Judith Atkinson  
Sherry Granum  
Keith Wilson

## December Appeal The Malala Fund

This month the charity has been chosen by the children of the meeting, who would like to nominate the [Malala Fund](https://malala.org/), initiated by Malala Yousafzai, which supports girls' education in areas where girls suffer educational apartheid, such as Afghanistan under the Taliban.



Photo credit: <https://malala.org/countries/pakistan>

The nominated charity ties in closely with what we have been discussing over the last few weeks in Sunflowers and Beansprouts about 'courageous peace-making', including the beautiful story of 'Malala's Pencil', which tells the story of Malala's campaign for girls to continue their education in northern Pakistan.

### How to donate:

Friends can learn more about the work of the charity [here](https://malala.org/), and can donate online in GBP and fill out a gift-aid declaration [here](https://malala.org/).

<https://malala.org/>

<https://malala.org/donate/uk> (for UK donations)

## Bring and Share - help needed!

Caroline Worth

HELP! A small group of us facilitate Bring and Share Lunches in the Garden Room at 12.15 on the last Sunday of most months.

But we are all getting older (4 of us are over 80) and we feel that we are not able to carry on much longer.

The Lunches are joyful occasions, where friends can get together, chat, and share food. Many people bring food contributions, but all are welcome even if they do not. In a large, fragmented Meeting it is a lovely way to bring together different ages, worshipping groups and interests.

The job is....

- to set up tables, crockery etc. and lay out the (cold) food, both bought and home cooked, which people have contributed. The office staff on duty may well help with this.
- to welcome people, especially those who may not know anyone
- to wash and clear up afterwards. Often others join in with this and are much appreciated.

The commitment is....

- monthly, on the last Sunday of each month. But the more people there are in the team, the less often each will need to help.

Bring and Share Lunches are important to the life of Oxford Meeting. But if friends don't come forward so that we can form a group to carry on, they will cease to be!

If you would like to find out more, contact

- Anthea Clarke (07788 545580)
- Caroline Worth (07817 237429)
- Kath Wilson (07846 415582)
- Ursula Kneisel (01865 744540) or
- Elizabeth Johnston (07395 423879)

## Quaker Writers Series 2024

### Caroline & Charles Worth and Ursula Howard on Writing Family Histories

Jimin Kang

On Friday, October 25, Ursula Howard and Caroline and Charles Worth joined forces to offer a fascinating discussion on the creative and ethical challenges of writing family histories.

While Ursula focused on the biography she wrote about her Scottish-born grandmother, Bessie Quinn, a working-class woman whose extraordinary story of migration and resilience was almost erased by the family, Caroline and Charles spoke on Caroline's grandfather, William Summers, a missionary who traveled across North Africa preaching about Christianity in places that were hostile to Europeans and Christians.

Having grown up with a library full of historical books, Ursula was inspired to write a family history when she came across three objects of Ruskinian craftsmanship that belonged to her mysterious grandmother, Bessie. Her background as a social historian led her to research and write a biography primarily for her grandchildren.

Naturally, when writing a family history, there are borderlines you may or may not cross, she said; there are people who you feel you have the right to write about, and others you don't. Ursula spoke about the challenges of detaching herself from her research, given how deeply intertwined the facts—such as her uncle being made to work to support an entire family as a schoolboy—were to her own life; 'I found new parts of myself,' she shared, with the recognition that, in relation to Bessie, 'there is a level at which people cannot be known.'

Meanwhile, Caroline had spent years using Ancestry, archives, and oral histories gathering details about her grandfather, William Summers, but hadn't considered writing them up as part of a book. Encouraged by her family, she pursued the

idea with the initiative of Charles, who offered to write up the research that Caroline had found. Thus was born a literary collaboration in which Charles would write up a draft of a chapter and send it to Caroline, who in turn would send it back with notes. There were interesting discussions on how much to turn to the imagination to fill in narrative gaps, and the 'maybes' and 'perhaps' that had to be scattered into stories told from William's perspective. The audience had a good laugh when Charles read an account of a visit to Morocco by the famous writer and explorer Isabella Bird Bishop, and the travels (and travails!) she experienced in William's courteous company.

The ensuing discussion involved further elaborations of aspects of Bessie and William's lives, including Ursula's research into Scottish poor laws. There was a fascinating conversation on poverty, and the ways in which one's life might be radically changed by someone else's light—such as when William was inspired to become a missionary via a chance encounter with the YMCA. You can find a recording of the talk and discussion here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1icE4l6k5nTg6RsNTh1rqgoAXQZq9PrV2/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1icE4l6k5nTg6RsNTh1rqgoAXQZq9PrV2/view?usp=drive_link). To stay informed about future Quaker Writers Series events, you are welcome to get in touch with Jimin at [jiminkang2021@gmail.com](mailto:jiminkang2021@gmail.com).



*Garden of 43 pictures: Caroline Worth*

## Notices

**A huge message of thanks and appreciation** for everyone's support and care towards staff over the past year. Thank you for all you do!

The office will be closed over the Christmas week. If you need to access the building please make sure you have the necessary codes.

Jacqui Mansfield - On behalf of all the Meeting House Staff Team

**Trio Watson** is releasing the second issue of her personal zine, Banjubec, called "Dear Ffriends," this Christmas. It relates to Quaker practice and creativity, drawn from gathered ministry, her own articles from 43, and her paintings and photography. All funds raised go to Quaker concerns. Suggested donation £5. You can read it in the library, buy a copy from the wall display in the lobby, or ask Trio about it at [banjubec@gmail.com](mailto:banjubec@gmail.com).

In May, the meeting will be participating in **Oxfordshire Artsweeks 2025**, in the non-commercial category. If you would like to exhibit work of any type in the meeting house, please contact [rupert.j.booth@gmail.com](mailto:rupert.j.booth@gmail.com).

A listing of Oxford Meeting committees and groups, and Friends serving on them, has been posted by Nominations on the noticeboard in the lobby of 43.

The editors of 43 are **expanding our monthly calendar of events** to include groups, events, and anything else that's going on in meeting. If you have a regular group or an event that you'd like us to include, please email

[newsletter@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:newsletter@oxfordquakers.org)

with your name, date, time and venue, and contact details if appropriate, by the usual 43 deadline of the 15th of each month.



Photo by Trio Watson

## Upcoming Calendar

**Friends' Fellowship of Healing** meets at 1.30pm on the first Wednesday of the month in the Garden Room. Contact Yvonne Dixon ([aldixons@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aldixons@yahoo.co.uk)) for further information.

### Children and Young People's Committee Events

**Forest Foxes** (age 10-12, adventure in the woods, around a fire, for friendship and fun) 14 December 2-4:30pm, Hill End.  
[juliad@quaker.org.uk](mailto:juliad@quaker.org.uk)

**Beansprouts Children's Meeting** (under 4s): Every Sunday, 10:30 on first Sunday of the month, 11:00 on other Sundays, Long Room

**Tea Cake and Play** (weekly morning chat and fun session for babies, toddlers and their grown-ups): Every Tuesday 10:00-12:00, Meeting House. Sally Lawson

[playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org](mailto:playgroupsupport@oxfordquakers.org)

**Sunflowers Children's Meeting** (school age children): Every Sunday, 10:30 on first Sunday of the month, 11:00 on other Sundays, Long Room

**All-age Meeting for Worship** Please note, this year there will not be an all-age meeting for worship in December

## Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three

### The Transformative Practice of Being



Carrie Newcomer

*"In the kinds of spiritual communities I grew up [in], we do a lot of talking at whatever is sacred," singer-songwriter Carrie Newcomer says. "I really appreciated, when I discovered a silent Quaker meeting, that all I need to do is listen... Something lovely happens when I quiet myself and I quiet my heart and I actually listen to what is coming up from the Spirit."*

8 Minutes

<https://quakerspeak.com/video/the-transformative-practice-of-being/>

## From Quaker Faith & Practice 19.14

### A Gathered People

Isaac Penington (1616–1679) wrote:

*At last, after all my distresses, wanderings and sore travails, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life and power, which I had been longing for and searching after... After a long time, I was invited to hear one of them (as I had been often, they in tender love pitying me and feeling my want of that which they possessed)... When I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of truth from the Spirit of truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yea, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch as my heart, in the certainty of light and clearness of true sense, said: 'This is he; this is he; there is no other; this is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood, who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart, but I knew him not distinctly, nor how to receive him or dwell with him'.*

*But some may desire to know what I have at last met with. I answer, 'I have met with the Seed'. Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied and inquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my Saviour, and he hath not been present with me without his Salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings. I have met with the Seed's Father, and in the Seed I have felt him my Father; there I have read his nature, his love, his compassions, his tenderness, which have melted, overcome and changed my heart before him.*

*What shall I say? I have met with the true peace, the true righteousness, the true holiness, the true rest of the soul, the everlasting habitation which the redeemed dwell in.*



## December 2024

Many meetings and events are held via Zoom. Link for all Oxford Meetings for Worship:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=VkkyZzZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09>

Please contact the Office for more details:

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

### OXFORD MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Meetings for worship are in person. Zoom connections are available only when indicated.

For more information, contact the Office at  
[office@oxfordquakers.org](mailto: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 followed by breakfast 07:30-08:00

#### Wednesday:

Meeting for Worship followed by lunch 11:45-12:30

#### Thursday:

Meeting for Worship followed by breakfast 07:30-08:00



Photo from Caroline Worth – Garden of 43

### 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/>

**Forty-Three** is available online at

<https://oxfordquaker.com/newsletter/>

and on the Oxford Quakers website,

<https://oxfordquaker.com/>

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

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**Please send newsletter contributions by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, the submission deadline.**

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