

Forty-Three newsletter

Number 526 February 2023

Oxford Friends Meeting

43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW +44 (0)1865 557373 office@oxfordquakers.org



'Tea, Cake and Play' **Matthew Gee**

Oxford Meeting's new drop-in group for babies and toddlers, and their parents, grandparents or carers, was launched on 17 January. This is planned to be a regular, weekly group every Tuesday from 10:00-12:00. It is similar to the successful Quaker parent and baby group that ran from 2018 to 2020, but this time it is also being advertised to people in the local community who might otherwise not have any other connection with Quakers. It is hoped that Tea Cake and Play will provide:

Inreach: New parents in our meeting, who may have a change in their pastoral care needs following becoming a parent, may appreciate the peer support and new connections that this group might bring. It can sometimes be difficult to attend meeting regularly as a new parent, and this group will help parents of small children to keep in touch and feel part of the meeting's community.

Outreach: Other parents in our local community, who will hopefully experience the meeting as being welcoming to children and families and may engage a different group of people from those whom other outreach activities we offer might interest.

Service: Significant funding cuts meant Oxfordshire County Council closed their Children's Centres in 2017, and the disruption of COVID has led to some other longstanding low-cost baby and toddler groups in Oxford closing. A free, inclusive space for parents and their children to meet, play and get mutual support is a vital resource for a diverse group of families across the city.

If you would be able to volunteer to help with Tea, Cake and Play — whether by chatting, playing, or providing a welcoming presence; setting up or clearing away; baking a cake; or helping in some other way, please get in touch with Julia Dover (JuliaD@quaker.org.uk).

Volunteers who work directly with children will need to have a DBS check and references, which is a straightforward process that we can facilitate.

Please send newsletter contributions well in advance of the intended publication date.

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 or community noticeboard can be emailed to office@oxfordquakers.org. The closing date is the 15th of each month.

Forgiven for my grandson in prison on his 19th birthday

Carol Lange

I forgave all your trespasses long ago, long, long ago, when first I realized the depths of your damage, your soul in turmoil, reaching, grasping for recognition, your need to be loved stronger than fear of drowning amid the weeds floating on the surface of your life. But now your reach exceeds your grasp. The cold reality of steel encases you in a world you never wanted, for you squandered your innate power and empathy on wounding the vulnerable for gain.

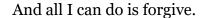




Photo by Carol Lange taken for her grandson

All-age creative group

Bryony Insua-Summerhays

An all-age creative group will be meeting each week on Thursdays in the long room, between 19.00-21.00, beginning on the 2nd of February 2023.

The group will begin with a short period of worship, after which Friends will have space to make whatever they feel led towards, whether this takes the form of drawing, painting, poetry, embroidery, sewing, knitting, carving &.c. The group aims to be a quiet, friendly space to connect with oneself and others and to nurture one's creativity, dormant or thriving.

Bring any supplies you need, and if you have any questions contact Julia at <u>JuliaD@quaker.org.uk</u> or Bryony at <u>b.insua@gmail.com</u>.

All-age meeting for worship Sunday 5 March 2023

Matthew Gee

Our next all-age meeting for worship will be on Sunday 5 March as part of the 10:30 single meeting for worship. Look out for more details in notices and the March edition of *Forty-Three*.

All-age meetings for worship are a chance for us to worship as a whole community, where children and adults come together to worship jointly. Oxford Meeting has a custom of holding three all-age meetings for worship each year on the first Sundays of March, October and December. Find out more about all-age meetings for worship in Oxford at:

https://oxfordquakers.org/cyp/all-agemfw/



Image from Quaker Council for European Affairs website, gcea.org.

Monthly Appeal - February 2023 Richard Seebohm

The Quaker Council for European Affairs is still both your Quakerly voice in Europe and your unique window on Europe – and not just about the European Union.

Perhaps you have been on one of its study tours, perhaps you see its bimonthly newsletter *Around Europe*. Perhaps you have already responded to appeals like this one.

It is easy for me to say it, but now seems a critical time to take stock of the myriad issues that crowd in on its traditional programme areas – peace, human rights, climate. Bad faith and hints of corruption, corrosion of democracy, militarisation of every policy strand, environmental effects of conflict, data and cyber threats, refugees, threats to freedoms, energy crises, Ukraine.

About QCEA*

The **Quaker Council for European**

Affairs (QCEA) works to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions. We seek to build support for humane, non-military policies at the EU level, both inside and outside its borders. We do so in the spirit of peaceful cooperation which forms the foundation of European politics.

...continued...

I could go on.

QCEA now has a sparky new director, Tracey Martin – some Friends may know her, she was until now at Woodbrook. She has until the April QCEA General Assembly meeting to formulate a strategy and staffing plan to face up to all this. More resources will make her task that much easier.

I shall be leaving leaflets in the Meeting House, but here are the contribution basics.

One way: go to the the <u>qcea.org</u> web site and click donate.

Bank transfer

Account: British Friends of QCEA

Number: 00004748 Sort code: 40-52-40 Reference: Oxford appeal

Cheque or charity voucher

Payee: British Friends of Quaker Council

for European Affairs

Address: BFoQCEA, 33 Shaw Lane Gardens, Guiseley, Leeds, LS20 9JQ

Gift Aid via Martin Ford, our treasurer email: ford.martin@outlook.com



Photo by J Henderson



We have been based in Brussels' European Quarter since our foundation in 1979.

We currently operate two programmes focused on peace and human rights. Our <u>peace</u> <u>programme</u> works to promote non-violent conflict resolution based on the concept of "shared security," with a view to challenging the idea that international security can only be guaranteed by military means. Our <u>human</u> <u>rights programme</u> seeks to advance a more humane approach to migration and asylum in Europe, and focuses on less visible migration policy areas such as child immigration detention.

QCEA is a member of advocacy networks <u>EPLO</u> (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office) and <u>HRDN</u> (Human Rights and Democracy Network), as well as a number of Quaker networks. We are an international notfor-profit organisation (AISBL) under Belgian law.

*Quaker House image above and the text of this article are reproduced with permission from the QCEA.

From the Garden Team

Jacqui Mansfield

Our lawn at 43 has weathered the extreme heat of last Summer, the weight of building materials when the kitchen was being refitted, freezing temperatures and heavy rain.

We are now trying to give it lots of T.L.C. to help it recover and hopefully spring forth in spring.

Could Friends try not to walk on it as we nurture it back to its former glory?

Many thanks.



Photo by J Henderson

Need a quick and easy mid-week top up?

Beth Crutch

Everyone is welcome to Headington's Meeting for Worship by Zoom on Wednesdays at 11am for 20 min plus 10 minutes Afterword.

For details, contact

headington.quakers@gmail.com

The Amulet

Karima Brooke

'I have no desire to make windows into men's souls'.

The judge echoed the queen, conscious of irony and the risk of own goals. In her domain, rhetoric flows. 'We'll pray for him; tell us his name'.

It's no secret.

Though tribunals are closed studios, with appellants rarely touched by fame.

Maybe like Pontius

Pilate, hers is a secular mindset presiding over a populist game.

I touch the amulet hidden near my breast bone, see myself kneeling, call on the Holy Name.

He won humanitarian protection,

Article 8, Sub-section...

Also allowed was that day's earlier claim.

An orphan trafficked,

bought by 'aunty', sold on as a slave,

He cried out but no-one came.

No-one noticed- hard to believe.

Boxes ticked.

'Prayers granted' was sent as emojis by phone from missionary friends: 'It shows

how God alone

is merciful and truly knows

what's in men's hearts'.

We all have roles

More or less original, all mimicked.

Much depends on the court district.

We play our respective parts.

Though we rejoice,

what's the fate of those without an advocate?

no supporting voices,

no-one able to translate?

How then does the petitioned God make choices?



Photo by K Brooke

Background to my poem, *The Amulet*Karima Brooke

This poem relates to a real immigration appeal hearing, a third and final appeal for asylum, at which I was a witness in November 2022.

The man appealing, MF, had been our guest under the Sanctuary Hosting scheme in 2018 to 2019. He was claiming asylum on the grounds of his conversion to Christianity - which could potentially mean a death sentence were he to be returned to Iran as he would be seen as an 'apostate'. Because of the backlog in the asylum system, this final appeal - which was heard by a judge - had been postponed many times. I and the other witness for MF, his vicar in the city where he now lives were allowed to be present remotely, as were the interpreter and the presenting officer for the Home Office. The judge, MF, his barrister and the tribunal official were physically present.

My testimony was basically that, whilst he was living with us, I had observed him to be a practicing, committed Christian. I had given him a Bible in Farsi as a Christmas present, and he was very grateful for this.

...continued...

Everything in this poem actually happened:

- * the judge, in her opening remarks, really did quote Elizabeth I
- * friends of mine who are evangelical Christians and very involved with Iranian converts to Christianity, did say, when I told them about the forthcoming case 'Tell us his name and we'll pray for him and ask others to pray for him'
- * The same people, when I told them the good news of MF's success, did send an emoji showing Prayers Granted
- * And, more or less, this is what my friends said when we next met
- * A case which was heard simply to give the decision, was slotted in earlier and either I was allowed to stay or they had forgotten that I was there remotely. This was the case of the Chinese teenager who was a victim of modern slavery.

As to the poem, it is quite deliberately modelled on George Herbert's poem *The Collar*. It has the same, very complicated rhyming scheme of 11 rhymes, similar line lengths, and absence of a consistent metre. It also has a title of something physical, worn on the body that is symbolical: the collar of obedience, the amulet of asking God's protection against evil. Both concern theological issues - Herbert is struggling with

obedience, and me with the concept of intercession.
Herbert seems to resolve his issue by the end of his poem; but I'm left with even more questions.



Photo by K Brooke



Do you book rooms at 43?

Jacqui Mansfield

PLEASE READ if you book rooms at 43 for Quaker (or other) activities.

In the office we are using a new software programme called Hallmaster for all room bookings at 43 St Giles. Hallmaster enables everyone to see all room availability on the bookings calendar and book a room directly.

This means that if you are in a meeting and want to see if a date and room is available, you can do it there and then without needing to check with the office.

You can find our Hallmaster booking calendar by visiting the Room Hire page on <u>www.oxfordquakers.org</u> or by using the link below:

https://v2.hallmaster.co.uk/Diary/ MainPanel/10979

We have just taken our hundreth booking via the new system, and so far, reports have been positive. However, we also understand that these things can feel very unfamilar (and deeply annoying at times) so if you get stuck, please contact the office and we will do our best to help! office@oxfordquakers.org



Hey-outreach! Reach out -join in? Saturday February 25th 10-2pm

Oxford Meeting House-brain nourishing refreshments provided.

Contact: office@oxfordquakers for more information
Outreach IDEAS and ACTION morning.

Bring your ideas—plans— TO ACTION this year. -

Faringdon, Charlbury, Burford, Swindon, Marlborough, Headington, Oxford—
we need all your input! Please let the office know if you can attend so we can send some
advance information. We'll aim to produce an ideas/action pack for you to develop and to
work on together.

OSAM Update January 2023

Julia Dover

Last week I came upon this year's first daffodil in bloom, and swooned - the shock of yellow in a palette of greys and browns! - a flower opens, and I open too.

So many delights to unfurl in the coming months, floral and otherwise. I am excited to announce the OSAM-wide launch of *Wonder Days* - a variety of events for all ages across the region directly inspired by the collective wonderment of OSAM Friends. Please note the following dates of the first stage of *Wonder Days* for your diaries:

25 February 2023

Oxford Friends Children's Meeting will decorate the 'Wonder Box'. At the end of the adults' 11:00 meeting, children will invite adults to write their individual responses to the question, "What makes your heart sing?", and place their answers in the Wonder Box. The Wonder Box will remain in the Meeting House for two weeks so as many interested Friends can submit their responses as possible.

11 March 2023 - OSAM Area Meeting at Burford

Children's activities shall run parallel to the meeting sessions throughout the day. At the start of the meeting, attending children will offer adult Friends from across OSAM a chance to add more 'singing hearts' to the Wonder Box. Children will then create a framed picture that celebrates all the responses; this picture will be presented to the Meeting at the end of the afternoon.

Burford Friends shall display the picture in their Meeting House until the next OSAM Area ...continued... Meeting at Charlbury in May, when they deliver the picture to Charlbury. I

t is hoped that each host Meeting of AM will display the picture throughout the year.

Meanwhile, I shall design and schedule a series of activity days sparked from the collection of Friends' responses to 'What makes your heart sing', to commence from May. All OSAM Friends shall be invited.

I heartily encourage Friends to offer their 'Singing Hearts' to the Wonder Box, and also to attend the Burford Area Meeting in March. I was amazed to learn that Burford has organised discussions around 'What makes your heart sing?' amongst Friends. From this marvelous example, I invite other Local Meetings in OSAM to do similar.

I would ask that families with children who wish to attend the Burford Area Meeting on 11 March to contact me as space in the Meeting House is limited.

Other activities of note

'Tea Cake and Play' is now up and running!
Parents, grandparents, guardians and their tinies are welcome at the Oxford Meeting House each Tuesday 10am-12pm. I extend my appreciation to Virginia Allport for cake!!! and her assistance during the first session. Any Friends who would like to help with the group- preparing refreshments, greeting participants- please let me know.

As the Quaker community grows more familiar with this quirky Canadian in your midst - and the sort of opportunities I am developing - Friends are reaching out to me to share their own creative ideas for events and activities. It is a joy to cocreate new ways of connecting; I will share with you new ventures as they gather form. I am especially thrilled to support the new all-aged Quaker creativity group, Thursday evenings 7-9pm at the Oxford Meeting House.

A reminder of my contact details JuliaD@quaker.org / 07529223379



Photo by J Henderson



Photo by John Cottis of an 1823 engraving showing the meeting house

From Faringdon Meeting House Website

Harvey Gilman at Faringdon Meeting House

Anne Watson

Over 50 people from all over Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting snuggled into the ancient Meeting House in Faringdon on the afternoon of Saturday 14th January to hear Harvey Gillman. Harvey, the author of 'A Light that is Shining' (and many other things about being a Quaker), spoke to us, and with us, about spirituality and hospitality.

These are my personal recollections and I know that others will have kept other phrases in their hearts — his talk was so full. He asked us to 'embrace the nakedness of being alive'. In part this was a desire not to be labelled, or not to feel we have to clothe ourselves in labels. Nevertheless, he labels himself as a seeker, explorer, and finder. Opening ourselves makes us vulnerable to being heartbroken but

all our uncertainties are embraced by the spirit. He suggested that 'God/the spirit/ the holy place is where people discover each other in love'. Knowing each other in that which is eternal (as our advices ask us to do) can make more sense if we learn about each other in the here and now, with depth. Spirituality is personal, and in relationships, and in the natural environment. I think he used 'still' in two ways — our own stillness and the 'still here' of the spirit. Towards the end he suggested that 'coming out as human is the task of our lives'.

The next day, ministry in the Oxford 11:00 meeting included someone's sheer joy and excitement at being among humans.

Others will have picked out other inspiring and moving excerpts from his talk. For me, being among so many Friends was important too. This was a fine example of the possible depth and power of seeking Spiritual Nurture among Friends.



Oxford Mutual Aid formed in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 crisis. We are a grassroots community support group and action network. Our team have significant experience working with at-risk communities and have long standing relationships with many other local organisations, including charities, community groups, food banks, schools and businesses.

Over a thousand volunteers in Oxford are working 7 days a week to get food and medicine to families and individuals in need. We are regularly supplying over 200 households with food and supply parcels, and we distribute over 600 re-heatable meals a week. the OMA base at Richard Benson Hall, 276 Cowley Road, nr SS Mary and John Church.

We use Open Collective to process donations safely and securely. You can also donate by bank transfer or by cheque. Financial donations can be made either by a one off donation, or by a recurring contribution . Which ones are you going to be?

Supporters make £5/monthly donations, Champions make £20/monthly donations, or you could be a Hero and contribute £50/month: https://opencollective.com/oxford-mutual-aid/

Donations can also be made by bank transfer:

Oxford Mutual Aid Limited Unity Trust Bank Sort code 608301 A/c number: 20430854

In addition cheques made payable to Oxford Mutual Aid can be sent to

Oxford Mutual Aid, 38 Parsons Place, Oxford OX4 1NL

Quaker Connection:

Mena Remedios an attender at the Oxford Meeting volunteers with OMA.

"Oh Kay - a bit of plain speaking!" Deborah Arrowsmith

Coming to the end of my time at Oxford Meeting I wanted to share, thank you all, and have possible rant - ok? Of course, in a shameless piece of advertising, I could encourage you all to come along to "Quakers who write and share" on February 24th when I am sharing my take on "Plain speaking"! Then there's another chance to make a difference :- Come along to the 'Outreach Ideas and ACTION' morning February 25th and see what we can actually achieve.

Eight years ago, the Meeting took a long time to work out what it wanted in the front office, eventually deciding on a non-resident manager. Amazed and delighted to be appointed, I was in fact dragged out of the pub to take the job - how was this going to pan out? I was described in a business meeting as "an experiment" to my face- do come along to business meetings by the way- you just never know what might happen. Usually tedious, sometimes exciting and supported by far too few. Can I

suggest Advice and Query No.75: "Where are you when decisions need to be made?"

In the office, I always operated the "we don't do fault, we don't do blame, we do 'taking responsibility" mantra. A way of building bridges, sharing, building teams-loving the FODS support -however you put it- working together the way I thought Quakers were supposed to operate. Brilliant when it works. Teams aren't easy. There was a stone on my desk by the phone with the word "Listen" on it as a reminder of the biggest part of the job. It's a privilege to be a Quaker manager or warden-

you hold confidences, help others bear stuff, introduce Heinz 57 varieties of people to our place, our way our worship- there was never a distinction for me between work and worship. Or so I thought. And yes, everything from designing posters, negotiating with contractors (if you can find them), to cleaning loos and cleaning up sick.

One of my favourite times of the year is the last working day before Christmas when everyone has gone. Before locking up I spend half an hour sitting in the Meeting House giving thanks for the year past, what we had achieved together, what still needed work in the year to come.



Even through the pandemic it felt positive. Though on my own, I was never alone. This last Christmas sitting quietly reviewing the most difficult and frustrating year I found myself very clearly supported. Rabbi Lionel Blue (who once found a welcome here) called him Fred. I call her Kay- as in 'It's Oh- Kay!) you can call her whatever you want. So, Kay said- 'come on- just let go- let them get on with it!'

When I took the job, it was with the words of the Clerk at Norwich Meeting wishing me well by reading Advice and Query 27: "Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?"

Now I sat and read on to Number 28: "Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness." In other words- "just go - get on with it- do something different- you'll feel much more purposeful-there's so much that needs doing" How could I not agree? It's not my business to tell you what to do nowthat's for you all to work out together as is the Quaker way. But if I had any authority, I'd urge you to get real, get with strategic thinking, get on with it, think outside the box- across the Area Meeting and turn some of those chairs out to face the world. (Remember the 98 roles in the meeting that were all about keeping you going and maintaining the status quo?) Better still stack the chairs in the corner till there's someone to sit on them. Embrace change- no, squeeze the living daylights out of change, use better technology, consider what you do with your money, help smaller Meetings, pay professionals who are accountable for what you don't want to do yourselves. Oh, and Advice and Query No.84: "First work out what it is that needs doing!"

I have clung to a statement that "being a Quaker is the most creative spiritual space I have ever found." I hoped others would agree, discover something fresh and wonderful...I hoped to help build that team. I was wrong. I have my own agenda of regaining trust in Quaker processes- many of which I feel are no longer fit for purpose in this time; seriously

stifling change and creativity. The real creativity is given to us all as a gift by God- oh-Kay?- not the preserve of a 300 year old private members club who delight in writing a perfect minute. It's 'that of God' in me for whom I need to make more room.

Resilience is what I am after, not in the sense of building of a fortress with 98 inward facing chairs sitting on our reserves just in case the sky falls in. Resilience in an openness of spirit, equipped to share and support. A desire to help, serve, and encounter all the troubles and issues of the days with a strong and clear voice. Prepared to discern, act and share the joy of achievement. Thankfully, Harvey Gillman speaking about spiritual hospitality in a time of uncertainty at Area Meeting in Faringdon, seemed to agree speaking of God's temple being built wherever we discover God's presence in depth and each other in love. Oh, and no I am not going back to Norfolk. I am not leaving because Hazel needs more care-she'd tell you that in no uncertain terms! Wednesday meeting will continue to benefit from delicious soup (and your company perhaps?) Thank you so much for 8 years of making friendships, the kindness and love of so many of you has supported me and I will cherish and hope to make more time for you. A huge thank you to the office team and Jacqui in particular. Advice and Query No 97: "Do you trust and value the experience, commitment and sheer hard work of your employees who are brilliant to work with?" (in Oxford, of course, this should read "with whom it is brilliant to work"!)

So, as (was it?) Hubert Gregg on Radio 2 used to say, "If you have been, thank you for listening".



Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three



Calliope George

My Experience as a Young, Adult Quaker

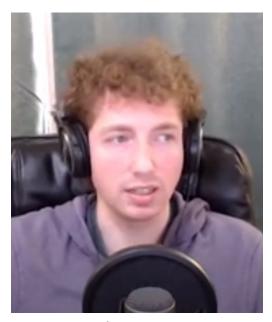
'Quakerism was always a very grounding space for me throughout my whole life, but in college, when I was away from my home community, I started to, you know, feel that longing for the space of home and stillness and reflection that Quakerism really brought.'

> Calliope George Pennington Friends House New York, New York

> > QuakerSpeak

https://youtu.be/kxWuB4I 7q8

5 Minutes



Carleton Crispin

Quaker Parenting Podcast Episode 1 South Jersey Quakers

'This episode addresses ways to handle differences between parents and children, children's interest in playing with guns, mediating conflict, helping children learn how to de-escalate...'

Carleton Crispin interviews Lauren and Megan from Haddonfield Monthly Meeting South Jersey Quakers

https://youtu.be/Mun 8jU ncg

44 Minutes

February 2023

Due to COVID-19, many meetings and events are held via Zoom. Link for all Oxford Meetings for Worship:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87383304611?pwd=Vkkya2ZweVVRZjRmOE1JVDBFdTdwUT09

Please contact the Office for more details:

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

From Quaker Faith & Practice: Facing change and difficulty

True love is proven when the loved one begins to be not only the mysterious beckoner of destiny, but becomes also the occasion of dull indubitable duty. At a frontier of life when one partner begins to say to him or herself: 'How can I love any longer? But I must love', then sometimes steadfastness and faith have power to nurse into existence the new being needed as companion and lover. What a triumph when old love is transformed into a deeper surer new love which can accept more fully what each has, and the pair find a rebirth together in those things which are eternal, and through this a renewal of their everyday living.

Chapter 22:48, 1959

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)

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

Editorial Team:

Juliet Henderson, Michael Hughey, and Luke Young (Joint Editing and Production)

Deb Arrowsmith and Jacqui Mansfield (Distribution)

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

https://headington.quakermeeting.org/



Music in the Park by J Henderson

Forty-Three is available online,

https://brooksidepress.org/quaker/ and on the Oxford Quakers website,

www.oxfordquakers.org/newsletter

HEADINGTON MEETING FOR WORSHIP

For full details see

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