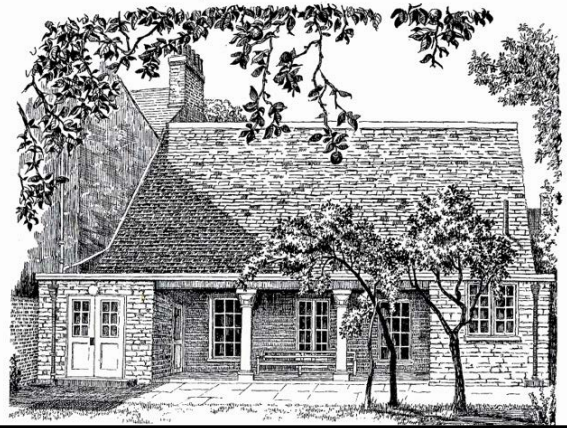


Forty-Three Newsletter

Number 535
November 2023



Oxford Friends Meeting

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Facing up to Slavery: Anthony Reddie (Friday with Friends)

Denise Cullington

This was a fascinating, challenging, and disturbing introduction to the first of a series of three meetings on this issue, in response to Yearly Meeting 2022's call for addressing the question of Quaker reparations.

Anthony Reddie, among other qualifications and awards, is the first ever professor at Oxford of black liberation theology. He is named after Tony Benn, and his great-grandfather, George, an enslaved man who taught himself to read by following the words in the church service, later becoming the first black bishop in Jamaica.

He called our attention to what is not only in the past (slavery) and what Quakers were complicit in then and what response we might make. He pointed out the legacy of slavery, which is still alive and kicking, in racism – both overt but also what is subtle, in the hierarchy of worth: what he calls (after Yale professor, Willie James Jenkins) 'whiteism'.

It is not only about *sharks* in the water, but also about *the water*: what we take in wordlessly as the accepted norm of what we should be, should aspire to; an ideal value of white, masculine, self-



Professor Anthony G. Reddie

Professor of Black Theology; Director of the
Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture
Regent's Park College

sufficiency – as opposed to one of community and connectedness.

As two examples of our civic society's valuing of worth he gave the examples of the action against those who tumbled the Colston statue into Bristol Harbour, v the Council's inaction to repeated requests that the statue be removed. (Property as of more value than people's hurt or offence). Or equally the removal of many of the Windrush generation and the achingly slow response to repair as much as possible, such actions.

Prof Reddie had a particular challenge for us. He was warm and appreciative of Quakers as almost always to be found on the right side of the argument, internationalist, humanitarian and so on but – and he presented us with a challenging “but...” We aren't the *sharks*, but we are part of the *water*.

In general (and looking around the room) we are white, middle-class, educated, thoughtful, good with words, elderly. He challenged us that in the multi-cultural city of Oxford, in our Meeting we have few black faces and few working-class faces. Those from Blackbird Leys, say, would not think of attending our meeting, nor feel comfortable if they did.

He said that for him, attending a Quaker meeting in Selly Oak, he did not feel at home. He described a meeting on diversity at Woodbrooke, in which tension remained from the previous day's exploration of the sexualities. He felt that the request to not blame nor attack but speak from the 'I' position could be managed much more by the middle-class Members than from those of other backgrounds, who he thought

might have felt marginalised and unheard (since they don't speak 'our' language).

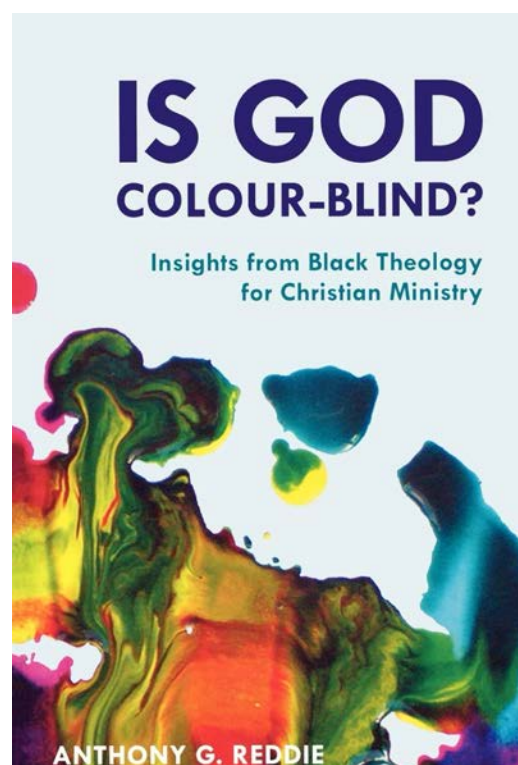
I thought his challenge was not only how we manage diversity and difference: but more than that, I understood him to be questioning whether in our careful thoughtfulness, we might be overly managing of disagreement, conflict and high intensity feeling and lose out on the passion which might be necessary when confronting systemic injustices (and ones from which we may also benefit). And passions which early Quakers certainly did possess.

What a start to this series of three.

Anthony Reddie. *Is God Colour-Blind?* 2020; <https://www.anthonyreddie.com/>

Willie James Jenkins: *After Whiteness*, 2020.

Esther Mombo, Swarthmore Lecture 2016. *Mending broken hearts, rebuilding shattered lives*.



Embracing Artificial Intelligence: A Quaker Perspective

A Contribution from Keith Wilson

In our rapidly evolving world, the impact of technology, and particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), is undeniable. AI, often described as the emulation of human intelligence by machines, is transforming the way we live and work. As Quakers, it's essential that we approach this wave of technological progress with our principles and values in mind.

The Quaker Approach to Technology

The Quaker tradition has long emphasized simplicity, equality, and community. These values can serve as our guiding compass as we navigate the uncharted waters of AI. Simplicity encourages us to use technology mindfully, avoiding overcomplication and excess. Equality reminds us to ensure that the benefits of AI are accessible to all and that no one is left behind. And, community underscores our interconnectedness, inspiring us to use AI to create a better world for all.

Ethical Considerations

In adopting AI, we must address the ethical implications. AI's power to make decisions and predictions can raise concerns about privacy, bias, and job displacement. Quaker values, such as peace, equality, and integrity, provide guidance for AI ethics. The value of peace encourages us to use AI for the betterment of humanity, while equality calls us to ensure AI applications are

equitable and accessible. Integrity means that transparency and accountability should be at the forefront of AI development and usage.

The Positive Impact of AI

AI is not just a source of concern; it also holds immense potential for good. For instance, AI can help revolutionize healthcare by aiding in diagnostics and personalized treatment plans. It can monitor the environment and contribute to sustainable practices. Moreover, AI can enhance disaster relief efforts by predicting and responding to natural calamities more efficiently. These applications align with Quaker values, showing that technology can be a force for positive change.

The Role of Quakers in AI

Quakers can play a significant role in shaping AI's future. Engaging in discussions about AI's impact and ethical considerations is a critical step. We should promote ethical AI within our communities, highlighting the importance of responsible AI practices that reflect our values. Furthermore, Quaker principles call for discernment and mindfulness in the use of technology, reminding us to consider the broader implications of AI in society.

The Need for Responsible AI Development

AI carries potential risks, such as job displacement and privacy concerns. These

concerns demand our attention. As advocates for simplicity, Quakers can encourage the development of AI that respects our commitment to ethical living. In our pursuit of equality, we must ensure that AI benefits all members of society without causing harm. This involves a balance between embracing AI's capabilities and mitigating its potential adverse effects. Holding AI developers and users accountable is essential, aligning with our values of integrity and social responsibility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Quakers, we stand at a crossroads. AI offers tremendous potential for good, but it also poses ethical challenges. By approaching AI with our core values of simplicity, equality, and community, we can harness its benefits while addressing its risks. We must be advocates for ethical AI, ensuring that technology aligns with

our principles. Our mindful and discerning use of AI can help create a more equitable and just world in line with Quaker values. As we navigate this technological frontier, let us do so with integrity, commitment to equality, and a sense of community, always striving to use AI as a force for good.

A Coda from Keith Wilson

What do you think of AI and its capabilities? Maybe you haven't experienced it yet. Or have you? Apart from this paragraph, this entire item was written by an AI (ChatGPT 3.5). No edits or changes have been made – the item appears exactly as the AI 'wrote' it. It took about 30 seconds. Makes you think, doesn't it? Please don't worry though – the 43 team will continue to give preference to human authors. At least it will until the editorial function is taken over by an AI!

Hometime for Quiet and Stillness

Anne Watson

Business Meeting in September agreed to try having a weekly MfW in the MH on Thursday afternoons from 5.45 to 6.15.

This will only work if there is a substantial rota of volunteers to unlock and lock up and be welcoming to participants, and maybe informative, as well as holding the quiet worship and ending the meeting.

Volunteers should work in pairs and there should be enough for the commitment to avoid being burdensome.

So far there are 4 volunteers - not enough. Offers of help should go to annewatson1089@gmail.com.



Photo by J Henderson

Oxford Quaker Meeting November Appeal

Healing and Rebuilding our Communities, Karongi, Rwanda

A Quaker organisation, Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) is Oxford Quakers' long-standing partner in Rwanda. This small, land-locked East African country has responded to the HIV pandemic by making anti-retroviral therapy (ART) widely available, free of charge.

But this is not the whole picture. According to HROC's Director, Jean Nshimiyimana, challenges remain. For example, a recent research study found that 37 percent of Rwandan youth who tested HIV-positive either missed or refused ART, and 26 percent attempted to harm themselves.

Researchers also found that HIV-related trauma and stigma, including self-stigma, are still widespread within families and communities in Rwanda. Many young people hide their HIV-positive status from their social networks because they fear rejection by their friends.



Image from HROC Website

Widows have particular difficulties, as Jean Nshimiyimana explains:

They feel ashamed and anxious about approaching other their neighbours because they fear blame and ridicule. They feel especially isolated and hurt whenever they are excluded from community activities such as wedding ceremonies and other community activities when food and drinks are shared.

Building on their previous experience of training groups of local people, HROC will focus initially on promoting self-acceptance through storytelling, supplemented by one-to-one follow-up counselling, as Jean Nshimiyimana explains:

Meeting as a group helps widows to escape loneliness, to feel valued and to re-integrate with other members of society.

They discover that they share the same experiences and problems as one another. This helps them to bear the difficulties they face, especially those related to their HIV-positive status.

They can laugh and weep together. They share advice about how to deal with their problems. They help one another by working together on agriculture, sewing and knitting. These activities help them to overcome their sense of isolation and despair.

Please give generously to support the work of this Quaker organisation in Rwanda.

To support the work of Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) in Rwanda, please make a BACS payment to

G&A Williams Partners
a/c 503236728
Sort Code 60 70 03
Natwest Bank

Alternatively, please send a cheque made out to

G and A Williams Partners
93 Divinity Road,
Oxford OX4 1LN

Your donation will be acknowledged, and no charges will be made to cover administration costs. You will also receive a report on the work of HROC in Rwanda.

Glen and Alison Williams

How to Keep Warm this Winter

Sarah Lasenby

Though it was truly hot when I started to write this, winter is surely coming. This makes me think what shall we do about keeping warm this year?

Last winter we did not have our gas central heating on at all. No, not at all, not even our gas fires. We used £149.26 of gas in the last 12 months. Yes, we did use the gas hob to cook on and electric fan for a short time to warm the bathroom and the electric blanket to warm up the bed. But without our 'therms', wheat seed bags heated in the microwave, we would not have survived.

The important thing is to avoid hypothermia. Some of you may know I suffer from the cold very much, but I have no problems when we use our therms.

We tried this experiment not because we could not pay the bills but in solidarity with those who really can't pay.

Yes, the house despite good insulation got cold, it sounded hollow, and I thought of those really suffering and hoped they were able to get to a warm hub at some time in the day. After a few days with no heating the house felt damp. We kept a window open for about an hour and this was successful in keeping mould at bay.

So, we got used to regularly warming up our therm bags and we intend to do this again this winter.

Hot bottles will help but the therms are much more comfortable. We clutch them to our bodies and miraculously the heat even travels to the extremities, enough to keep chilblains away.

Older people who are more sedentary will find therms easier to manage without the risk of filling a hot bottle.

Of course, it was pleasing to see how low our gas bills were. Not only savings for us but less monster profits for them and significantly better for the planet.

Instructions for making therm bags

Therm Bags are 14 x 14 cm of cotton cloth, curtain lining is very good, with 580 grams of wheat seed. Stitch up by hand or machine.

Heat the bag up in a microwave for 2 minutes (be careful not to overheat). You may want to make a bag with a strap to sling over your shoulder or head to put the therm bag in.

Of course wear plenty of clothes and clutch the therm bag to your body. Cover yourself and the bag with blankets or a duvet.



Wheat seeds. Wikimedia Commons.

The Fourth Kicking the Bucket Festival of Living and Dying

Liz Rothschild

The idea behind this festival is that life gets better if we can accept our mortality just as the sweetest strawberries are those eaten in season.

The simple act of attending an event breaks down the taboo of talking about death and reduces the sense of fear and isolation. There is a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion in this festival.

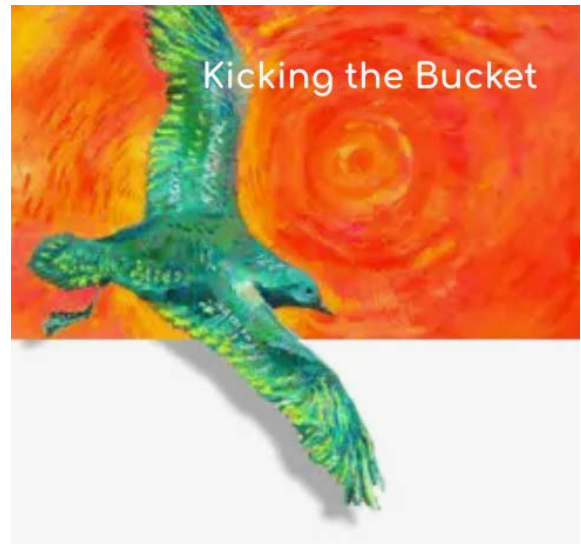
Feedback from previous events describes being surprised at how uplifting it was, and people talked about finally being able to initiate conversations with parents and/or children that had felt unapproachable before. One person even described it as “the best two weeks of her life”. That is quite a hard review to live up to, but everyone went away better informed and inspired to explore more.

The festival is so grateful to be able to use Friends Meeting House again for its hub day on Saturday November 4th.

It has included a wide range of happenings in many venues around the city starting with an exhibition at the Old Fire Station called *How are you feeling today? (finishing soon)* and it continues until November 5th.

There is also an online day on November 3rd for those less able to get out of the house or come as far as Oxford.

We do hope you are able to come along to one or several of the events.



Images from Kicking the Bucket website

Eco- Meeting: Sunflowers

Matthew Gee

On 15th October, the Sunflowers children's meeting took the first step on a journey to becoming an 'Eco Children's Meeting', using bananas and chocolate coins to think about sharing creation, and Fairtrade!

Over the rest of October and November we are using some of the children's resources from the Eco Church programme in children's meetings to think about how our land, buildings, worship, and lifestyles impact on the environment, and how we can live more sustainably, using some Bible stories and fun activities.

There are resources for adults as well, including an award scheme for places of worship to become accredited Eco Churches. If you would like to find out more, look at the Eco Church website: <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>



Image from Wikimedia Commons, produced by Fir0002/Flagstaffotos and is regulated by the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

All age meeting for worship – Sunday 3 December

Matthew Gee

Our next all-age meeting for worship will be on Sunday 3rd December as part of the 10:30 single meeting for worship.

Look out for more details in notices and the December 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-age-mf/>

Quaker Questions and Answers

Richard Seebohm

Luke Young

Variation on Quaker Q&A

Editor's Note:

We asked Richard Seebohm for his answers to our interview questions such as those answered by Linet Arthur last month. Instead, he sent us this. But he doesn't mention his past as a steelmaker and then civil servant, nor his arrival in Oxford Meeting as a research student in 1957 whilst he followed his previous Cambridge pursuits of jazz bass playing and stage lighting. Nor his time (1998-2001) running QCEA in Brussels.

Richard Seebohm

For Stephen Yeo's writing group, I prepared a document to go in the student magazine *Cherwell* (if accepted) encouraging students to check out Quakerism. As it happened, on the relevant Friday evening the entire YAF group was off in Cambridge at some kind of event and the only members present were Stephen, me and one post-graduate young woman, an attender rather than Friend. I read them my two alternative texts, one about what do you want out of Oxford and the other about me. They both preferred and endorsed the latter, so, choosing my time, I have just submitted it!

Come Hither

Richard Seebohm has a suggestion.

When I was a student some 70 years ago (if you challenge my relevance you need read no more) I went to a meeting of a Christian group whose name I forget. I soon realised that I was surrounded by ordinands – candidates for church ministry – who had come to practise on flock.



Richard Seebohm

I told my newly met girlfriend and she said, You have a good Quaker name, why don't you go to Meeting. So, I went to the Quaker Meeting and immediately felt that it was where I belonged.

Why was this? It wasn't just because my great, great, great-grandfather was convinced in 1790 – at that time I didn't know this. I was shown into the Meeting House and sat down. Nothing happened. After a while, an elderly woman stood up and said a few words and sat down again. Then someone else did the same. Then the hour of silence was up, two of the Quakers shook hands, and conversation broke out all around. It wasn't at all like the church of my upbringing.

And what has kept me a Quaker since then? We have always called ourselves the Society of Friends. The first Friends emerged in the 1650s when beheading the king allowed his



Photo by J Henderson

divine right to be challenged. New approaches to Christianity, still with the biblical Jesus message, became open to all. Our claim for the priesthood of all believers meant that no ordained minister was required to preach only the doctrine decreed by royalty. The silence of our meeting for worship allowed and allows us to seek the Light – that of God – within each of us. We still don't prescribe what you are to believe. We don't decide by voting at our business meetings.

Today, much guidance comes from the collective findings of Quakers over the years. Many names appear. One of these is William Penn. He founded Pennsylvania – but I should explain that this was a debt repayment earned by Penn's father, Charles II's admiral. One advice by Penn that still resonates is,

True godliness don't drive men out of this world but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it.

William Penn, 1682, QF&P 23.02

This is how we try to live, as led by our 'testimonies' of peace, truth, equality, simplicity, sustainability.

The mending has a lot going for it. It was Quakers in the eighteenth century who broke the silence about the horrors of the slave trade and by being collective kept the pressure growing to abolish it. It was the Quakers in the first world war who not only supported conscientious objection to military service but ran the Friends Ambulance Service to care for war casualties of both sides. OXFAM was not a Quaker invention but an outcome of Quaker principles. We have been do-gooders, but we have done good.

If you care to look in on 43 St Giles, you can see what we are up to nowadays. Monday evenings are for 'Young Adult Friends' (and friends of Friends) – with supper.

Friday with Friends Autumn 2023

Howard Grace

At Oxford Meeting there has been an engagement in “uncomfortable conversations” about injustices in our past (Sue Smith and Bridget Walker in 2021) emanating from the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020.

In March this year a day at Jordans was arranged by Regional Meeting:

Acknowledging the impact of the slave trade, colonialism, and economic exploitation on the lives of many today; what should and can, we do?

A small group of Oxford Quakers has been set up for the purpose of learning and discussion and we planned an autumn “Friday with Friends” programme. The first was held on Friday Sept 22nd (organised by Charles Worth) with Professor Anthony Reddie (an audiotape of this is available).

The second will be held on Friday November 10th (organised by Howard Grace) to be given by Letlapa Mphahlele. The third will be held on Friday December 8th (organised by Carol Saker) when Ann Morgan of Lancaster Meeting will talk about her research on Slavery - details soon. Everyone welcome.

Letlapa Mphahlele

He was commander of a liberation army during South Africa’s apartheid times.

Letlapa, who will be the guest of ‘Friday with Friends’ on 10th November, was born and grew up in a rural village. In 1978, at the age of seventeen he went into exile. Rising

through the ranks of the ‘Azania People’s Liberation Army’, the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), he became its director of operations.

In 1993, following the killing of black school children, he ordered several high-profile retaliatory massacres, including at the Heidelberg Tavern in Cape Town. Lyndi Fourie, a student, was amongst those killed. Her mother Ginn later forgave Letlapa. This was pivotal in both their transforming journeys.



Letlapa Mphahlele

In 2003 UK teacher Howard Grace met Letlapa and invited him to the UK, taking him to 36 school Sixth Forms in six weeks, to share his story. The impact of this later led to the making of the award-winning film ‘Beyond Forgiving’ The two-minute trailer can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inghPuBNSEE> .

Letlapa was later elected president of the PAC, a post which he held for six years. His life journey has led him to a passion to foster our shared humanity.

An article in *'the Friend'* about his last visit to the UK concluded with a quote from Letlapa which says:

Beyond prejudices we inherited from our forebears, across the fences and walls we erect around ourselves, across doctrines and dogmas we uphold, perhaps it helps to acknowledge that there's a thread that runs through all the ideologies and all the schools of thought: common humanity.

And if we recognise humanity in others, no matter how different from us they look and dress and talk and worship, we'll be nourishing and watering the roots of our own humanity. Is this a vision that can unite atheists like myself with a variety of religious believers where we come together for a greater 'Yes' - the reality of a shared humanity?

Letlapa has accepted Newbury Friend, Howard's invitation for a further venture to the UK. We have an opportunity to meet with them for a heart and brainstorm on 10th November in Oxford Meeting House at 7.30pm. (7.00pm light refreshments).



Photo by J Henderson

Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three



Laura Boles
Strawberry Creek Meeting
Mill Valley, California

[The Power of Being Quaker in Public](#)

During a long Quaker business meeting, Laura Boles stood up and said, "I don't want to hide behind Quaker process... I want to do something, and I want to do something now." And so, she did.

QuakerSpeak

https://youtu.be/nUxC_vr4RRs?si=gImroat55IrMSYWs

5 Minutes



Carl Blumenthal
Brooklyn Monthly Meeting
Brooklyn, New York

[Supporting Friends With Mental Health Issues — Quaker Faith & Mental Health](#)

Content Warning: The following episode contains conversation on suicide and depression. Viewer Discretion is Advised.

QuakerSpeak

<https://youtu.be/oWQBc4Ru3zw?si=yzMUBkgdbuqvFY3>

6 Minutes

From Quaker Faith & Practice 1.02.28

Advices and queries

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.

George Fox, 1656

October 2023

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

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 J Henderson

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.

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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.