

Forty-Three Newsletter

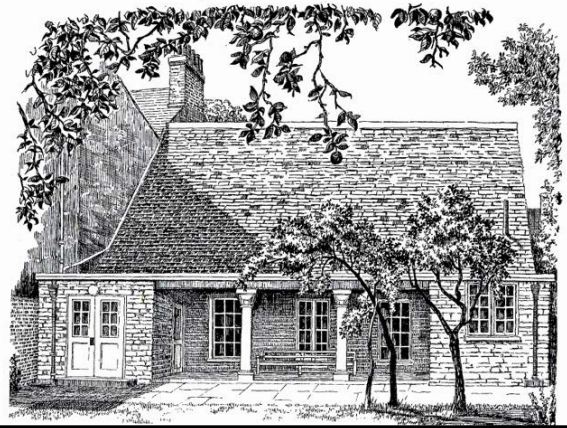
Number 536
December 2023

Oxford Friends Meeting

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office@oxfordquakers.org



Understanding our finances

Iain McLean, Financial Overseer

Sarah Lasenby, Collector

Oxford Meeting is the steward of the wonderful space at 43 St Giles. This grade 2 listed, 17th Century building, together with the Meeting House and the gardens, provides the Meeting with a home in the centre of Oxford. We have the duty of care (and the costs) of the buildings and grounds, including necessary improvements and accommodations to make it suitable and safe for use by members of the Meeting and by members of the public.

In addition to Meetings for Worship and other Quaker activities, our buildings and gardens are used by many organisations including charities, community groups, student societies and businesses. Our room hirers are not just an income stream. They are also our outreach, so that everybody who uses our premises has a sense of Quaker values. These organisations pay to hire the space and provide our largest income stream. The Meeting employs staff to manage the building, both for our hirers and to support the Meeting's activities.

Oxford Meeting also helps those in need across the city via small grants distributed by Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP). To help plan and manage the ever-increasing demand for grants, Oxford Meeting agreed in 2023 to guarantee OXFAP's expenditures of up to £75,000 if donations specifically earmarked for OXFAP were insufficient. Donations earmarked for OXFAP amounted to about £45,000 by mid-October, when the Treasury Team started looking at the financial results for 2023 and budget for 2024.

The Meeting also gives an amount of money each year to support the work of Britain's Yearly Meeting (BYM). Friends are asked to contribute to BYM directly and then the Meeting aims to make up the amount to £240 for every member, which is what BYM asks all its affiliated Meetings to pay for our central work. As with OXFAP, our Meeting aims to make up any shortfall

once the total of direct donations to BYM is known, which happens early in the New Year.

Each year Friends are asked to give what they feel able to support all these costs. Some Friends give via direct debit each month. Others give a one off sum. We can claim Gift Aid on these amounts if the giver is a UK taxpayer. This increases the value of each eligible donation by 25%. If you are eligible and have not already made a Gift Aid Declaration, please collect a form from the office when next in 43 St Giles and return it there.

If you want to know how the money you give to Oxford Meeting is divided up, it depends on whether you have given the Treasury team any instruction.

Instructions you could give include: *“I want to divide my contribution between Oxford Meeting General Fund and Oxfap”* or *“I want my donation to be divided up between Oxford Local Meeting and General Fund in the following mannere.g. 50% to Local Meeting and 50% to OXFAP...”* If you give no instruction, the above explanation applies re OxfAP and Britain Yearly Meeting, applies.

In 2021 we received a large legacy from our Friend Peggy Heeks. This together with smaller legacies and the continuing generosity of Friends, enabled us to survive the loss of income in 2020 and 2021, to continue to support OXFAP and to repair and improve our buildings.

We are steadily building back our lettings income, but we are still running a deficit. We are being asked to make choices as to how we manage this. This is particularly crucial because the Meeting House needs reroofing, and we want to make the building safer and more accessible by

lighting the garden properly and improving access to the front door. The Garden Room is also in need of emergency repairs. In addition, as you will know, costs such as utilities have risen sharply.



Our Financial Overseer, Iain McLean, raised some questions at our November Business Meeting. The current draft budget, after changes agreed by November Business Meeting, is attached.

1. Do Friends feel able to give more money to the Meeting and/or to OXFAP?
2. Do Friends feel able to give more money directly to BYM?
3. If we are not able to raise more money via Friends donations how do Friends wish to see our expenditure cut?

We need to decide the rest of our 2024 Budget, preferably at our December Business Meeting as there is not another until February. If you have thoughts or questions, please contact Iain at iain.mclean@nuffield.ox.ac.uk or via the Office.

Oxford Local Quaker Meeting

Estimate of income 2023 and possible budget 2024

Income, £	2023, estimated	2024, proposed
Donations		
earmarked for OXFAP	45,000	49,950
not earmarked	50,000	50,000
Interest and investment income	11,350	29,804
Lettings:		
Top flat	15,180	13,282
Room hire	89,109	100,000
Income Total	210,639	243,036
Expenditure, £		
Office, cleaning, garden	19,894	17,821
OXFAP	75,000	75,000
Payroll inc tax and NI	57,127	71,483
Pastoral Care Group	600	624
professional fees; bookkeeping	1,800	8,972
repairs, maintenance	14,500	15,080
Stoll Pendleton Fund	2,038	2,119
supplies	9,675	5,954
Utilities	17,322	18,015
Young Adult Friends	447	464
Insurance	3,818	3,971
Top-up to Britain Yearly Meeting	23,612	24,556
Expenditure total, £	225,833	244,060
Exceptional Items for 2024		
Meeting House roof		65,000
Meeting House Floor		5,000
Garden Lights		12,000
Disabled access at front		5,000
Expenditure including exceptional items		331,060
Deficit for year	-15,194	-88,024

Book review: *The Dance Tree* Kiran Millwood Hargreave

Nicole Gilroy

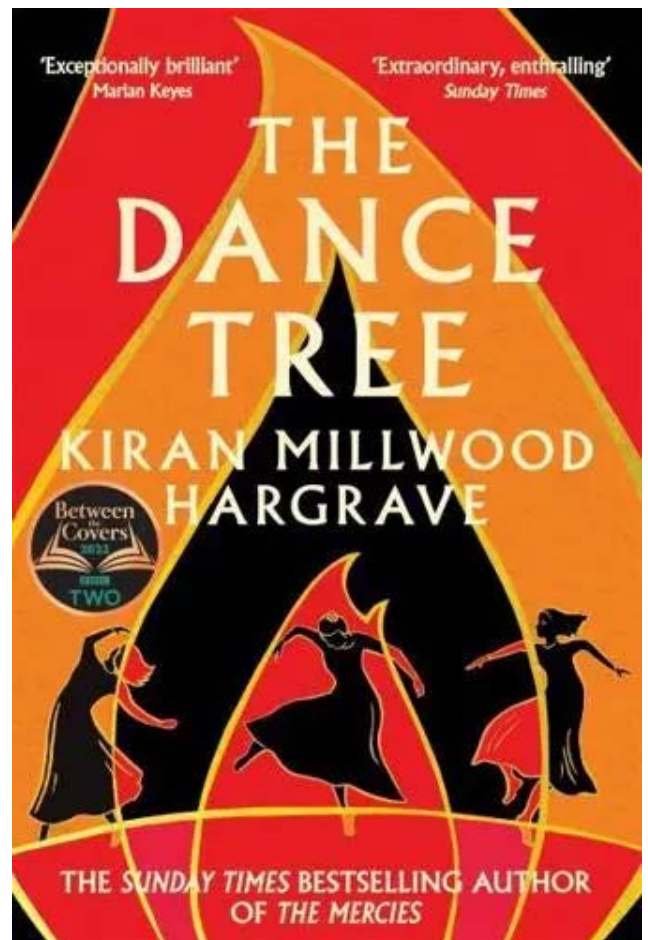
For someone who has spent their entire life studying and working with books, I have a chaotic method of choosing reading material. I've always been one to judge a book by its cover, and *The Dance Tree* has a fabulous abstract red, orange, and black design, reminiscent of flames but with silhouette dancers on it. It was also advertised via flyers on the tables of Blackwell's café, and I'm a sucker for advertising.

But having bought it I realised I hadn't a clue what it was about. The cover design made me wonder if it was one of the superb books I've recently read from West African writers, but the author's name not so much. Then I opened it and read *Strasbourg, 1518* and some bells started ringing.

My last binge read was almost the complete works of Benjamin Myers, writer of historical based fiction including the Gallows Pole about the Yorkshire Coiners – also highly recommended, and the one I haven't yet read, Cuddy, about St. Cuthbert – (watch this space). In his book *These Darkening Days* he deals with a case of violent attacks which turn out to be a manifestation of shared delusion, a sort of communal psychosis brought on by intense social difficulty. He based this on the true story of the Halifax Slasher, a strange spate of violent attacks on women in 1938 which turned out to be a case of mass “hysteria” and the injuries to be self-inflicted.

What has this got to do with the *The Dance Tree*? Well in July 1518, a woman named Frau Troffea started to dance in

the street in Strasbourg. During the summer she was joined by up to 400 others, dancing almost constantly to the point of collapse and often death. Various attempts to cure this behaviour failed, including hiring musicians to come and intensify the dancing until the women were exhausted (this made it worse and added more people to the crowds!) arresting and imprisoning the women for demonic possession, and finally taking them to the shrine of St Vitus to be cleansed of the disease.



The Dance Tree tells the story of Lisbet, a farmer whose home is allocated by the authorities to be used as accommodation for two of the hired musicians brought in to tackle the dancing. Lisbet and her husband Henne keep cows and bees, the hives being

Lisbet's special talent and spiritual calling. Yet the taxation and seizing of property by the corrupt and rapacious church authorities keep the farm on the edge of subsistence and the behaviour of the family is controlled by threats and warnings from the powerful men of the town.



Engraving by Hendrik Hondius portraying three people affected by the plague. Work based on original drawing by Pieter Brueghel. From Wikipedia.

I won't tell the story, but I'll state that using the dance plague as a frame Hargrave weaves a rich tale of survival, love, child-loss, prejudice, music, grief, racism, homophobia, and the deadness of the established patriarchal corrupt society against the freedom and warmth of those who don't quite fit in, without romanticising the difficulty of trying to live outside of the established order.

There are several modern theories: the dance plague may have been caused by fungus poisoning in fermented grain, or some other medical source. Yet the concept of a mass stress-induced psychosis, complicated by the

deeply held beliefs of a downtrodden exploited subsistence level society on the cusp of the reformation and terrified of being accused of heresy, is not entirely impossible to believe. Unfettered, uncontrollable public dancing by women seems a psychologically plausible response to their unbearable impotence, oppression, and submission. It puts me in mind of the preface to Alice Walker's *Hard Times call for Furious Dancing*

“I was born into a family of eight siblings. I am the youngest. Five of us have died. I share losses, health concerns, and other challenges common to the human condition, especially in these times of war, poverty, environmental devastation, and greed that is quite beyond the most creative imagination. Sometimes it all feels a bit too much to bear...I have learned to dance.”

If you read it, do let me know what you think!



Detail from a 1642 engraving by Hendrik Hondius, based on Peter Brueghel's 1564 drawing

Monthly collection UNICEF Children in Gaza Crisis Appeal

Matthew Gee
Children and Young People's Committee
CYPC

The December collection is for the UNICEF Children in Gaza Crisis Appeal. This is urgently raising money for UNICEF to deliver life-saving supplies such as medicine and clean water, as well as mental health support, to children affected by the continuing violence in Gaza.

UNICEF has been able to bring some supplies to Gaza through the reopened Rafah Crossing with Egypt. but this meets only a tiny proportion of the need. With supplies and living conditions rapidly declining, they need your help to reach more children and families in Gaza.

You can read more about UNICEF's work in Gaza, and donate online, at

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/children-in-gaza-crisis-appeal/>

You can also pay by cheque, made payable to UNICEF UK, posted to:

Donations Team
UNICEF UK
1 Westfield Avenue
Stratford, London
E20 1HZ

Or make a donation by telephone by calling:

0300 330 5699



Friday with Friends, 8 December 2023

Quakers, Slavery and Reparation

Ann Morgan, Lancaster Meeting

Carol Saker

Ann has accepted our invitation to speak at Oxford Meeting House Friday with Friends on Dec 8th at 7 pm for 7.30 pm. All are welcome.

‘I plan to explain my research findings, look at how the research has been used locally and nationally, and provide information of where British Yearly Meeting is in relation to reparation by December.’

Background about Ann

Ann and her husband started attending Finchley Meeting, London at the time of the First Gulf War in 1991, attracted by the Peace Testimony. They worked together managing the QPSW Vocational Project in Lebanon from 1996 until it was laid down in 2004. They trained a team of five local people each from a different confessional group to work on sustainable and curriculum development with 100 NGOs, including those in the Palestinian Refugee Camps.

Ann has been a member of the Religious Society of Friends since 1995. She has been a Trustee of the Quaker Tapestry, served on the Quaker Middle East Management Committee and been Chair of Trustees of Global Link, a Lancaster charity working on education development and with Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

In 2019, when Lancaster Friends’ Meeting Clerk, Ann was approached by the BBC to participate in a programme about

Sunderland Point, built by a Lancaster Quaker between 1720 – 1723, and its slave trade connections. Ann lacked the knowledge to participate and decided to educate herself.

Thus in 2020 when Lancaster Meeting met to consider a response to the death of George Floyd, she was able to offer to continue her research into the involvement of Lancaster Quakers in slavery as part of that response.

The initial results were presented to the Meeting and Area Meeting in Autumn 2021 and then to Yearly Meeting in 2022. The research is currently being prepared for publication.

Ann has just become the Co-Clerk of the newly established 2023 Britain Yearly Meeting **Reparations Working Group**.



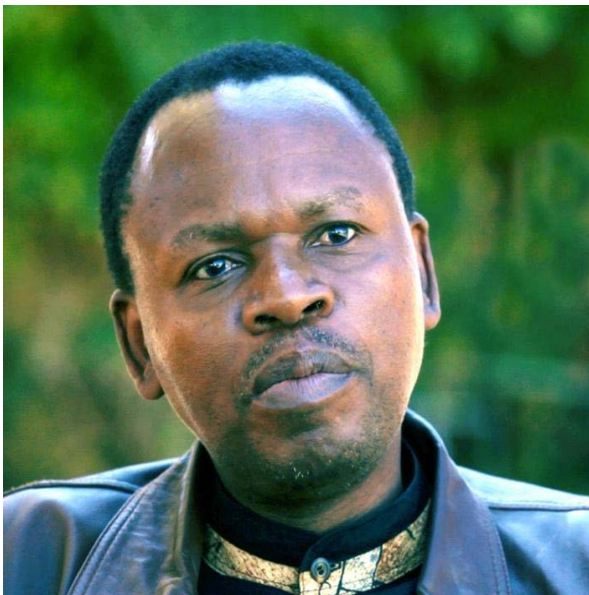
Ann Morgan

Encounters with Letlapa Mphahlele and Ginn Fourie

Judith Mandeville Atkinson

In about 2016 Oxford Friends had the privilege of watching *Beyond Forgiving*, a film about the inspiring relationship between two people, Letlapa Mphahlele and Ginn Fourie; their cooperation could not have been predicted, their relationship has proved almost miraculous.

Letlapa had grown up in a South African township at a time when apartheid was at its height and has always described himself as an atheist. In 1993, as Director of Operations of the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress, he authorised the killing of a group of young white adults. One of these was Lyndie Fourie, whose mother, Ginn, came to realise not only that she could forgive the killers, but that she wanted to meet Letlapa and reassure him that she bore no hate. She wrote later ‘Since then, as a Christian, I have come to understand forgiveness as a process which involves the principled decision to give up your justifiable right to revenge. To accept violation is a devaluation of the self’.



Letlapa Mphahlele

The film episode in which Letlapa and Ginn first meet is deeply moving, as is the work they have done together to promote forgiveness and peace. His evidence to Desmond Tutu’s Truth and Reconciliation programme helped – slowly – to mend some of the terrible hurt. After leaving the military in October 1994, he invited Ginn to his homecoming ceremony. She was able to “apologise to his people for the shame and humiliation which my ancestors had brought on them through slavery, colonisation and apartheid.” (It is recorded that on that occasion she received more applause than did Letlapa).



Ginn Fourie

In the UK, members of our Regional Meeting, particularly Howard Grace, attendee at Newbury Meeting and his wife Maria, member of that Meeting, have worked hard to further contacts with organisations in South Africa. These

contacts have continued to promote peace. Many of these Friends, as well as Oxford Friends were at the meeting in Oxford FMH in November 2023 and Letlapa faced some difficult questioning. Asked whether he had forgiven himself, he said he thought he had and that working with Ginn had helped enormously.

Humans' inhumanity to other humans can be almost beyond belief yet hope still springs eternal. As I cycled home, I wept, but also felt joy in my heart.



Photo by J Henderson

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.

The theme is **Giving and Receiving** and the meeting will be semi-programmed with a reading of the nativity story, a worship-sharing activity exploring what we would like to give and receive, and a chance to sing together.

All-age meetings for worship are a chance for children and adults to come together to worship jointly. Oxford Meeting has a custom of holding three all-age meetings for worship every 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-mfw/>



Photo by M Hughey

Quaker Videos in this Month's Forty-Three



Matt Rosen
Oxford Local Quaker Meeting
Oxford UK

Lecture on Convincement and Belonging

Dear Friends,

I wanted to share news of a lecture I gave this week on convincement experience and belonging in Quaker community (for Pendle Hill).

Matt Rosen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygHpj5IFCME>

1 hour 33 minutes

Oxford Quaker and Answer

Forty-Three Editors

The Forty-Three Q&A will be back next year! If you would like to sign up as one of the twelve Friends to be featured in an issue next year, please email the newsletter.

From Quaker Faith & Practice 11.01

The meaning of membership

People still become Friends through 'convincement', and like early Friends they wrestle and rejoice with that experience. Membership is still seen as a discipleship, a discipline within a broadly Christian perspective and our Quaker tradition, where the way we live is as important as the beliefs we affirm.

December 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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can be left in the office pigeonhole of any editor.

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