

# REACHING OUT



The Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies

DECEMBER 2011

The Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies (QFAS) is a Listed Informal Group of the Religious Society of Friends. QFAS aims to explore evidence for survival of death, to provide a forum for discussion on this and related subjects and to learn from and support those with psychic gifts and experiences. It aims to do this within the Quaker movement, and in society in general by liaising with other groups with like aims. QFAS was formed in 2000.

**Website:** [www. quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk](http://www.quakerfellowshipforafterlifestudies.co.uk)

**Clerk:** Angela Howard – 01371 850423 e-mail: [angela1@webbscottage.co.uk](mailto:angela1@webbscottage.co.uk)  
Webbs Cottage, Woolpits Road , Great Saling, Braintree, Essex , CM7 5DZ.

**Treasurer:** David Britton, Captain's Cottage, 35 Churchfield, West Mersea, Colchester , CO5 8QJ.

**Membership Secretary:** Sylvia Izzard - e-mail: [sylviaizzard@gmail.com](mailto:sylviaizzard@gmail.com)  
10 Whitefield Court, Mayland Court, Mayland, CM3 6BN

**Newsletter Editor:** Cherry Simpkin: - 020 8852 673 e-mail: [cherry.simpkin@btinternet.com](mailto:cherry.simpkin@btinternet.com)  
78 Courtlands Avenue, Lee, London , SE12 8JA

**For information about CDs of talks given at QFAS conferences and to order, please contact:**

**David Arundel, 34 Jubilee Terrace, High Ackworth, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 7LH.**

**e-mail [rdarundel@gmail.com](mailto:rdarundel@gmail.com)**



## CONTENTS

Item	Page
New Look Magazine	1
Sittings with mediums	2
Subscriptions	2
CDs	2
Forthcoming Events	2
Conference Reports	3
Annual General Meeting Report	13
Quakerism and Near Death Experience	15
Some Thoughts from Rudolf Steiner	17
An Experience of a Link with a Loved One	17
An Experience by a QFAS member	18
Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies	19
Steve Jobs' Last Words	20

## NEW LOOK MAGAZINE

Welcome to the new QFAS magazine. It was decided at the AGM in September to replace our newsletter with an A5 booklet style magazine. As well as QFAS news items and reports of conferences, this new format will give more space for members to share their ideas and experiences. We would also like to have sections for reader's letters and book reviews. This magazine is very much a "work-in-progress" so we would appreciate any thoughts you may have on its development for the Committee to consider.

We will do our best to include what we can. We cannot guarantee to take all suggestions on board as we have to take suitability and costs into consideration. Also, as editor, I reserve the right to decide whether to include an item in a particular edition. It may be also necessary for me to edit some pieces in order to fit them in with the lay-out of the magazine.

All contributions should be sent to me, preferably by email but, if that is not possible, by post. My contact details are inside front cover. Please include your name and, if sending by post, your postal address or telephone number. Please also say whether you are happy to have your name included with the item in the magazine or would prefer your contribution to be published anonymously.

I look forward to receiving your contributions.

## **SITTINGS WITH MEDIUMS**

Members often ask the committee to recommend a medium they can visit in their locality. We would, therefore, like to compile a countrywide list of mediums and would be grateful if members would send details of those with whom they have had successful sittings. Please send details to me, including any details of your sitting which you think may be suitable to share in the magazine

## **IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!**

Subscriptions for next year are due on 1st January. Subscription renewal slips are included with the magazine. It helps to keep down administrative costs if members pay by standing order so please consider arranging to pay your subscription this way if you do not already do so. Your membership of QFAS is greatly valued. The more people who support QFAS the more we can do for our members and the more QFAS can widen its scope and influence within the Society of Friends and in the wider world.

## **CDS OF SPEAKERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

CDs of talks given at QFAS conferences are now available. An order form with details is enclosed with this magazine.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **QFAS Spring Conference 2012**

The date of the QFAS Spring Conference is Saturday, April 28th, 2012, and it will be held as usual at Friends' House, 10.30-4.00. Rhonda Riachi will be the speaker and her two talks are "Mapping the Afterlife" and "Navigating the Unknown Region".

Rhonda is a Quaker and chairs the Oxford and Cotswold Group of the Alister Hardy Society for Religious and Spiritual Experience (<http://www.alisterhardysociety.org>). Her interest in the Afterlife began in 2001 with the showing of the BBC Horizon programme on Near-Death Experiences, "The Day I Died" (which featured NDE research by Peter Fenwick, Sam Parnia, Bruce Greyson and Pim van Lommel). She works in adult education in Oxford.

Rhonda will explore different perspectives on the Afterlife, reflecting her own journey through some fascinating material over the past decade. Using diagrams and texts

from Theosophy, Sufism, Buddhism, mystical writings, channelled communications, out-of-the-body and near-death experiences, and other sources ... common themes can be discerned and models built up.

Cost: £12.00 waged, £10.00 unwaged

**Further details and booking forms from Angela Howard (contact details inside front cover.)**

### **QFAS Autumn Conference 2012**

This will be held at Glenthorne, Grassmere, LA22 9QH, from 7th to 9th September, 2012. The theme will be "Communication between the Worlds" and will include such subjects such as direct contact, contact through mediumship and EVP (electronic voice phenomena). Booking will be through QFAS and details will follow in a future magazine.

### **QFAS Spring Conference 2013**

Details to follow in a future magazine.

### **QFAS Autumn Conference 2013**

This will be held at Woodbrooke from 20 to 22 September, 2013. It will be held jointly with Friends' Fellowship of Healing and cover all aspects of healing. Booking details will follow in a future magazine.

## **CONFERENCE REPORTS**

### **QFAS Spring Conference 2011**

The QFAS Spring Conference was held at Friends' House in London on 30th April, 2011. The speaker was Julian Drewett, the General Secretary of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (CFPSS).

Julian gave two talks. The first was entitled "How I am convinced of life after death" and the second "The Subtleties of the Psychic". These talks are summarised below.

**"HOW I AM CONVINCED OF LIFE AFTER DEATH"  
- summarised by Cherry Simpkin.**

There are five areas in his life that have influenced Julian's belief in the Afterlife – Church, family, books, the CFPSS and his faith.

He started his church life as a chorister at the age of seven. Through attending church he became aware of a sense of sanctity and of the communion of saints i.e. that there were those who loved God who watched over us from "the other side".

An interest in the psychic and the spiritual was always there in Julian's family. His paternal grandmother was naturally psychic and would talk to him about her experiences. He first heard the word 'psychic' from her. It was a natural part of her everyday life. She was also interested in complimentary medicine especially homeopathy which fuelled his own interest in healing. His mother's side of family was academic and anthropological. His great aunt was the first woman to live with tribes in Papua New Guinea. Her academic way of looking at life was a good balance for Julian to the influence of his father's mother. The two influences together gave him a good foundation for his future life.

Although Julian is not a great reader and more interested in music, he will read voraciously on areas that enthral him, including psychic and spiritual subjects. He has read many books on subjects such as healing, spirituality, prayer, life after death, automatic and inspired writing, ghosts, mediumship, and the psychic dimension in general. For him it was like going on a journey and brought new understanding and confirmed for him that in glimpsing spiritual truth we cannot ignore the truth of life after death. Helen Greaves' books particularly spoke to him. "The Wheel of Eternity", which is about a cottage which Helen lived where she helped a number of earth-bound entities move on, introduced him to a new concept and later helped him in dealing with similar situations through his work for the CFPSS. "The Odour of Sanctity" by Enid Case about people having scintings connected with departed loved ones especially on death anniversaries, also enabled him to verify similar experiences for those who had them. Poetry also helped to cement his belief and interest in psychic and spiritual subjects.

Thirty years ago Julian became General Secretary of CFPSS. Here he has found people of like mind and a great sharing of amazing evidence. His work includes the deliverance ministry and he has found that those experiencing the need for this often find it can be a stepping stone to a more general exploration of the psychic and a deeper appreciation of spiritual reality.

He has come across many experiences which have convinced him that people are met when they die by people on the other side. When his maternal grandmother died, people said they saw figures clad in white around her bed. There was also the bishop he knew who was puzzled at seeing people at ceiling level in his room and then died suddenly. It was as though they were coming to meet him.

Sometimes people will talk to him in everyday life about their experiences because they know of his work with the CFPSS. For example, one of his fellow bee-keepers started talking to him while they were inspecting their hives together. The man's deceased aunt (who had lived and recently died in Australia) appeared to him one night and expressed concern that her daughter would not dispose of her ashes as she (the aunt) wished. The man's family did not believe him and so someone suggested he talked to Julian, who advised him to use a forthcoming trip to Australia to speak to the daughter, who had indeed not yet disposed of the ashes. He did this and the ashes were buried where the aunt wished.

Lastly, Julian emphasised the importance of faith on the journey. We cannot know everything about life after death. It is important to have faith in and hope for the future life so that we can concentrate on living our lives more fully on earth. Julian has never doubted that there is a life after death but he realises that there are those who never have faith or whose faith is extinguished by some event. For others, faith comes in small steps. We cannot persuade someone to have faith but we can be alongside people and through us God can work to help them to a deeper understanding when the time is right for them.

He concluded by stressing that we should never forget the most important part of our journey is always the present moment – the NOW.

#### **"THE SUBTLETIES OF THE PSYCHIC" – summarised by Rosalind Smith**

Julian Drewett is the General Secretary of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, an experienced researcher in the field of parapsychology, with a wonderful way of delivering a talk. He gently brings to his subject a great degree of sensitivity and a wealth of knowledge as well as a balanced sense of humour.

While he is well aware that there are those who are often sceptical and dismissive of the idea of psychism, he gently reminds us that 'To dismiss the psychical is to ignore the very workings of God through the Holy Spirit and through us on a soul level'. He also makes us realise that much of our everyday instant and instinctive rapport with others is due to an intuitive response, a sense of something working between us that we recognise but cannot, or do not, quantify. It is that psychic sense, whether we acknowledge it or not: a deep level of the being of each of us which permeates our lives, often giving rise to subtle impulses and insights, to sudden awarenesses, to empathetic responses, and which can, sometimes, resemble 'a sharp arrow of darkness ... which can warn us and give us a feeling of foreboding.'

He uses the word 'subtleties' for aspects of the psychic, no doubt because he finds that people prefer not to use the word 'psychic'. In some ways this is unfortunate because another word for the soul is 'psyche.' Nothing weird or suspect at all!

He tells us that in essence we cannot develop or control this faculty, although we can be receptive to it. It is mysterious, evasive, and it can, if allowed to, put a barrier between people. We must remember that sometimes common sense is the best way forward.

After drawing on some of his own experiences, he went on to talk about precognition which 'can simply be a slip of the experience of time – an ability...to see the future which somehow has already happened or is already happening.' Sometimes we know that the phone is about to ring, or someone is just going to knock on the door, and we often know who it will be. Or perhaps 'an email comes through at exactly the same time as we have just sent one to the same correspondent - there may be no meaning in it but just simply an example of this precious contact we have with that other soul.'

We should be aware that 'It is the dimension we live in now and shall live in after death – so in this life we need to prepare and become more aware of the subtleties of everyday life, to become more sensitive in every way to our vocation as we continue our pilgrimage here on earth.'

Julian says that as with all spiritual gifts, any psychic experiences are to be brought to God for consecration – to be made holy. Then we can begin to say those two important words – Ah! Yes! I see!

The Conference concluded with a discussion section led Angela Howard in which she looked at the value of QFAS's role and how we might counteract the attitudes of the media, in particular the BBC, to psychic experience.

#### **THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX.**

**- Discussion session introduced by Angela Howard  
- summarised by Angela Howard**

What is the role of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies now? Has it changed in the first ten year's of its existence? What have we learned?

Since its formation in 2000, QFAS has held over twenty conferences (day and residential) and we have heard evidence for the existence of all kinds of paranormal phenomena. Many of our members have been able to speak openly about their own experiences, something they had been unable to do previously. The evidence – much of it anecdotal - is good. Looked at cumulatively it is highly convincing. And yet we find ourselves living in a society in which the materialistic paradigm prevails and the idea that paranormal phenomena exists is ridiculed by those with authority in the scientific and intellectual world. I think that perhaps we are so used to this situation that we have become inured to it and feel powerless to effect any change. Where to start?

Because I watch TV and listen to the radio rather than read newspapers and journals, I chose to attack the BBC in this regard. I quoted from the BBC charter, part of which reads -

*The Public Purposes of the BBC are as follows—*

*(a) sustaining citizenship and civil society;*

*(b) promoting education and learning;*

*(c) stimulating creativity and cultural excellence*

- and expressed the view that we would be justified as a group, to question whether in fact the BBC's attitude in the area of paranormal phenomena and research was one which promoted 'education and learning'. I felt we should ask for the screening of programmes which dealt with the serious investigation into the paranormal carried out in the past 150 years by reputable scientists, presented in a thorough and unbiased way. I gave examples of programmes which I had seen or heard which had ridiculed the idea of the paranormal, and suggested that members phone or write and complain when they hear anything they object to. (I am collecting examples and should be glad to receive reports. Hallow E'en is a particularly good time for attempts to debunk, and 2011 was no exception! The phone number for complaints is 03700-100-222 and the address to write to is BBC Complaints, PO Box 1922, Darlington, DL3 0UR. (It is also possible to complain on-line.)

In the discussion which followed many Friends shared my anger and disgust that a powerful public body should consistently put out such misleading information. Other Friends felt that the main purpose of QFAS was to speak the truth which many of us feel we have found, to other Quakers rather than to take on society at large. Others felt that we should tread much more gently and quietly and treat the whole subject as a great mystery best explored at a personal, spiritual level.

I can certainly see value in all viewpoints. However, personally I continue to be deeply troubled that the BBC with its vast influence is not upholding its charter. I feel that it should be called to account for broadcasting misinformation.

Recently I received this from a QFAS member: "I've watched many wonderful BBC programmes on Quantum Physics, Chaos Theory, Chemistry and the wonders of the Solar System and wondered why they dare not go that one step further. And I've spent 40 years with my husband, a highly educated man, a life long Guardian reader and subscriber to the Humanist magazine and observed him constantly having his prejudices re-affirmed by these publications. He may be a liberal thinker but he is not a free spirit!"

As for the future of QFAS, it seems that members do very much value meeting each other, hearing talks and exchanging ideas, and that we should aim to attract more and more Friends to the group rather like a rolling snowball!

### **QFAS AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2011**

The residential autumn conference was held at Woodbrooke on 23-25 September, 2011. The theme for the weekend was "Life Beyond Death: A lost part of the Quaker tradition?" The speakers were Angela Cotter, a Quaker and a Jungian psychoanalyst, and David and Rachel Britton.

The talks are summarised below.

#### **OLD QUAKER CERTAINTIES - first talk by David Britton - summarised by David Britton**

The original Quakers claimed that we can know spiritual truth directly. The certainty of immortality is, strictly speaking, intrinsic to the spiritual experience of God – which is why it was rarely separated out and treated as an 'issue'. Immortality was an 'old Quaker Certainty' – and current indifference to it among British Quakers is often justified on the grounds that it is one of the 'old things' that we can no longer believe. But that judgment depends precisely on separating it out, or denying that the reality of God has immortality as an implication.

Such a denial is untenable - and spiritually should be a matter of shame. It involves saying that the 'spiritual experience' of the comfortable in this world is primary, while the fate of millions of desperately unfulfilled and underprivileged people is, while unfortunate, secondary. This is bourgeois religion.

It would be better if those who deny immortality could feel a lasting heartbreak about the fate of those for whom they can affirm no hope. Heartbreak opens us up, and goes on doing so until we receive an illumination. A heart-broken spirituality is a good spirituality – while a bourgeois spirituality is the worst possible.

Fox himself as a young man was heartbroken, as he searched for the religious certainty that his Puritan upbringing claimed to give him, but which he could no longer believe in. The Puritan doctrine of predestination was one of the chief things that had broken his heart – and Penington's heart, and no doubt the hearts of thousands who eventually flocked to Quakerism.

The Quaker experience of a loving God brought with it the possibility of a universal salvation. Early Quaker hopes of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth in no way lessened their ardour for the Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven.

The Quaker who most clearly spelt these things out was the great but now seriously neglected Robert Barclay. Fox loved him dearly; admired him; and praised him generously on his death, as 'a good man' and as a 'scholar'. The last few pages of his 'Apology' deal with 6 common misconceptions about Quakers in his day. One of these concerns the hope of heaven, and Barclay deplores the fact that so many 'maliciously say, that we deny any heaven or hell but that which is within us'. Yet this misconception is exactly what so many British Quakers now believe and promulgate. In the 17th century it was a Ranter position, and Quakers were extremely anxious to disassociate themselves from it.

To conclude, I would like to look at the ways in which the Quaker religious and mystical experience was valuable, and how the experience of immortality found its place.

It was valuable in itself, bringing serenity to the heart of the individual and to the worshipping group. Thus the actual period of worship came to be enormously valued.

It was valuable to the wider Society. A genuine serenity and stillness was attractive, even beautiful. Friends drew others in through the attraction of beauty, among other things. It was also valuable to the general social and political life. Friends' seriousness about their Testimonies made them trusted where others were not. Finally it re-affirmed human value for the next world. In the stillness Friends came to know that God does not punish arbitrarily, but reaches out to us to draw us towards fulfilment in God itself in the heavenly worlds. Finding the heavenly peace 'here and now' is the sign that it is also trustworthy for the next world

#### **TALKING ABOUT DEATH: A VERY MODERN TABOO - a talk by Angela Cotter - summarised by Cherry Simpkins**

The talk by Angela Cotter looked at the fear of death in modern society and the need for a new collective spirituality to fill the gap left by the waning of interest in organised religion.

For most of us it is our own experience that leads us to an interest in the afterlife. Through her own psychic ability, which she attributes to her Celtic ancestry, Angela has experienced the supernatural from childhood.

However, it was nursing which brought her first encounter with the reality of death. She felt inadequate when she could do nothing for those who were dying but came to understand that it was just 'being' with them that mattered rather than 'doing' anything.

Through her experience of working with dying people, she became very interested in the whole subject from a 'professional' point of view. She found that death evokes a powerful archetypal state that enthralls those involved in it and increases the nearer death approaches. Time takes on a different meaning and sense of experience intensifying and a changed relationship to the world around.

When nursing her stepfather, she became very entangled in his dying process, as though it were happening to her. Jungian analysis helped her to understand her fear of death and to accept the idea of dying.

Death takes us into an unfamiliar territory and, in an increasingly secularized society, can become caught up with notions of annihilation and disintegration.

Experiences of spiritual presences do not fit with the reductionist approach of the modern healthcare professions.

In her research for her PhD on the concept of the wounded healer in nursing, she found that nurses who experienced severe acute or chronic illness had felt invulnerable prior to being ill just by virtue of being a nurse. She learnt that, for those in the caring professions and in society in general, acknowledging one's own vulnerability can help to redress the balance between the omnipotent carer and the weakened cared-for person.

Death takes us beyond all thinkable experiences. The intuitive right side of the brain, is perhaps more centrally involved as we approach death. We need to connect more deeply with the instinctual and to see death as a natural event rather than something to be fought against.

Over the last century, medical developments and improvements in living standards have meant that the main instances of death have changed from young people dying from infectious diseases to older people dying from non-infectious diseases such as heart disease, respiratory disease and cancer. As these conditions take longer to develop, the medical profession has taken over the dying process from the community and death is now seen as a failure by health care professionals.

Dying is increasingly on the public agenda. There are books and television programmes about it. The hospice movement, with its emphasis on holistic care and having a 'good' death, is helping to change attitudes to dying. Yet this presents a problem in that it suggests there is a way to "die right". Death has become part of the self-improvement movement. One is expected to perform the task of dying well. One might even expect the Department of Health to set standards on how to die competently!

Yet many people now are unprepared for the encounter with death and dying in others or themselves. In our paradoxical society, we encounter death in the media everyday and yet many may have no personal contact with it until at least middle age with the death of a parent. We feel immune and believe that it will never happen to us. We have lost that sense of eternity and being in contact with nature familiar to "primitive" people and, as a consequence, society is facing a loss of spirit and soul on a collective level.

Our increasing sense of omnipotence over nature denies our frailty in this world and the smallness of our egos. Seeing the ego as only a small part of the whole psyche helps to restore a sense of our rightful place in creation. We are small and insignificant, yet, as the Aborigines know, each of us has a vital part to play in keeping creation going, by working with the divine to maintain a harmonious balance.

Our spiritual approaches have often favoured the male "Sky God" and the importance of the mind. We need this but we also need to re-balance ourselves by making Mother Earth's more rooted nature an integral part of our spirituality. In relation to concepts of the afterlife, this means valuing the ancestors as well as the angels. There are movements towards this in psychotherapy, notably in Advanced Integrative Therapy which explicitly considers ancestral and past life trauma. Similarly there is a growing interest in subjects such as shamanism and Celtic Christianity, with its respect for nature. By encouraging a holistic spirituality that encompasses the afterlife, the work of QFAS can become one of the building blocks of a new approach that is emerging bit by bit in different areas - built on the past but moving beyond it.

### **SCIENCE AND THE LOSS OF THE SOUL - second talk by David Britton - summarised by David Britton**

Darwinism was certainly a shock to many religious people and churches, and continues to be a problem. It is not the idea of Evolution itself which is troubling, except to Fundamentalists. (St. Augustine and some other Church Fathers were willing to embrace what could be called an evolutionary view.) It is the assertion that everything in the evolutionary process is random, no exceptions allowed. It is the consequence of this that it is not possible that such a thing as an immortal soul could exist, for its very principle would seem to be a denial of complete randomness.

The same thing could be said of Consciousness, of course, which is why the materialist Neuroscientists are anxious to debunk that as well – and believe they have successfully done so. This ignores the fact that a number of good Neuroscientists have not been materialists, and a few, notably Sir John Eccles, deeply religious, with a firm belief in immortality. Also, several good Biologists, including Sir Alister Hardy, do not believe

that natural selection acting upon random mutations is a sufficient account of evolution. But the Establishment simply ignores them, as it ignores Spiritualism and the findings of Psychical Research. In fact, where materialist Neuroscience thinks it is strongest it often shows itself at its most absurd. In order to secure itself it needs to show, for instance, that one's simple and conscious decision to, say, raise a hand, is in fact conditioned by a chain of unconscious causes going back more or less to one's birth. And we just know that that is nonsense.

The Manchester Conference of 1894-5 was an attempt to bring a narrowly evangelical Quakerism into the circle of general culture, of which Science was a very important element. This had some positive outcomes, which we continue to enjoy. But the neglect of our own theological tradition, to which Herbert G. Wood as Warden of Woodbrooke was always drawing attention, has been one of the factors in the Quaker loss of the Soul. We are now in the strange situation of practising a Spirituality without the Soul, a top-heaviness which does us little good. A Quaker Theology Group was not set up in Britain until 1994, precisely 100 years after the Manchester Conference. My own 8-9 years experience of that Group is that they would rather meet a bear in a wood than restore an immortal soul to their discourse. So QFAS still has a lot of work to do.

#### **GOD AND IMMORTALITY IN THOMAS KELLY - a talk by Rachel Britton - summarised by Rachel Britton**

Many QFAS members turn to 'evidence' of life-after-death, in the form of work with mediums, for instance, because Quaker Meetings, and the wider Christian church too, in many cases, have become hard places even to talk about life-after death issues. This inability to talk is a recent phenomenon, and a great waste of a wonderful Christian and Quaker tradition. We need to re-own the experience of earlier Quakers, and delight in their certainty that the God they encountered in worship together was the guarantee of fulfillment to all, and the closeness they knew with each other was not something that death could break.

Thomas Kelly, a 20th century American Quaker, seems a good place to start. Brought up in a Quaker family, he always cared about the spiritual life – but as a young man, his first loyalty was to rigorous intellectual thought, and his dearest wish was to gain recognition from the great American intellectual centres. He wanted a PhD from Harvard. He worked extremely hard for many years to get to that goal, only to find himself speechless when the great occasion came for him to defend his thesis in person before the Harvard faculty. He failed his PhD. The shock of this set-back drove him into some kind of breakdown. It cracked him open at a deep level – and that was when he found himself flooded with an experience of the love of God, which changed

him utterly. From then on, for the last three years of his short life, he was what George Fox would have called 'an established man'; integrated, sure, with a spiritual authority recognised by all who met him.

'On strict, rational grounds,' he says, 'there is no inescapable, watertight demonstration that there is life after death, any more than there is a strict, watertight demonstration that God exists. It seems to me plausible to believe there is life after death. For, as William James puts it, when I reach the time for dying, I am just beginning to learn how to live' Here we are still in the realm of 'plausible probabilities'. But in quite another spirit, he cries 'How could we have been so blind? For surely all things of value are most certainly made secure through Him!' 'See earth from heaven' was one of Thomas Kelly's phrases. Whatever of earth can be seen from heaven, including the real which we see in people when we 'know one another in the things that are eternal', that cannot vanish or die. One of Kelly's discoveries from his tremendous immersion in God, was the close fellowship this brings with everyone who has had similar experience, whatever their culture or creed. He called it the Blessed Community, (the communion of saints, in more orthodox Christian parlance). 'The incident of death puts no bound to the Blessed Community', he says. Here we are in the realm of certainty.

(Rachel's talk will be appearing in two editions of "Quaker Voices" in 2012.)

#### **QFAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**held at Woodbrooke, Saturday, 24th September, 2011.**

Angela Howard

15 Friends attended the AGM on the Saturday afternoon of the Woodbrooke Conference and a committee meeting was held on the Sunday morning. Here are the main items of interest which resulted.

#### **Finances.**

Commenting on the funds the treasurer, David Britton, said that there would be a balance of £1,493 in the account after the payment to Woodbrooke for the present conference. A deposit of £370 had been paid to Glenthorne for next autumn's conference. The membership subscription remains at £5.00 but Friends who are able are encouraged to give a donation in addition and many do. Friends are also encouraged to pay by Standing Order.

The Spring conference with an attendance of 35 made a loss of £52 because of the high cost of room hire at Friends' House. It was decided that the conference fee must be more realistic although we have no wish to deter anyone from attending for

reasons of cost. It was decided to charge £7.00 unwaged and £10.00 waged. (Based on costs for next year the amount has since had to be revised to £10 and £12.)

### **The Newsletter**

It was decided to change the format of the newsletter to an A5 booklet. The committee has since agreed on the title "Reaching Out".

### **CDs of Talks available**

An initiative taken in 2010 was to begin recording talks given at conferences for later distribution on CDs. Many of our members cannot travel to conferences for various reasons, and it would seem preferable to hear a talk rather than read a summary in the newsletter. It could also form the basis for a group discussion.

As an experiment the three talks at the Charney conference (autumn 2010) were offered at a cost of £12.00 to non-members, and £10.00 to members. This pricing was based on the amounts charged by other similar organizations. It seems that it may have been too high as very few people ordered the talks. After the April conference this year (2011) we tried a different tack and offered two talks free on receipt of stamps to cover postage. This time over 30 people requested and received the CDs. Friends at the AGM discussed what would be a reasonable price in the future and decided that on a charge of £3.00 per CD with a reduction for members. Our thanks to QFAS member Clement Jewitt for copying the CDs, and to David Arundel for taking on the job of sending them out.

### **Future Events**

Rhonda Riachi, who is chair of the Oxford Branch of the Alister Hardy Society, has agreed to be our speaker at the Spring Conference on April 28th 2012. Her title is "Mapping the Afterlife". Rooms 7/8/9 at Friends House are booked.

It was decided to title the conference at Glenthorne conference in September, 2012.

"Communication between the Worlds" and to cover subjects such as direct contact, contact through mediumship and EVP (electronic Voice Phenomena)

It was agreed to book Woodbrooke for the conference in Autumn 2013. The theme would be healing. We agreed to ask the Friends' Fellowship of Healing to hold it jointly with us.

### **The Committee**

This year has seen the partial handover of work from David Britton (who has been our treasurer/membership secretary for many years) to Sylvia Izzard. Unfortunately Sylvia fell and broke her hip early in June. We are grateful that she has still managed to take over as membership secretary with David continuing as treasurer for another year.

David Britton (treasurer), Sylvia Izzard (membership secretary), Angela Howard (clerk), Cherry Simpkin (Newsletter editor), and Rosalind Smith were willing to continue as committee members until the 2012 AGM. Roger Straughan wished to retire from the committee and the AGM thanked him for his service. Geoffrey Martin was appointed.

### **Any Other Business**

It was decided to place an advert in "The Friend" once a month to try to make QFAS more widely known. This is the practice of FFH. A form of words has yet to be decided.

The idea of approaching the BBC about a programme or series of programmes on the history of psychical research is still active but nothing further was planned.

Several Friends have mentioned reincarnation as a possible theme for a future conference.

### **QUAKERISM AND NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE by Neil Crabtree**

**(A version of this article was published in "The Friend" on 15 July, 2011)**

Recently I was in contact with a Friend who is looking for subjects which could be discussed in an up-and-coming conference on the future of Quakerism. With the movement's peace work in mind, I wrote a letter describing how research into the near-death experience [NDE] might soon offer opportunities for those interested in peace. Her response, kindly questioning whether the NDE had a role to play in this field, did not surprise me. However, after monitoring the subject in the fields of medicine and mental health – I myself suffer from manic depression – I am of the opinion that this phenomenon is worthy of serious consideration among people who are concerned about violence and cruelty.

How I have arrived at this opinion requires a glimpse back in time when alcohol and emotional problems caused me to behave with unkindness towards people who cared and trusted me. I do not wish to go into detail other than to say that these people all turned up to terrorise me as I lay in a state of extreme paranoid psychosis following a suicide attempt. I couldn't keep my eyes open, and when I closed them I was in a torture chamber designed specifically around my worst fears. The people present, who were obviously inner hallucinations, were as clear and real as in everyday life. All but one was still alive and they created for me worlds of pitiless terror which were designed by a quiet telepathic voice.

A couple of years later, in 1995, my father collapsed at home with a cardiac arrest. Due to the distance the ambulance had to come and the initial ineffectiveness of the fibrillator, he was without a heartbeat for about 10 minutes. Luckily, he was revived

and when he was able to speak the first thing he said was that he had been with his mother and brother-in-law, both who had been dead for sometime. He also described a loving light. Despite the fact that I had experienced something with similar characteristics i.e. the hallucinations of people, our experiences were otherwise so at odds with each other that I didn't make the connection. Also, I had not heard of the NDE so I did not make the wider link.

It was 12 years later, following my father's death that I started coming across books and articles on the NDE written by surgeons, psychiatrists and psychologists. A constant theme was how many people who are close to death meet up with dead loved ones or, in the case of children in particular, gentle strangers or friends who are alive. This is followed by a sense of leaving the body and travelling along a tunnel towards a loving light which is usually referred to as God. All describe a gentle, non-threatening inner voice which sometimes encourages a brief life review where people consider how they have hurt others and could have done things differently.

What are of particular interest to me, with my own background, are the rarer reports of unpleasant "inverted" experiences. These are varied but include descriptions similar to my own. It is difficult to pin-point this phenomenon as it is under-researched, possibly because it was ignored by some early writers who, with all good intention, were trying to sell feel-good books. Also, if this is connected to poor behaviour in life, it is possibly less likely that sufferers will admit to experiencing this hellish dimension. However, I do think it is connected to psychosis, which is not my own theory. In the 1950's Aldous Huxley made this link in his book Heaven and Hell. Also, according to modern research into the subject, it appears that the NDE generally can be stimulated by treating the part of the brain which causes psychotic illness. Obviously, this is not to say that people who suffer psychosis are experiencing an NDE of suffering for their behaviour.

It is possible that our ancestors were aware of the NDE but without modern technology believed it was proof of eternal life after death, whether in Heaven or Hell. This would help to explain why so many historic religions, who had no contact with each other, believed in similar scenarios following death, and which were dependant on behaviour in life. This is not to say that all peoples believed in this. Buddhism for instance is a very cerebral movement which recognises that these events occur in the mind, in the dying stages of life. This is the theory which I believe in.

Whatever the reality is, I am of the opinion that this field of research, with its mention of a loving inner light, a gentle telepathic voice and God, might be worthy of serious attention by Friends. The features of a positive NDE seem to speak directly to the condition of Quakerism, yet there appears to be little awareness of the subject. And with regards to the inverted experience, if there is a feeling that this would be no deterrent as it only occurs in the head, there are many psychotic sufferers around who

can testify that the mind is capable of creating places where it is best not to be. This could be the case for tough love.

### **SOME THOUGHTS FROM RUDOLF STEINER - Cherry Simpkin**

I am grateful to Pat Grundy for the following thoughts from Rudolf Steiner.

There will come a time, says Steiner, when we shall not merely have memory pictures in our minds of our dead friends, but shall feel them as real assistants in our activities on earth. The souls of those we have loved and who have passed into the spiritual worlds will then live on in our consciousness. That this is not yet experienced by many, says Steiner, is because spiritual scientific development is as yet only really beginning. It has not yet planted in souls the capacities and power that can act freely out of selfless love and love-filled wisdom.

The path to such an experience of the presence and help of the 'dead' will gradually open for many souls in the future. We may think of the 'dead' while about our daily work; we may awaken in our hearts all the selfless love we harboured for them, and the moment will surely come when we have the clear, conscious experience that the one who has 'died' is helping us, as if he kindled our ardour for the work we are doing, as if he or she were working through our very hands and fingers. This clear feeling, this conscious inner experience, that spiritual influences work down from the spiritual worlds into our physical earth-lives, is a fruit, a living fruit, that comes to those souls who, in selfless surrender, in spiritualized love, tread the path of spiritual development.

### **A PAINTER'S EXPERIENCE by John Lawton**

I have been a Friend for forty years and a spiritualist for 6 years, but have dabbled for nearly 36 years. And finally this year had an experience which for me confirms the truth of spiritual survival. I had spent months doing a portrait of my late wife from a photograph. And finally reached a point beyond which I could not go! So having cleaned all my equipment I sat down in front of the canvas and after a few minutes I experienced a strong pull between my solar plexus and the painting. The same evening as I put my foot on the first step to go upstairs to bed I heard at the back of my head behind the right ear, saying simply "good night"! Have never had such an experience before or since! I am 82 and hope to develop further, but who knows!

## **AN EXPERIENCE by a QFAS member**

I wonder if there are any Friends who have had an experience similar to this...

Four days after he died he came to me. I felt a fuzzy feeling in my head which made me pick up a pen - I had experienced this on one or two occasions in the past with the recent dead connecting with me through writing. I hadn't been expecting this communication I was too grief stricken - we were very fond of each other but it was unsaid as he was also a friend of my husband. The messages I have had in the past were very brief and hesitant but this was so different, very confident with long well constructed sentences showing a very clear and lively mind.

His funeral was to be held in the meeting house. So at the same time that I was helping to plan it I was in contact with the man who was to be buried and when I was sitting talking to his daughter in the meeting house about the finer details of the event, he was there with me. And an hour before the funeral he was sitting with me at the computer suggesting what I should say in the last line of my little speech.

The funeral went off very well. He was looking forward to it and enjoyed seeing family and old friends and was surprised to find out how well liked he was. We then took his body to its grave in a rather bleak hillside cemetery close to his home and I watched dry eyed as the coffin was lowered into the grave, knowing that he was with me, that we loved each other and had embarked on the adventure of understanding this extraordinary situation we found ourselves in.

Eventually we could communicate without the writing. This all happened nine months ago and he has been with me constantly since.

During this time I've tried to make sense of it all and was pleased when a Friend told me about 'Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies' as I was beginning to question my sanity. I was also directed to Deepak Chopra's Life after Death which has helped to give some clarity on the situation.

Soul bonds occur on the astral plane just as they occur in the physical world. Relationships in the astral plane mean that you are vibrating in concert with someone else's soul and therefore feel a heightened sense of love, unity, and bliss. It is not a relationship in spatial or physical terms, because the astral world is populated only by thought forms. When the disembodied soul tunes in to the frequency of a loved one back on the physical plane, that person may feel the presence of the departed; two souls can commune even though one is vibrating on the material plane and the other in the astral plane.

The souls motivation to keep coming back to the material plane is twofold; to fulfil desires and to rejoin with familiar souls. We relate now to those peoples souls we related to in the past; we end relationships with people whose souls no longer vibrate with ours.

## **THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL STUDIES by David Taylor**

The Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies (USPS) was founded in 1965 by Rev. G. Stanley Whitby. In his long and distinguished career he was an examiner in Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow and Lecturer in Philosophy for Adult Education. He was subsequently a Lecturer in Philosophy and Scientific Method at the University of Sheffield. Amongst his published works are articles in the International Journal of Ethics, the Maurice Elliot Memorial Lecture 1966 (on the Value of Psychical Studies) and the Beard Memorial Lecture 1970 (Philosophy and Survival). He was also joint editor of 'Life, Death & Psychical Research' for the Churches Fellowship for Psychical & Spiritual Studies (Rider, 1973). For 30 years he was a minister of the Unitarian Central City churches in Glasgow and Sheffield after which he became a minister of the Cotswold Group of Unitarian churches. He was also the Director of Studies for the Churches Fellowship for Psychical & Spiritual Studies, Chairman of their Scientific Research Committee and their Education Committee as well as being Education Officer of the College of Psychic Studies and a member of the Society for Psychical Research.

The Society was established to: "encourage the study of psychical phenomena in all aspects, with a critical and open mind". With this statement at its core, the Society is open to Unitarians and Non-Unitarians alike.

The Society carries on its work principally by publishing a journal, 'Psychical Studies' twice a year. In honor of Rev. Whitby and to mark the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Society, the 'Whitby Memorial Paper' has recently been established. For this a leading figure from the world of psychical research is asked to write an article on any aspect of psychical research.

The Society also holds an Annual Weekend Conference. For several years this has been held at the Unitarian run Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow in the beautiful Derbyshire Peak District. The conference is open to all Unitarians and Non-Unitarians. Three speakers are invited to present a lecture on any aspect of psychical research.

The Society is also allocated lecture time at the Annual General Meeting of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, at which a lecture is given on some aspect of psychical studies by someone prominent in the world of psychical research. Past speakers have included Dr. Alan Gauld, Guy Lyon Playfair and the USPS President Peter Underwood.

Further details about the Society can be obtained from the journal Editor, David Taylor, 15 Brier Mill Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3HA

Tel: 0121 550 8874 Mobile: 07505 323443 Email: editorusps@yahoo.co.uk

## **STEVE JOBS' LAST WORDS – Cherry Simpkin**

There was an interesting piece in The Guardian on 1 November concerning the last words of the Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. His sister, Mona, reported that on his death bed, surrounded by his family, he looked at them all and then beyond them over their shoulders and exclaimed "Oh wow! Oh wow! Oh wow!" Was he seeing something? An indication of where he was going?

There are lots of accounts of people expressing interest or even excitement at something they appear to see before they die. If you know of similar instances that would like to share, please let us have them.



## **BOOKS/BOOKLETS BY QFAS MEMBERS DETAILS FOR ORDERING**

### **The Not Unfamiliar Country: Communication Beyond Death**

#### **An Anthology of Quaker Experience**

£2.00 + 55p p&p

Please order from Angela Howard, Webb's Cottage, Woolpits Road, Saling, Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DZ. Cheque payable to Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies.

(Also free copies of the QFAS introductory leaflet, and card for FMH notice boards.

Please send an s.a.e. with your request).

\* \* \*

### **The Afterlife**

#### **How good is the evidence?**

Talks from the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies Conference held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, in July 2009

Please order from David Britton, Captains' Cottage, 35 Churchfields, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, C05 8QJ. £2.00 + £1.00 p&p.

\* \* \*

### **Quakers and the Spiritual/Psychic Dimension**

#### **by Rosalind Smith**

£1.20 and please enclose a stamp. Order from The Manager, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6QH. Tel: 01342 832150. Cheques to be made out to Claridge House.

\* \* \*

### **Beyond the Music An experience of love and death**

#### **by Joan Benner**

£3.00 + 50p p&p

Order from and cheque payable to: Joan Benner, 12 Manor Gardens, Hampton, Middx, TW12 2TU

## **QUAKER FELLOWSHIP FOR AFTERLIFE STUDIES**

Books by QFAS members, some on special offer!

Please make cheques payable to authors.

### **DO WE SURVIVE DEATH?**

A Descriptive Bibliography and Discussion on the Evidence Supporting Survival  
Compiled and written by David Hodges

An excellent guide for those who wish to explore the very extensive literature on the subject of survival of death.

£5.00 + £1.50 postage. Please order from David Hodges, 14 Eythorne Close, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9LP. Cheque to David Hodges

### **ONLY A THOUGHT AWAY**

A personal story of bereavement and communication beyond death.  
by Angela Howard

Published by Quacks Books, October, 2010. ISBN 978-1-904446-28-6.  
£5.00 + £1.50 p&p

Please order from Angela Howard,  
Webb's Cottage, Woolpits Road, Gt. Saling, Braintree, Essex, CM7 5DZ.

### **SCIENCE, MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF**

by Don Mason

Published by William Sessions Limited, York.2006. ISBN: 1 85072 357

The author gives an account of his own beliefs, founded on the knowledge and experience he has gained during his lifetime. His mother had a remarkable psychic gift and his father was a hypnotist and a very deep thinker. The author, himself a scientist, firmly rejects the current materialistic interpretation of the world that many, but not all, scientists put forward.

£ 5:00 plus £1:50 postage.

Please order from Don Mason, 5 Larch Lane, Witney, Oxon, OX28 1AG

### **A STUDY IN SURVIVAL: CONAN DOYLE SOLVES THE FINAL PROBLEM**

by Roger Straughan

Published by O-Books. ISBN: 978-1-84694-240-2.

Roger Straughan's book presents dramatic new evidence for the survival of our individual personalities after death. Providing this is an astonishing series of recent communications from a man who died in 1930 and whose mission, when alive, was to bring just such evidence to the notice of the widest possible audience - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. For more information visit

[www.0-books.net](http://www.0-books.net)

Price £7.00 + £1.50 p&p.

Please order from Roger Straughan,  
Apple Pie Cottage, Downs Road, Compton, Newbury, RG20 6RE.