

# Quiet Places



*The Newsletter of The Quiet Garden Movement*

winter 2023



## Quietness and contemplation in the busyness of life by Gillian Prance

**I am very happy to have been a Patron of the Quiet Garden** Movement almost since its beginning.

I know the importance of quietness and contemplation in the busyness of today's life. Even long after official retirement I am as busy as ever continuing my research on the Amazon forest and its influence on climate change and also now becoming more and more of a carer for my wife whose memory is fading. This means that quietness is probably even more important for me than it was in the past. I am fortunate to have a nice medium sized garden to work on and to enjoy. In fact, the time I spend gardening is often a time for contemplation along with the many tasks needed to keep the garden in order. This year I have restored the bench in a small alcove in the garden that is enclosed on three sides by hedges and fruit trees and the open side looks out over the lawn to a flower bed. I often sit on that bench and to relax and think. It is a most important refuge for me, but more importantly it is a place where my faith in God is strengthened and where I experience the wonders of His creation. Usually when I sit on the bench a robin appears from somewhere..... foraging on the ground or perches on the tree above me to sing. It is such quiet times as this that keeps me going through my daily life. The reality of Psalm 46 verse ten becomes more real:

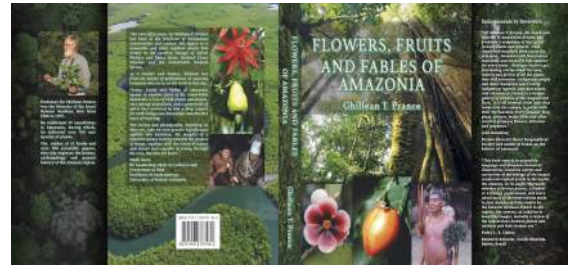
**“Cease striving and know that I am God.”** Providing places for those that need refuge from the pressures of modern life and time to approach God is such an important mission and that is why I continue to take an active interest in The Quiet Garden Movement.... Cont overleaf

“Let us approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4: 16.

**Gillian Prance is a botanist and former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew. Gillian has travelled and conducted research extensively in South America. His life’s work has focused on ensuring global sustainability and management of the environment through increasing our knowledge and understanding of the plant kingdom.**

### **FLOWERS, FRUITS and FABLES of AMAZONIA**

**By Gillian Prance**



Available for purchase from [https:// butterfliesandamazonia.com](https://butterfliesandamazonia.com). Price £25.00

### **GOD in the OAK**

**These words fit with the old oak that sits at the top of the hill behind our home, bowed and heavy with age. This year it has been host to a hornets nest and many small mammals find shelter in the hollows at its base. I like to stand beneath its bows, feel the rough thick bark and marvel in its glory.**

**The old oak stands, two years now leafless.** She’s still the signature tree of all the farm’s timberland and a meditation point for Quiet Garden. Returning visitors who recall her in full glory are keenly disappointed. I suggest they sit with her and wait. We have lost her cool shade and vibrant colors but are grateful that her starker beauty provides a perpetual view of sky.

She invites us to look for new patterns that her bare limbs sculpt in every direction. Her naked branches allow unprecedented views of birds at work and play. No leaves muffle their songs.

What creatures seek shelter in her ever-hollowing core? She’s become a giant switching station over pasture reverting to savannah. She’s a welcome tower of hospitality for all arrivals rounding the bend in the drive. She embraces us from the east porch at any hour - a most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. She’s steadfast even in death.

**Nan Bonfils** (originally published in Quiet Spaces 2015)

### **Centering Porch Quiet Garden, Iowa, USA**

Restful in every season, our home and farm is yours to enjoy as a gathering place, contemplative retreat, or creative wellspring. Explore forty acres of prairie, pasture, timber and oak savannah. Inhale enough bird songs to make your heart sing. **The Centering Porch** offers distinctive privacy and preserves intentional quiet.

<https://centeringporch.org/>

<https://quietgarden.org/gardens/centering-porch/>

## SUNSET FLIGHT

The sun was setting,  
drenching the sky deep gold.  
Light lingered in the west,  
turning to evening ink  
as dusk crept slowly into night.  
There was a stillness now.

Trees made black silhouettes, branches forming  
intricate patterns  
and the horizon hedges blurred and merged into  
long shadows.

No sound.

Even the traffic's roar was a memory,  
a distant far-off echo after day.

But then, movement

a dark shape disturbing the sun's cream mirror,

a lone bird

flying in straight line across the pale last glow,

so sure,  
no prevarication,  
to find shelter in known tree  
and noiselessly settle and sleep.

Lord, after the restlessness of our day,  
our steps, our walks, our comings and goings,  
after the busy chatter, clutter, our singing morning  
sounds,

may we turn, sure and unswerving,  
like that bird of evening  
and seek a quiet place,  
and find our peace in you.

Catherine James

### Join our Patron Brian Draper during Advent

To find out more about this special Advent series  
please follow the link [here](#).

## HEALING

Rest with me  
In this moment,  
As a leaf  
Floats gently down stream ,  
Among diamonds of sunlight  
Returning to the sky.  
Stay in these moments,  
As the morning mist  
Floats above the surface  
Of the lush, green meadows,  
On the far side of the stream.

Stay and listen  
To the morning song,  
Bringing music  
To the silence,  
A prelude gifted  
To the rising sun.  
Walk with me  
On my journey,  
We will talk  
Of forgiveness  
And peace.

Chris Roe

## NEXT TO NATURE

### A Lifetime in the English Countryside By Ronald Blythe

Ronald Blythe lives at the end of an overgrown farm track deep in the rolling countryside of the Stour Valley on the border between Suffolk and Essex. His home is Botten-goms Farm, a sturdy yeoman's house once owned by the artist John Nash. From here, Blythe has spent almost half a century observing the slow turn of the agricultural year; the church year and village life in a series of rich, lyrical rural diaries.

Beginning with the arrival of snow on New Year's Day and ending with Christmas carols sung in the village church *Next to Nature* invites us to witness a life richly lived. With gentle wit and keen observation Blythe meditates on his life and faith, on literature, art and history, and on our place in the landscape.

It is a celebration of one of our greatest living writers and an unforgettable ode to the English countryside.

[www.johnmurraypress.co.uk](http://www.johnmurraypress.co.uk) UK £25.00 USA \$ 34.99

## NEWS FROM CIRENCESTER QUIET GARDEN

**Our Quiet Garden is the re-purposed Quaker burial ground** attached to the 350-year-old Cirencester Meeting House; and we have welcomed a steady number of visitors throughout the summer. It has also been a summer of celebration marking the 350th anniversary of Quaker worship here, with an exhibition of Quaker Tapestry panels, illustrating the history of Friends since Quaker beginnings. This has also attracted visitors - locals, tourists and Quiet Garden members.



**One of the panels (D8) depicts the influence that Quaker botanists and plant hunters had in the development of garden plants as their discoveries were introduced into the UK by these explorers. To mark this, we are now refreshing the long herbaceous border and replanting with more of these plants. A fernery**

featuring many different varieties is also being established in a shady corner, again highlighting the plant hunters' discoveries. We look forward to welcoming more visitors to this quiet space in the future.

## NEWS FROM DEGIBNA PRAYER GARDEN

**Degibna Prayer Garden** was officially opened in July 2013; on Saturday 5th August we invited friends to celebrate the Garden's 10th Anniversary. During the week before a small team of volunteers met to tidy the garden. Much weeding and pruning was involved and the bird-feeders topped up.

**About 50 people joined us for tea**, coffee, homemade cakes and chat with a special Anniversary Cake (see photo attached) baked by one of our friends, Hazel Treloar.

**The day itself was overcast** and very windy so only a few ventured into the garden on the afternoon. Nevertheless all enjoyed the event, especially looking at the photo album which reminded us how the ground was cleared by the local Young Farmers Group, the Cornish Hedge built, the paths laid out, the lawn seeded and the flower beds planted by volunteers. **The Garden is always open** so we do not know how many have visited over the last 10 years. However as we are adjacent to a National Trust Car Park which is much used, if an average of only 10 people visited per week, that would add up to over 5,000 visits! The actual figure is probably greater.



**Andrew Hill—Degibna Prayer Garden**



### Blessing

Bless to me, O God,  
Each thing my eye sees;  
Bless to me, O God,  
Each sound mine ear hears;  
Bless to me, O God,  
Each odour that goes to my nostrils;  
Bless to me, O God,  
Each taste that goes to my lips;  
Each note that goes to my song;  
Each ray that guides my way;  
Each thing that I pursue.

Amen

Carmina Gadelica III

### Raising awareness

In our experience one of the most effective ways of raising awareness of this ministry is word of mouth. If you are aware of any opportunity in your area to tell others about the Movement we can offer advice.

We have a variety of leaflets available.

Please contact the Quiet Garden office or check out what is available on our [website](#)

### Become a Friend

Regular support through our Friends Scheme ensures the charity can maintain and develop the Movement, meaning people of all ages can discover and experience the benefits of time out in nature. Click [here](#) to join.

Nourish the simple act of lighting one purple candle and watching it glow.

That light is powerful; a beginning of something utterly astounding.

# NEWS

## AN ADVENT QUIET EVENING WITH MORAY COTTAGE QUIET GARDEN

Please join us for an online quiet evening for Advent

Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7pm

Please email [sarah@quietgarden.org](mailto:sarah@quietgarden.org) to book a place.

## SMALL PILGRIM PLACES NETWORK

We are looking forward to creating a Pilgrim Path with SPPN in Cornwall more information will be found on our website when the route has been confirmed.

## QUIET GARDENS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

We are currently in discussion with a number of churches on the IOW with an interest in working with us to open a number of gardens in church spaces

## THE FOLLOWING GARDENS WERE WELCOMED TO THE MOVEMENT

Click on each link to find out more.

[The Glebe Quiet Garden](#)

[Seatree Argyll](#)

[Marshwall](#)

[Tall Trees Retreat Space](#)

[Brookside](#)

[Hazel Cottage Quiet Garden](#)

[Treargel Retreat](#)

[Wrentham Chapel \(URC\)](#)

[BOB \(Built of Bits\)](#)

[The Quiet Garden at Dore Abbey](#)

[Quiet Spaces \(Plymouth\)](#)

Cambridge

Scotland

Shrewsbury

Worcestershire

Lancashire

Surrey

Cornwall

Suffolk

Cumbria

Hereford

Devon

## PATRONS

The Rt Revd John Pritchard | Richard Foster | Terry Hershey | The Revd Lucy Winkett | Shane Connolly | Brian Draper | Bishop Graham Usher | Professor Gillian Prance | Founder Revd Philip Roderick

## Celtic Christianity and the Ecological Crisis

**With the scale of the biodiversity and climate crisis that we are facing** it's clear that we are living in a sick time but also a time of great potential for positive change. Our belief that we are separate from nature, superior to other than human life, that nature is solely a resource for exploitation are causing us to kill the very thing that has given birth to us, that we love and depend upon, mother earth. So at heart the environmental crisis is a spiritual crisis affecting us all.

The antidote to our arrogance as homo sapiens is to relearn an old spirituality and humility that shifts us away from our anthropocentrism and reconnects us to the sacredness of the earth and other than human life with empathy and affiliation.

We need to reimagine the Christian faith and by extension secular humanism which likewise teaches the illusion of human exceptionalism. This will require effort, imagination and empathy. It's critical that we relearn to venerate nature, not just when we feel like it but all the time. So spiritual practises from our Christian tradition, other faiths and indigenous spiritualities, are going to be critical in helping us develop and grow into this new mindset.

**Drawing upon the Celtic Christian tradition** offers us one pathway into this humble, affiliative way of being with nature. Celtic Christian spirituality emphasised an awareness of the sacredness of all things. Part of the western Christian legacy, it's a tradition that has been largely forgotten and at times suppressed.

Celts believed in the essential goodness of creation and man, the original blessing and saw Christ bringing fulfilment to all of creation lifting it up to God. The artwork of the Celts is full of their exuberant celebration of creation. Their illustrated scriptures are covered with intertwining patterns of fruit and foliage, beautiful drawings of animals and birds. The Celtic cross, the circle of creation, representing the earth and the sun, surrounding the cross of redemption.

**The Celtic Christian celebration of the goodness of creation has three main roots.**

**The first was scriptural.** It's impossible to read the Old Testament and not be struck by the essential goodness and preciousness of nature in the eyes of God, "and God saw that it was good". The psalms are filled with a sense of wonder for nature. The Hebrew prophets talk of a reciprocal relationship between creation and God.

The second main theme came from the Celts pagan inheritance of druid nature mysticism. Druids (meaning oak knowers) worshipped rivers, forests and hills as the dwelling places of spirits and divinities. Celts had a deep respect for the natural world and took care to sustain it and not to unnecessarily damage it. Celts retained this reverence and respect for nature when they became Christians. Monasteries were built on the site of sacred druid groves. Wells and springs were given saints names.

**Thirdly Celtic Christians** also derived their sense of the goodness of creation from living so close to nature and having the time to study and contemplate its variety and beauty. They established monastic settlements in wild remote places, like the Skellig Islands and Glendalough. Love of nature for its own sake echoes through many of the writings of Celtic monks. The lives of the Celtic Saints paint a picture of a people deeply attached to animals and birds. Kevin of Glendalough was once engaged in a prayer vigil with his arms stretched out, when a blackbird came and laid its eggs in his outstretched hand. Kevin didn't want to disturb the bird, so he maintained his uncomfortable position for several weeks until the blackbird's little blue eggs had hatched. **St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne** emerged from the freezing North Sea after a long prayer vigil to find two otters following him onto the beach and then lying before him and licking his feet to keep them warm. Before then drying him with their fur.

**Mochua, disciple of Columba**, lived as a hermit. His only companions were a mouse, a fly and a cock. Each helped him with his work, the cock crowing at midnight to wake him for matins. The mouse nibbling his ear to wake him up in time for the first office. The fly walking along each line as he read from his psalter.

On the last day of the life of Saint Columba a white horse, that carried milk for the monastery, sensed that he was dying and put his head on the chest of the elderly Columba and “like a human being let tears fall freely on the lap of the Saint”./Underlying this love of nature was a deep sense of the sacredness of the earth itself and its closeness to humanity. The Hebrew word Adam has the same roots as the word for earth “adama”. In English the word humility comes from “humus” the Latin for soil. For Celts to be Christian was to walk humbly and to be mindful of the close ties that bind us to our mother earth.

The Celts have much to teach us today about their relationship with the rest of creation. The idea of domination taken from an erroneous interpretation of Genesis 12:8 was alien to them. They preferred Christ’s injunction.

“In as much as you have done it to the least of my brothers and sisters you have done it to me”

and they applied it to animals, insects and birds, the most vulnerable of God’s creatures. This compassion sprang from their deep belief that the natural world, just as much as the human, is charged with sparks of the divine presence and reflects the glory of the cosmic Christ.

“Understand the creation if you would wish to know the creator. For those who wish to know the great deep, must first review the natural world”. Saint Columbanus.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Century Irish scholar, John Scotus Erigena, believed every sentient being and object, was a flash of the divine. God had not only made the world but to some extent, she was the world. Not just the creator but the essence of all things. For Erigena “making” was the same as “being”. Erigena wrote:

“We ought not to understand God and the creatures as two things, distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting himself in a marvellous and ineffable manner, creates himself in creatures”.

Re embodying the Celtic Christian tradition, alongside other Christian mystics, such as Hildegard of Bingen, St Francis, Meister Eckhart and John Muir gives us hope in these turbulent times that we can reconnect to the sacredness of the earth and protect other than human life with empathy and affiliation.

**Author: Mike Mullins, Director of “Soul Rewilding”**

**Reconnecting people to the divine in nature through immersive experiences in nature.**

[www.soulrewilding.co.uk](http://www.soulrewilding.co.uk) / [mikemullins@soulrewilding.co.uk](mailto:mikemullins@soulrewilding.co.uk) .

#### Keep in touch

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#### Office contact details

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## RAMSEY QUIET GARDEN

**Ramsey Quiet Garden is still relatively new**, but we are committed to being part of the local community, as we believe that offering a quiet place for people is so important, especially as the town is growing fast with hundreds of new homes are being built.

**We have a presence on Facebook and have some regular followers.** We put up posters in the town and also have regular articles in the local free newspaper. We have had a wonderful response from local people who have donated plants, bark, a bench as well as time and money.

We try to be present at significant events e.g. the last two years we have had a stall at the Christmas Lights market. This year we were invited to have a stall at the St Thomas's (parish church) fete which is always a big event. In fact someone who picked up a leaflet subsequently came to the following two Quiet Mornings and is booked to come again. We had some lovely conversations with people and encouraged them to visit the garden. We will also had a stall at the Eco Fair on Heritage day in September. We can't monitor who goes to the garden because we aren't there all the time, but the message is getting out there. Today when I was helping at the Foodbank, a lady came into the church where it is held and asked about the Quiet Garden. She doesn't live locally, but her mother does, and she said how important it was to have quiet places.

So far we have held two public AGMs, last year at the library because the garden wasn't really ready, and this year at the garden, followed by tea and cakes. As well as putting up posters, we put flyers through the neighbours' doors. One lady, who came, said she was really pleased to be invited. There were about 20 people altogether, which was great.

**Of course, the main focus of what we do is to hold regular Quiet Mornings. Sometimes we get about 7 or 8 participants and other times only 2.**

Three of us prepare and lead the mornings, and one other lady sorts out the refreshments. We would hold the morning for ourselves, because it is so important to us. I should add that we didn't know each other before the Quiet Garden started. One regular participant commented that since she has been coming to the Quiet Mornings she feels more part of the community, and people she has met at the mornings will often say hello in the street and ask if she's going to the next one (this was totally unprompted and such an encouragement).



**It's difficult to measure 'community', but as the World Community for Christian Meditation always says 'meditation builds community' and our Quiet Mornings certainly do.**

I haven't even mentioned that Rachel, who is the Secretary of our association, and another lady who came to our 'mosaic' day last August, now meet regularly to do mosaics together and have become good friends. There is probably some sort of 'ecology' going on but I am not quite sure how to express it.

I had better stop now, because this is becoming an essay! Just writing this has given me such joy.

**Eilish Storey | Ramsey Quiet Garden**

<https://quietgarden.org/gardens/ramsey-quiet-garden/>