

Meeting for A Day with Owen Barfield

In 1981 when my wife left for 10 months to go East to obtain a second degree, I stayed home and paid the mortgage and read all the works of Owen Barfield. It was a wonderful immersion.

Barfield – a lawyer until age 50, then a career as a brilliant poet, writer, and original thinker was a joy to explore through his writings. He engaged with C. S. Lewis in “The Great War.” He was instrumental in Lewis’s conversion. He was the longest living [Inkling](#). Barfield was a lifelong [Anthroposophist](#). Barfield - fully engaged - lived to be 100.

After reading all his works I wrote him a letter and asked if me and my wife could come to England and meet him. He responded in the affirmative. On the appointed day we took the train about an hour out of London. We walked 15 minutes or so from the train station to his home.

He greeted us about 1pm and served us tea as we sat in his living room with a coal fire. He smoked his pipe. Ashes fell from his pipe and some seemed to burn small holes in his old sweater as he was lost in thought.

After brief introductions he asked; "Who in America is writing anything of interest?" My wife, being a voracious reader as well as a humanities major with a law degree focused on Constitutional law, was able to respond. Barfield was pleased. She had not read Barfield or much of Steiner. As the conversation beautifully and slowly moved along with deep listening by all, my wife asked Owen this question, "If this guy Steiner is such a big deal why has no one heard of him?" Owen seemed to pause for 5 minutes. The question lingered as smoke rose from his pipe and ashes fell. He then responded; "If the world heard of and took in Rudolf Steiner they would have to rewrite all the text books."

Quite an answer. Yes - true.

He asked which was my favorite of all his books. I said for sure "Unancestral Voice." He said it was his favorite too. I pulled out my copy and he signed it.

We then got in his car and drove to town as we had asked before coming if we could take him to dinner. He took us to a non-descript Chinese restaurant. Food just fine. He ordered dessert. A banana split of soft serve ice cream with strawberries, chocolate and pineapple on each of the 3 mounds of ice cream with a banana cut down the middle on each side

of the blue plastic serving bowl. Mr. Barfield was quite a thin man and seemed to enjoy his dessert. We had a warm parting and then back on the train to London.

Thereafter, I assisted in sending other American friends to meet Owen. I also followed with great interest the published letters between Owen and Saul Bellow. This correspondence over the years had an influence on Bellow's book "Humboldt's Gift." It was most fascinating to me that both men - Owen and Saul - Saul influenced by Owen used the "I AM and More Brilliant Than The Sun" meditations as described by Steiner in "Guidance in Esoteric Training." I too had been working with those meditations for many years.

Meeting Owen and experiencing his gentle, brilliant, insightful Spirit has been a great life Gift. Grateful!