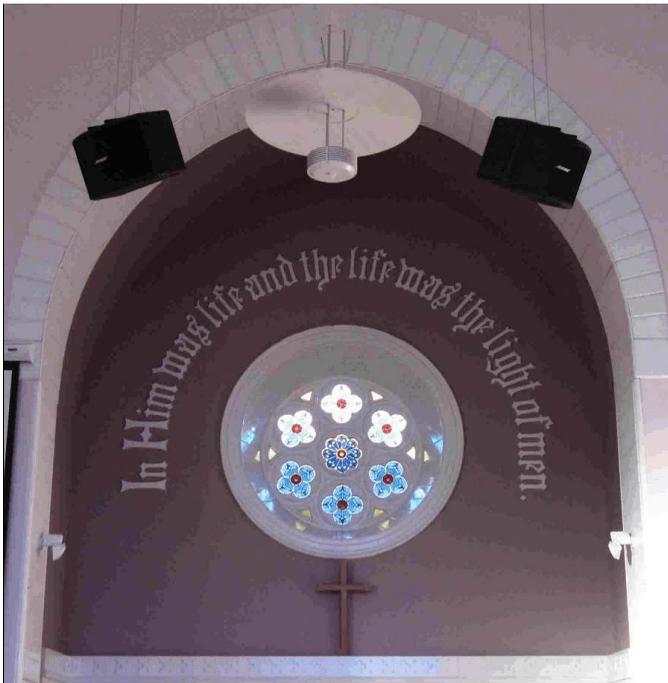




February  
2014

# Scottish Friend



Window in Aberdeen Baptist church -  
the location of last General Meeting

MP

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Please send material for next Scottish Friend by 2 May to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or [nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk).

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website and can be emailed to you at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email [scotfriends@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriends@gmail.com), to let Bronwen Currie know. You are strongly encouraged to do this, in view of escalating postage costs - and of course you get the photographs in colour, as an incentive!

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain or elsewhere.

Published by Quakers in Scotland, 01496 850 006  
quakerscotland.org.uk (British website: quaker.org.uk)  
Printed on recycled paper by  
Print Force, Milngavie, 0141 956 1052 

## Across the sea to Ireland Yearly Meeting 24-28 July 2013

John Melling

Ireland Yearly Meeting gathered in Cork for the first time in 350 years of Irish Quaker history. The Yearly Meeting invites BYM to send two representatives, one from Scotland and one from England, thus respecting differing cultural relationships. Around 150 adult and younger Friends were present. There were representatives from four main Irish churches. All were made welcome. We were to have three and a half concentrated days with fellowship spliced between Quaker business. The theme was "Living in the Spirit".

Irish Quaker membership is twice that of Friends in Scotland. It spans the christocentric to the liberal; the evangelical to the contemplative. Its membership includes Quaker families some of whom are in business. Several southern meetings have a significant number of former Roman Catholics. Irish Quakerism lives within two jurisdictions, the north and the republic.

We were reminded in worship to live the gospel, but only to use words if necessary. Each day opened with bible study and worship sharing. Each morning session opened with a "Thought for the day". Sessions included Ministry and Oversight; Peace (both the possible misuse of Shannon Airport for rendition flights, and Quaker influence during the commemorations covering the First World War and Irish independence); and Quaker faith in action in Ireland, Europe and the World. Reports from the Friends' World Conference in Kenya, and Financial Resources. I felt that Friends present owned the workings of their Yearly Meeting.

The Annual Public Lecture was given by Swedish Friend Julia Ryberg. She talked through her faith journey from being forlorn in her twenties, into listening experiences, and on to reclaiming her Christian roots and a fuller understanding of Quakerism. She drew

on Swedish Quakers including Emilia Fogelklou who in 1921 wrote "Poor Jesus, if we would only worship him a little less, and listen to him a little more".

This Yearly Meeting had inspiration, focus and cohesion. I was impressed that:-

- \* the breadth of the agenda was well covered;
- \* the Yearly Meeting is big enough to act, yet small enough to be owned by its membership;
- \* both history and two jurisdictions assist Irish understanding of the world;
- \* the Yearly Meeting has a wide range of committed Quaker Life and Practice.

**Faslane 2014**

**Alison Burnley**

**Meetings for Worship for Witness for Peace**

Sunday 9 March

Saturday 12 April -

with Scottish Churches against Nuclear Armaments

Sunday 11 May

Sunday 8 June

Sunday 28 September

Sunday 9 November

I would remind you that you need weatherproof clothing, something to sit on, and something to eat afterwards. As ever we hope to leave south Edinburgh at 8-30 am, in order to have a stop in Helensburgh for comfort and sustenance! And still get to the North Gate for 11-00 am.

## QUAKER LIFE AND PRACTICE - (Formerly Christian Experience) - Review by Roger H. Quinn

In his article in Friends' Quarterly (Issue 1 2013) Ross Chapman, an Ulster Friend, describes the long and often painful gestation period of this book, the latest edition of Christian discipline as practised by Friends within Ireland yearly Meeting.

This week with its spectrum of rainbow colours on its cover, is a celebration of the wide diversity of thought among Irish Friends today.

Here is a cornucopia of distilled Christian Quaker wisdom from the past to the present day. It embraces contributions from "all continents and islands" where Friends met in worship. Read the Christian ministry of the doyen of Irish Quakers Victor Bewley; add to that the shrewd observations of C Winifred Lamb together with many other ministries of great weight; and you have a book that deserves to be on the table of every Meeting for Worship.

Word cannot do justice to express the gratitude one feels towards the Review Committee, whose work over the fourteen-year period from conception to birth made what was "humanly impossible" divinely possible.



## Wool Against Weapons

Jane Lewis - South Edinburgh

Dear knitting and crocheting Friends,

We hope that Quakers in Scotland would like to be involved in creating a Scottish section of the Wool against Weapons scarf that will stretch 7 miles on 16th August 2014 between the Women's Peace Camp at Aldermaston and Burghfield (the other Nuclear Weapons Establishment site) in Berkshire?

The idea is that individuals knit or crochet a scarf (100cm long and 60cm wide) in pink wool on large needles, any design. You don't need to be a fantastic knitter, you just need to cast on and get started. And if you've never knitted or crocheted, well, maybe this is a good incentive to learn the basics! There's loads more information on the website <http://www.woolagainstweapons.co.uk/> and some inspiring pictures of scarves that have been knitted.

Many of us in Scotland have started already, and if we each encourage others to take part and sew all of our scarves together we could create a Scottish length that could stretch part of the way down the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. This would be an excellent way of attracting publicity to the issue of Trident and keeping it on the agenda during the independence debate.

To give you an idea of what is possible, some areas, such as Knighton in Wales, have set themselves a target length to knit as a community <http://actionawe.org/town-criers-pass-the-knitters-in-knighton/>  
<http://actionawe.org/knitting-for-nuclear-disarmament-at-the-clock-tower-in-knighton/>  
<http://actionawe.org/bomb-protest-group-needs-help-to-knit-peaceful-future/>

They are aiming to knit 120 pieces to stretch the 120 yards from the clock tower to the cenotaph and will as a group take it next August

to lay it as their bit towards the whole scarf. The rolls of scarf will then go back to the groups who bring and lay them out, be washed and made up into blankets to give to local hospices and to send out to emergencies/refugees etc. So nothing will be wasted.

So the first step for a Scottish length might be to organise and publicise a knit-in in your local area - this might be at your meeting house, local peace centre, community centre, library, market or in your own home. You could then set yourselves a target length as a group, and aim to recruit more knitters to help you reach that target. And as the weather warms up next spring we can meet up periodically for some very public knit-ins in Edinburgh and other town and city centres to attract media attention.

If you are up for taking part please give me your contact details so I can make sure that we keep in touch as the knitting grows and join the 'wool against weapons scotland' facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/woolagainstaweaponsscotland/>.

Happy Knitting!



## **Quaker Public Spending Survey at Wigtown Book Festival 2013**

Ian Macdonald

During the annual Book Festival this autumn at Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town, our Local Quaker Meeting took a table at an outdoor market on two Saturdays. Our display was used to offer visitors information about the Religious Society of Friends during Quaker Outreach Week.

As a talking point and a bit of serious fun, we set up 7 clear large

plastic bottles and offered onlookers to place 1p coins in the bottles as if they themselves were the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Each coin represented £50M. Participants had 10 coins (£500M) but only 7 bottles to choose from. The choice of spending was entirely of free will. The idea was to measure just how the general public feel about government expenditure. One of the bottles was labelled ARMS TRADE SUBSIDY which we highlighted as a concern to many Quakers and others as distinct from NATIONAL DEFENCE.

Participants ranged from very young children to senior citizens. The 7 bottles were labelled Healthcare, Education, Housing, Energy, Transport, Defence, and Arms Trade Subsidy.

Over the two Saturdays the results of where they wished spending to be done was:-

Healthcare 27%

Education 25%

Housing 18%

Energy 12%

Transport 10%

Defence 6%

Arms Trade Subsidy 2%

We trust politicians both local and national might take notice of our visitors priorities on public spending. Many participants commented on how politicians and decision makers rarely ask us how our taxes should be used. The feeling generally was, that politicians just did their own thing with little consultation of the citizens who elect them.

Thank you all who took part in the banter and survey; it was great fun

P.S. We told our visitors that we hoped to interest the local press and book festival sponsors, the Daily Telegraph, and that they might publish our findings.

## Palestinian Students at St Andrews

Jill Marshall

The University of St Andrews agreed to waive the tuition fees for two Palestinian postgraduate students each year to study a one-year taught Masters course. But of course tuition fees are not the only expense students have to meet so the waiver was the start of a chain reaction to take advantage of this commitment.

St Andrews Education for Palestinian Students was formed in 2011 as a charitable trust with seven voluntary trustees (three of whom are Quakers) to meet these other costs that cover travel from and return to Palestine, accommodation and a maintenance payment each month to support the students.

A young man from Jenin refugee camp was our first student in 2012/13. He studied "Peace and Conflict Studies" at the International Relations Department, attending his graduation ceremony last year in the Younger Hall.

Our second student in 2013/14 is Saba Albess from Ramallah and she also is attending the International Relations Department. I am including Saba's unedited impressions of the many facets of her life during her first 4 months in St Andrews.

STEPS regenerates Hope in the Holy Land

I have been taught that once we lose hope, we lose everything we own and everything we are. This is why I fought hard to always keep the hope!

Education to me is essential. Ever since I graduated high school, I wanted to major in International Relations. However, this specific programme was not available at Birzeit University where I completed my undergraduate degree. Therefore, immediately after graduation, I started looking for a scholarship, which would allow me to pursue my higher studies in the field that I like. Three years later, STEPS

gave me a wonderful chance of joining a master's programme at one of Scotland's finest universities, the University of St Andrews.

I have only been in St Andrews for 4 months yet, but this experience has taught me a great deal already. I have matured in different ways. I am currently completing a master's degree in Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asian Security Studies. This chance allowed me to study with great professors and experts in their fields. Not only have I learned a lot about those regions, but luckily I had the chance to meet and make friends with amazing people from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as Bosnia, Greece, Germany, Brazil, Sweden and many other countries. Sharing my culture with my friends, and learning about other cultures made me realize that no matter how different we think we are, we are very similar in so many ways. My Brazilian friend is a clear example! We are both loud... we both enjoy Mexican soap operas, and we love rice and cakes so we have invented our own special cuisine, a "Palestrazian" cuisine!

Due to physical restrictions back home, manifest in checkpoints and walls, we Palestinians, sometimes create our own mental checkpoints, which further restrict our lives. Living in fascinating Alba helped me break free from those mental checkpoints and indulge in new experiences that varied from surfing to Céilidh! I would not have done this without STEPS.

I continue to hope that the same opportunity granted to me this year will be given to another person next year so that hope returns to the Holy Land year after year with each one of us, the STEP-erS! The disappointment felt by trustees is that we have so far only been able to offer a scholarship to one student each year as it is necessary to have sufficient funding amounting to £10,000 to fulfill our support commitments for each student. It would be a really satisfying achievement if we were in a position to bring **two** qualified

students to take advantage of the university tuition fee waiver.

For further information about STEPS visit [www.stepspalestine.org.uk](http://www.stepspalestine.org.uk) where you will also find provision to contribute either as a monthly commitment or as a donation, with gift aid if possible or, if you prefer to donate a cheque; please post to STEPS, c/o St Andrews Meeting House, 2 Howard Place, St Andrews, KY16 9HL. St Andrews Meeting has been and continues to be very supportive not only by donating special collections, one of which was at the 50th year celebration of the Meeting last September, but as individuals and also providing a venue for STEPS trustee meetings.

Our aim is to try and meet our goal for 2 Palestinian students to come to St Andrews.



## **Updating the 2013 Book of Members and Attenders**

**Bronwen Currie**

Another year past, and so many Friends have moved house, changed their email addresses, changed their names, added mobile numbers....

So - a list of amendments to the 2013 blue book is now ready, together with an updated list of GM and AM dates and postholders for 2014. Electronic copies have already been sent to LM correspondents in the hope that they will be able to make these available to you, but if you can't get hold of these documents that way, contact me on [scotfriends@gmail.com](mailto:scotfriends@gmail.com) or 01496 850006 before 21 March and I will send you the information in whatever way (electronic or paper) is most convenient for you.

Another round of updates will of course take place towards the end of the year - very little ever stays the same where Friends are concerned! - and a complete new book will be published early in 2015.

## **The Administrator's Sabbatical.....**

**Bronwen Currie**

General Meeting Trustees have been kind and supportive enough to give me, your GM Administrator, three months away from my desk and the email later this year. For a very good reason, the details of which follow below, I shall be absent from the beginning of April until the beginning of July. This is a time of year when there are only a small number of essential tasks to be done, and these will be taken care of by other kind and willing Friends (so you will still get your May issue of Scottish Friend!). If you contact the scotfriends@gmail.com address during this period you will get an out-of-office message suggesting who might be the best person to deal with your query. And if you didn't have a query but were just sending me information that's fine; it will sit in my inbox and I will deal with it when I return.

..... in the occupied Palestinian territories

Meanwhile, I am delighted to have been selected to serve as an Ecumenical Accompanier. I am not the first Scottish Quaker to have done this, and I'm sure I won't be the last, but in case you don't know what this entails, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel is a World Council of Churches initiative which has been operating since 2002, sending international teams to live alongside Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank. Whilst there EAs monitor and report on human rights abuses, support local communities and accompany people in the ordinary tasks of life such as tending crops and going to school. These things sound ordinary -

but when you are being threatened and intimidated by Israeli settlers, or face having your schoolbag searched by armed soldiers, they are not. EAs also support and work with both Israeli and Palestinian peace and civil rights groups, meet with delegations of international visitors and politicians, and advocate for a just peace based on international law.

I will welcome your upholding and support Friends - this venture feels to me to be very much a part of my witness as a Quaker - and if you would like to know what I and the other team members are up to you can follow the EAPPI blog at <http://blog.eappi.org/> or, if you email me on [bron.currie@gmail.com](mailto:bron.currie@gmail.com), I will email my reports (probably only about 500 words every couple of weeks or so) to you. And of course, I would love to come and speak to your Meeting, or to any other group with which you are associated on my return. If you would like me to come and give a presentation later this year or early next year, please do contact me on [bron.currie@gmail.com](mailto:bron.currie@gmail.com) or on 01496 850 006



Cactus flowers

SP

## BOOK REVIEW -

**Five Rivers to Cross**

**Michael Gilderdale 2012**

The history of the Friends Ambulance Unit and its service to refugees and civilians after both world wars are generally remembered only in broad outline today. Michael Gilderdale's new book is a riveting account of the detail of one man's experience in the FAU, and helps us to build up an understanding of what it was really like at the time. Michael, now a member of St. Andrews Meeting, was at the age of 22 part of an FAU convoy which travelled into occupied Europe on the front line with the British Army providing assistance and medical help to civilians and refugees as the army advanced in 1945.

During that period, as the convoy moved through a Europe shattered by Nazi occupation and years of war, Michael kept a diary, written on flimsy paper often late at night by candlelight, recording his observations. After returning home, his diary became lost. However in late 2012 Michael was contacted through the Society of Authors to be told that a diary bearing his name had turned up in a dusty attic and could it be his? Indeed it was, and he was sent over 50 diary pages written in spidery hand on thin paper narrating his journey from Birmingham in December 1944 to Hamburg in June 1945. This book is the transcript of that diary. It is a personal day-by-day account of a unique cooperation between men at war and men of peace.

" We worked together in friendship among the injured, lost and enslaved people of many nationalities and then helped them back to their homelands."

The account has a vividness and immediacy that is absent from many historical narratives. It draws the reader in and is written with such intensity that it is difficult to put down.

In one village in Holland, Michael was billeted with a Dutch family. He explained that the FAU would assist anyone in need, even Germans. This was received badly by the family. He comments "Our friends have seen too much and lived through a world which was not meant for children. The mark will always be there and it is this which shows the full shame and pity of war. War has bred hate in the hearts of these gentle peace-loving people. How can this hate be combated?"

Michael's unit worked close to the front line and was responsible for the reception and care of refugees.

An entry in January 1945 reads "After breakfast the first of 500 refugees arrived. Chaos. Many were exhausted; all were hungry and cold. They were dispatched and next day another 100 came in, many injured"

One day he helped a mother and father look for their six children. He took them in his ambulance on a perilous journey through a deserted village and onto a track where they proceeded on foot into a forest. He entered the farmhouse. In the kitchen he found a horde of tiny children and one or two grown ups. "One fellow in a blue overcoat stepped forward and gripped my hand and a woman turned from us in floods of tears."

On March 19<sup>th</sup> in Kevelaer, Holland

"We find the Quakers are highly esteemed here. The townsfolk have not forgotten the good work done by them after the First World War. We are immensely grateful and hope we can live up to the high standard they set over 20 years ago. A Major in the detachment also seems thankful that we are a Quaker organisation. He seemed proud to have us with him."

In April they received 100 refugees just released from a concentration camp. Their cheek bones were sunken and hollow.

They were white, incredibly thin and weak. Some had to be lifted into the wagons. They were barely alive.

In May, driving towards Hamburg, the ambulance group had to pull off the road to allow a small convoy of official cars to speed past in the opposite direction. Michael learned later that this carried officers of the German High Command on their way to meet Montgomery to sign documents of surrender.

This slim book brings the extraordinary work of the FAU teams into vibrant life, with graphic description of the human experience, the personal encounters with other volunteers, local workers, soldiers and refugees, and Michael's thoughtful reflections.

It can be obtained from Michael Gilderdale, Brae Cottage, Earlsferry, Elie KY9 1AN, [gilderdale@earlsferry07.plus.com](mailto:gilderdale@earlsferry07.plus.com) at a cost of £5.

Robin Waterston



**Relationships, Trust and Balance.  
Report on Meeting for Sufferings  
held on 1st February 2014**

**Jane Pearn**

This was a thoughtful, reflective meeting in which we took our time over matters that seemed to require it. Three themes - relationships, trust and balance - seemed to me to converge: relationships between meetings, committees and individual Friends; and between our young people and their Yearly Meeting; and the balance between trust and accountability.

We considered and approved a new policy on Speaking Out. This updates paragraph 3.27 in Quaker Faith & Practice, and guidance last issued in 2006. It includes the use of social media as well as formal public statements. I was reassured that this was not a response to actions or statements which have caused embarrassment or difficulty. It is intended to be a positive step including new forms of public witness, to enable Friends to speak out with a confident Quaker voice. As a policy it applies to our staff and Friends serving on central committees, but there is helpful guidance in it for us all. There are plans to produce a shortened checklist for meetings and individual Friends.

The experiment last year of inviting children and young people to work alongside us for a day was considered a success, and there are plans to make it a regular annual event for 14 -18 year olds. Some ministry questioned whether it might be patronising to young people to invite them only once a year to make this kind of contribution. We heard that it is not just about contributing, but about ownership and feeling a sense of belonging. The young people's reports suggested that this had been an important experience and that they had felt welcomed and respected. It could be especially valuable for isolated young Friends. However, several contributions expressed disquiet at

the extra demands this might place on representatives and asked whether a requirement to take on the role of 'responsible adult' might reduce the pool of available, suitable Friends. This could make the task of nominations committees even more difficult. The principle was agreed to, but Quaker Life was asked to think again about the practicalities.

As is often the case in response to the Trustees' report, issues of relationships and trust arose. Some Friends again voiced their disquiet with the extra name of 'The Light' being used to attract users to the Large Meeting House (the latter is still the name that we as Friends will use). We were reminded that we as a body only use the room for 8 days in 3 years; that the hospitality board meets and discerns in the spirit, like any Quaker group; and that they regularly review their decisions.

Lizzie Rosewood, Vibrancy in Meetings Programme Developer, summarised possible responses to feedback she has received. She has been asked to take forward some possibilities, including the idea of regional workers and/or a telephone helpline to support meetings.

Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary Engagement Officer based at Friends House, gave a lively account of her first few months in post. She sees her role as partly responsive and partly proactive. She is keen to tap into the expertise and experience of Friends, and hopes we will contact her. She broke down her time into:  
40% looking at legislation, e.g. the Lobbying Bill  
40% speaking to friends e.g. arranging workshops for Young Friends  
20% work with other churches and campaign groups.

Chris Skidmore, Yearly Meeting Clerk, gave us a flavour of Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath, in which worship will be an integral part, with opportunities to 'go deeper' in smaller groups. There are no big decisions anticipated, but as we draw to a close our three year consideration of 'what it means to be a Quaker today', we may start to consider 'living out our faith in the world'. Materials for spiritual preparation will be sent out in March.

## JOHN WIGHAM (ENJOYMENT) TRUST

For many years we have been in the happy situation of having a modest legacy to disburse. John Wigham directed that grants should be made "to 'deserving persons resident in Scotland who owing to straitened circumstances are unable to enjoy the usual pleasures of life, the purpose of such grants being to provide the recipients with some additional comfort or pleasure of an exceptional nature over and above the usual necessities of life".

Funds have been distributed over the past nine years. The money now in hand is likely to run out during 2014 unless further donations are forthcoming.

We welcome applications from Quakers and non-Quakers resident anywhere in Scotland, for grants large or small. £500 will normally be the maximum. Applicants may obtain an application form and further information from :

Sylvia Massey, John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, 22 Bruntsfield Gardens, Edinburgh, EH10 4EA . Phone number 0131 229 4238  
Email: [sylviamassey293@btinternet.com](mailto:sylviamassey293@btinternet.com)

The completed form should be passed to a Quaker of long standing who is well known to their meeting, who will countersign it and forward it to the address above, to arrive by March 31st or September 30th. Applicants will normally hear the results of their application within 8 weeks of these deadlines.

## **Scottish CND appeal for support from organisations**

### **Scotland's Spring Walk for Peace - 1-7 April 2014**

A nuclear-free Scotland is possible!

In April next year, Scottish CND is planning to walk from the Scottish Parliament to the nuclear submarine base at Faslane. The week-long walk will include a send-off rally at the Scottish Parliament (1 April 2014), a March and Rally in Glasgow (Sat 5 April 2014) and meetings and discussions with communities and their elected representatives across central Scotland. We believe that the theme, 'Cut Trident - not jobs and services', will chime with the aspirations of millions of people in Scotland.

Repeated opinion polls have shown the great majority of Scottish people oppose these weapons as well as the majority of Scottish MPs, MSPs, churches and trade unions.

We, therefore, ask if your organisation would become a named supporting organisation for the walk and if you would be able to help publicising the events when the time comes.

If you want more information please visit [www.springwalk.org](http://www.springwalk.org) (under construction). We would like to list your support on our website and, where possible, list your name on other publicity materials. There will be some openings for representatives to speak at local meetings along the route.

In addition, we would really appreciate if you could inform and encourage your members and supporters to join this initiative.

We look forward to hearing from you.

## Report on General Meeting for Scotland

17<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013

"Grass roots movements involve planting seeds. Those seeds are our own Faithful Lives" - Jane Pearn in her report on Meeting for Sufferings.

This sentiment ran through G.M. for me.

Our Trustees are working on our proposed Advocacy post. Phil Lucas on behalf of our Parliamentary Function Group talked us through the next steps in this discernment process. Area Meetings are asked to invite the Parliamentary Function to meet with them, in the near future, to explore the proposed role of Scottish Advocate. This person's role would be to liaise with the Scottish parliament on our behalf. There needs to be discussion on the finance for this post and trustees feel this discussion is best done at A.Ms. The parliamentary Function Group is in close contact with Friends House about this, both in relation to finance and to ensure there is a good link between any liaising going on with Westminster and of that in Scotland. We heard of more work being done by this group in regard to Trident, assisted suicide and discussions with Roseanne Cunningham on protecting those affected by the Bedroom Tax from eviction. They have also designed an Advices and Queries to help prompt discussion around the Independence Referendum.

We accepted the budget including some changes to our regular donations. Our Trustees have been asked to look at our mileage claim rate which is currently 25p per mile.

Christine Davis reported on the challenging yet rewarding work she has been involved in on the ACTS Faith Studies Network. ACTS are reviewing their structures due to a need to focus their available

resources. Stephen Smyth, General Secretary of ACTS, thanked Quakers for their involvement in ACTS.

After the morning business we spent the afternoon considering Economic Justice. First we heard from Val Brown the Church manager for Christian Aid Scotland. Her presentation involved a short well informed introduction, a clear and moving DVD, group discussions and further input which was highly relevant. The main part of their work which we focused on was the need to change the way multinational companies behave in relation to the tax they pay. We spent time considering all angles of this. We were shocked by some of the figures and the reality for the developing nations struggling to deal with the way international companies don't declare profits in a transparent way. Christian Aid wants to change this and spends a lot of time lobbying governments around the world. There was so much interesting material, both in terms of various countries and how C.A. is dealing with it. I urge you to find out more.

Next we were moved by Kate Green from Wanstead Meeting. She began the Fair Penny on line petition after responding to a concern laid upon her. The petition states "I would pay an extra penny per pound in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from austerity cuts" Kate is clear that this is not about charity but a statement to government that there are people who care and would support a tax rise if the money went to help the worse off. Her passion for this brought me right back to the above opening quote. Please sign the petition (you don't have to be a tax payer to do so) and spread the word.

Next we heard from Suzanne Ismail of Quaker Peace and Social Witness. We heard of her work on the Economics, Sustainability and Peace sub committee. This work is anchored in Minutes 36 and 23 of BYM in 2011. We worked in small groups to answer some questions the answers of which surprised many of us. For example;

1. What proportion of the UK population believes that "large numbers falsely claim benefits"?

We all guessed from between 40- 60 % ... Well the answer is over 80%. Actually less than 1% of claimants do so falsely.

2. What proportion believes that benefits are too high?

We guessed about 30%. True answer is over 50%.

3. What proportion says that the poor could cope if they managed their money correctly?

We guessed about 30%. Real answer is over 60%.

We guessed about how the popular press and wordings of politicians effect these perceptions.

On Sunday and in the light of the main topic of the weekend there was a timely report from Bob Williamson, a trustee of the Quaker Housing Trust, describing projects in Scotland which have been given support by the Trust. They are Durness Development Group, turning a former council house into affordable homes for local young couples and families, and Helmsdale Community Association, building two bungalows and two family houses for the community with a third project is under consideration. QHA, whilst being an independent trust, was set up in 1967 arising from a BYM decision which brought together the twin concerns: the lack of affordable homes for rent and the right use of our money. QHT works in conjunction with Triodos bank and it gives a mechanism for Quakers to channel money into a savings account which specifically helps social housing projects.

Finally the GM took time to consider how best to use the time in March for a discussion on the Independence referendum. It was agreed to aim for an innovative and creative session. The value of giving ourselves opportunity to reflect together on what kind of Scotland we would like to live in was emphasised and the importance in discerning what questions to ask as we seek, individually, to discern how to vote.

September 18 is only a few months away. On that date each of us over 16 in Scotland will have the right and responsibility to vote in a referendum on our future: will this be in a continuing United Kingdom, or as an independent state? So at General Meeting in March we will be considering what we feel about this, and whether there is a particular Friendly perspective on the future.

One of the challenges in this debate and decision is where to begin. Here's a quick summary of the political status quo:

- we live in a unitary state made up of three legal entities: in order of size - England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland. We have one Head of State.
- we have a unified financial and fiscal [tax and benefit] system for the legal entities.
- all of us, as the United Kingdom, are one member of
  1. the United Nations, where we are a Permanent Member of the Security Council
  2. the Commonwealth, where most members also recognise our Head of State
  3. the European Union
  4. the Council of Europe
  5. the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
  6. the G8 and similar groupings.
- internal devolution in the UK has given some powers to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies, and the Assembly for London, while powers of traditional Local Authorities have diminished.

Any change in the status of Scotland would involve changes in these arrangements or negotiations about them. However, negotiations cannot take place before a commitment to the destination of change. The decision of principle has to come first

All these elements of the status quo are discussed, often at considerable length, in the manifesto from the YES campaign Scotland's Future; and all are defended by the Better Together or NO campaign. And yet the discussion is not just about issues which can be coolly debated - it is about who we think we are, and how we go about making decisions; it is emotional as well as rational and logical. As one Friend recently wrote to me: 'I myself feel strongly Scottish, British, European and World. Strangely, UK as such doesn't seem to be there.' In GM we will spend some time looking at the way we are all tugged this way and that by our different and multiple identities and loyalties.

Much of our decision in September will be based on our level of trust of the various political actors in a complex scenario. We may be saying 'No radical change; but accept the modifications in the pipeline [the Scotland Act 2012 is not yet fully implemented] and careful as we go' or we may say 'Time for a change and assumption of responsibility closer to home, even if this means venturing into unknown territory'. Whichever, those of us who are Friends will take our Quaker values into the future with us, and will want to see simplicity, truth, equality and peace built into the way politics and decision making is carried on in Scotland and/or in the UK. Some of us will inevitably find ourselves in the minority group in the vote. Conducting ourselves well, whatever the outcome, to achieve a reconciled state will be a particular responsibility.

These Friendly reflections do not remove us from the need to consider some of the particular issues being debated.

Here are a few of the questions:

- After 307 years of the Union, where do you think it is broken and requires major alteration? This assumes that a YES vote might return Scotland to the position of an independent state with a sovereign parliament but a shared monarchy with the remainder of

the UK [rUK] where a NO vote might still permit alterations within the balance of the UK, but might also 'freeze' the current position.

- Identity and international status are often quoted as factors in the choice of independence or union. The UK is currently one of five permanent members of UN, and a member of the G8. Scotland would not be [and rUK might face interesting questions]. Does this matter to you? Better Together puts considerable stress on the UK's international standing. The YES group is more willing to accept a Scandinavian-style world profile.

- What are the economic questions we need to consider about independence or integration? We currently live in a monetary union, with a fully integrated economy. What would have to be reconstructed were Scotland to become independent? Economic and fiscal questions loom large in the campaign because this is where the UK is currently most closely integrated.

Here are some more:

- There are currency issues around either retention of the £Sterling or becoming part of the €zone. If an independent Scotland were to remain in the sterling area, what influence would it exercise over such things as the setting of interest rates, availability of credit, relative value of sterling to other currencies etc? Similarly, if in the Eurozone, what influence would it have?

- Currently we share schemes of social protection and care in a group of 60 million people. Could we sustain a similar level of support and protection systems with an ageing population base of 5 million?

And there are many other matters of interest to us:

- What about defence policy, the position of the nuclear arsenal on the Clyde, and NATO membership?

- What about membership of the EU?

- Would an independent Scotland be more welcoming to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants than the UK is at present? Might there be a 'border issue' here?

•What are the issues we are all overlooking? The environment and climate change; the constitution and monarchy [is this the republican opportunity]; culture and the arts; travel and border issues; dual citizenship [both ways]?

Whatever the outcome, we will still be Friends; we will still belong to Britain Yearly Meeting, though it may have to relate to different jurisdictions as Ireland YM does today, and our values will remain a strong element of our communal life. We will also remain part of our local communities, their joys and sorrows, campaigns and activities. And we need to be hopeful and positive to face the challenges, whatever they are, that the years ahead will doubtless bring.

And so, be of good faith, and valiant for the Truth.

George Fox, 1663 [QFP 20.23]

## General Meeting for Scotland

General Meeting will be held on 8 March 2014 at  
11-00 in Glasgow Friends' Meeting House,  
38 Elmbank Crescent, G2 4PS  
(Opposite the multi-storey car park)

Tea and coffee will be available at 10-00  
You should bring your own lunch, but soup and  
bread will be served at lunch time, and there will  
be refreshments after the meeting, at 4-00.

## **General Meeting for Scotland**

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

We plan to use the main afternoon session at *General Meeting* to help Friends focus on the question of possible independence for Scotland which is the subject of the referendum in September. We recognise that there will be a variety of views amongst Friends. This is not an attempt to arrive at a common view - rather it will be a sharing of ideas, thoughts and concerns that will hopefully broaden our understanding of the issues involved and assist us better to appreciate the different positions which individual Friends may take.

To help Friends prepare for *General Meeting*, Christine Davis has written an article appearing elsewhere in this issue of the *Scottish Friend* which outlines some of the aspects of possible independence which Friends may wish to think about. Contrary to our usual practice, there will be no speaker for the afternoon session. Instead, after a brief introduction, we will divide into groups, initially to undertake an exercise exploring our multiple identities - within family, social groups, locality, nationality and wider. After a period of sharing, we will move into a more general sharing of the aspects of possible independence that concern Friends or on which they feel insufficiently informed.

In the morning, we will deal with various items of ongoing business, reports etc. I anticipate that many Friends will wish to attend this meeting in view of the importance of the question which we will all face in September and I urge you to come.

Martin Burnell, Clerk.