

TAYSIDE QUAKER

Vol 40 No 4 October 2016



The interior of Brigflatts Quaker Meeting House
(*Photo Enid Harding*)

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Closing date for the next edition is Saturday, 21 January 2017

Please send copy to the editor, Felicity Bryers

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East Scotland Area Meeting

Scottish charity number SC0020698

All opinions in Tayside Quaker are those of the individual writers and not necessarily of The Religious Society of Friends.

The water's lovely



The Water's Lovely 9/55

I first attended a Quaker Meeting nearly thirty years ago (admittedly I was about five at the time!). For the last ten or so, I have been thinking rather inconclusively about applying for Membership - I always thought it was something I would do one day, but that day never seemed to arrive, as I kept putting it off. This was mainly because I was worried about 'The Visit' - I thought I would never seem good enough to be accepted as a Member, that the Visit would be a terrifying experience, rather like a job interview or exam, at which I would not be able to answer the questions satisfactorily.

Earlier this year, something changed. I decided (or it could be interpreted as being a divine nudge) to take the plunge and attempt to join both the Quakers and the Franciscan Third Order. I think in pictures a lot, and the picture here is the image that came to me symbolising this decisive moment.

I had my Visit recently, and it was much less fearsome than I had previously expected. Making a fish curry for my Visitors certainly helped! On Saturday 8th October, I hope to be received as a Postulant in the Third Order. The water is indeed lovely...

Rebecca Howard

East Scotland Area Meeting, November 2016

Dear Friends,

The next Area Meeting will take place in Dundee on Saturday 5 November, at 11 am with refreshments available from 10.30 am. All are welcome. The venue is 30 Whitehall St, Dundee, which is just round the corner from the Meeting House. It has the advantage of having a lift and so being fully accessible. Soup will be provided at lunchtime, but please bring your own sandwiches to supplement this.

As well as a number of membership items, we will have reports of events, including the recent Quaker Prison Chaplains conference. We will consider the merits or otherwise of moving to just three meetings of Area Meeting instead of four. And we will reflect together on topics that we might wish to include for afternoon sessions in 2017. Please think about this in advance.

Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? (*Advices & Queries 30*)

Barbara Davey, Meri Goad and Alice Curteis all attended April's Quaker Life Representative Council when the theme was 'Quaker Explorations of Dying and Death'. In our afternoon session they will lead Friends in some gentle reflections on this theme of love and loss.

Please come, and do encourage others who may not be regular participants at Area Meeting. It is a good opportunity to meet Quakers from other parts of our area. Attenders are very welcome, but it would be helpful if they could let me know in advance on 01334 474129 or robin.waterston128@gmail.com. There will be two agenda items for members only when attenders will be asked to withdraw.

In friendship,

Robin Waterston

Clerk

East Scotland Area Meeting (AM), 20 August 2016, Perth

Perth Friends hosted Area Meeting at which 26 Friends attended. During our opening worship, the reading was from a piece by Elin Henrysson on her work as a peace maker in Burundi, quoted in 'Living our Beliefs' 2016.

We considered two issues of concern sent to us by Meeting for Sufferings. The first was a draft paper, "Vision for a Criminal Justice system", prepared by QPSW Central Committee setting out principles that Friends could support on this important topic. It is summarised in the sentences "Justice should be compassionate, forgiving and healing – restorative not retributive. We want to change attitudes and encourage the criminal system to move towards this vision of justice." The report can be seen on our web page, www.quakerscotland.org/east. We supported the principles contained in the document; in addition we hoped that there could be reference to:

- The position of young offenders;
- The situation regarding women offenders and young children;
- The disproportionate use of prison for some ethnic minorities;
- The work by Quakers on international penal reform.

The second issue was a concern raised by Cornwall Area Meeting regarding the decriminalisation of the possession of drugs for personal use. They would like to have the corporate support of British Quakers behind this concern. We considered a summary by Robin Baker of the main issues involved in this complex matter. We acknowledged both the complexity and the importance of this issue. We recognised that decriminalisation would still leave users with unavoidable contact with criminal dealers. There is an overwhelming need for greater public awareness of the mental and physical harm that drug use can cause, for better resourced rehabilitation services and for a change in public attitudes towards treatment away from criminalisation. We saw the principal issue as concern for human needs and the welfare of those who, for whatever reason, get caught up in drug use. While recognising the impossibility of doing justice to all the dimensions of this matter, we agreed to support Cornwall Area Meeting's concern.

In the afternoon session Sheila Mosley and Catherine Henderson, explained the work of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN). QARN supports those working with refugees and those seeking asylum and lobbies decision makers on their behalf. Its aim is to work for justice and compassion in the asylum system. One concern is the policy of indefinite detention of asylum seekers and Catherine described the UK policy of trying to create a 'hostile environment' for refugees fleeing war-zones as both reflecting an absence of empathy and as contrary to international law.

Some Syrian children in camps in Calais are being reunited with family members in the UK but the rate is far too slow. The wider crisis of refugee movements across Europe represents a failure of both governments and larger refugee agencies to address the humanitarian needs of those fleeing war, persecution and famine.

People are forced to flee their homes for many reasons, including climate change and it is recognised that mass migration is here to stay. The recent Immigration Act was described as punitive and destructive of human dignity. What values will governments uphold in response?

Quaker Peace and Social Witness has recognised the importance of this issue for Quakers and is increasing the resources it puts towards this concern.

Sheila and Catherine encouraged us all to get involved, whether with time or financial support. The QARN website is www.qarn.org.uk .

Our next Area Meeting will be held on Saturday 5 November in Dundee.

Pam Apted
Assistant Clerk

We are like blocks of stone out of which the sculptor carves the forms of men.
The blows of his chisel which hurt us so much are what make us perfect.
The pain now is part of the happiness then – that's the deal.

From 'Shadowlands' about C.S. Lewis

Contributed by Margaret Berwick

Creating a just Scotland - transforming our land and taxation policies

Scottish Quakers are committed to seeking a just society in which resources are shared more equitably. We are not alone; many others share this vision. The time seems right to join with others and call for change.

The Scottish Parliament has recently had devolved to it considerable autonomy with regard to taxation and economic affairs and is looking, especially in the circumstances following 'Brexit', for still greater powers, either through the development of greater federal devolution or, if that does not emerge, through independence. While there are radical elements within the Holyrood parliament and Scottish society at large calling for the creation of a more socially and economically just society, these are working against an instinctive conservatism and against those stakeholders with money, land and power who do not wish to see change. If such change is not initiated in Scotland at this critical time, when doors are wide open, there is the risk of traditional power bases uniting with inertia and caution to prevent change.

Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Quaker Parliamentary Engagement Officer and the General Meeting Parliamentary Liaison Function Group have arranged a symposium on tackling inequalities in Scottish society. By agreement it is part of the Independent and Radical Book Fair in Edinburgh. The event will bring together a range of concerned parties including Scottish Quakers, other churches and faith communities, and local organisations working on economic justice.

Sally Foster-Fulton, head of Christian Aid in Scotland and former chair of the Church of Scotland Church and Society Council is the chairperson.

There are three speakers:

- Richard Murphy, well know academic political economist, who has proposed a radical reform of our taxation system in books such as 'The Joy of Tax' and has been a significant influence on current Labour Party thinking.
- Lesley Riddoch, journalist, author of 'Blossom - what Scotland needs to flourish'. Influential in making links between Scottish politicians and Nordic

countries, with a view to learning lessons from their economic and political systems.

- Andy Wightman MSP, advocate of land ownership reform in Scotland, author of 'Scotland - Land and Power: The Agenda for Land Reform' etc.

We hope to unite voices in Scottish church and secular society to lobby for radical change in Scottish taxation and land ownership policies, to create greater equality of opportunity. The symposium will provide an opportunity to clarify how best we can work together for these changes.

Elizabeth Allen

Convenor, General Meeting Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

***Creating A Just Scotland –
Transforming our land and taxation policies
Saturday, 29th October, 10.00 am to 11.50 am
Out of the Blue Drill Hall
36 Dalmeny Street, Edinburgh, EH6 8RG
Admission Free – no ticket required***

Late news

St. Andrews Quakers would like to invite you to celebrate the completion of the Labyrinth on Thursday 27th October at 3.00pm at Kinburn Park, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DP, followed by refreshments in the museum.

Please let Joyce Taylor know if you are coming.

Beauty, the Arts, Christianity and Quakers

In some puritan and evangelical traditions (including the early Quakers) the arts were looked on with suspicion as distractions from the serious religious purpose of life. But in previous Christian traditions that was not the case. Medieval cathedrals were resplendent in architecture, sculpture, painting and music; and Eastern Orthodoxy still involves unaccompanied choral singing and the veneration of icons. Much further back, the Psalms of pre-Christian Judaism are supreme examples of religious poetry (not to be taken literally), and some of them mention singing and dancing before the Lord.

In past Western tradition the arts developed in close association with Christianity - think of all those madonnas and altar-pieces, the cantatas of Bach, and the poetry of George Herbert. But in recent centuries the arts have, for better or for worse, developed a life of their own, and have become professionalized and largely secularized.

Indeed it seems to many of us that some contemporary trends in the visual arts have lost their way, losing human (let alone religious) meaning.

There may be a place for the playful, for the subversive, and even for the disturbing, but there will always be a higher place for artworks that have beauty and deep human meaning. Such meaning is spiritual in a wide sense, even when not overtly religious - think of Rembrandt's portraits, Mahler's symphonies, and Seamus Heaney's poetry.

In Quaker Faith and Practice 21.28 we read

"God is in all beauty, not only in the natural beauty of earth and sky, but in all fitness of language and rhythm ... in all fitness of line and colour and shade ...in all fitness of sound and beat..."

It is in this spirit that St. Andrews Quaker Meeting mounted an exhibition of painting, crafts, music, stories and poetry in Quaker Week 1-8 October.

Leslie Stevenson

John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust

We are 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'.

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 from Mel Richards by telephoning her on 0131 225 1298 or emailing her via deusexmacintosh@yahoo.co.uk. Please note that grants cannot be made in retrospect for goods already purchased or events that have already taken place. The completed form should be passed to a Quaker of long-standing who is well-known to their meeting and to you, who will countersign it and forward it to the trustees. Applicants will normally hear the results of their application within eight weeks.

The Dog

In Cordova a little ugly dog, in an advanced state of preparation for motherhood, came up to me; it was an undistinguished animal, and certainly full of very casual puppies about which no fuss will have been made; but difficult as it was for her she came over to me, as we were quite alone, and raised her eyes, enlarged by care and self-seclusion, and begged for my glance, - and truly in hers there was everything that transcends the individual and passes, I can't say where - into the future or into the incomprehensible; the result was that she obtained a piece of sugar from my coffee, but incidentally, oh so incidentally, we read the Mass together, as it were. The transaction in itself was nothing but giving and taking, but the meaning and the earnestness and our whole mutual understanding were boundless. And yet such things can only happen on earth: when all is said and done, it is good to have made the passage here willingly, even though unsurely, even though guiltily, even though not at all heroically - at the end one will be wonderfully prepared for relationships with the divine.

Rilke

Contributed by Margaret Berwick

News from Local Meetings

Perth

Courses

There is only a single topic from Perth for this edition – courses. These are recent or upcoming courses that members of our Meeting are undertaking or have completed. The reason for choosing such a topic is because often there is little opportunity to hear of such experiences and yet this is an exciting aspect of people's spiritual lives. The courses described here fall into two types there are the traditional face-to-face courses and there are online courses that have become very common and popular.

Restorative Justice

Described as “inspiring” by the attender who took this course at Woodbrooke last February, it was led by art therapist and mediator Marianne Liebmann. The course presented alternatives to the many destructive effects of punishment within the justice system, in schools and other areas of life. The participants examined case studies, where those harmed and those responsible came together with experienced mediators in an attempt to lessen the damage created and to find a positive way forward. There were also talks from people who worked in a range of relevant settings, such as prisons, followed by some lively discussions.

Old Testament and Psalms Wisdom Literature

This took place at Glenthorne Quaker Centre and Guest House and was the second course this member had done with Janet Scott as leader. The previous year the course had been on the Gospel of Mark. Initially, the member had worried that she would be out of her depth, but had actually found both courses really interesting and had thoroughly enjoyed some fascinating discussions. Most appealing had been the outlining of historic contexts the better to understand the world the writers were coming from, their audiences and the purpose of their writing.

Exploring Early Quaker Vision

Two members took part in this Woodbrooke online course but with very different outcomes. While both members thought the lecturer, Stuart Masters, was excellent and the topic really interesting, full participation depended on a good broadband speed. One member lives in a town where such a good speed exists, while the other

lives in a remote area where the speed is very slow. There were several aspects to this course with the lectures themselves being delivered by means of webinars, which allows participants to raise issues live and develop a discussion online. Accompanying the lectures were notes that members thought excellent. On such a course it is possible to record and watch the lectures at a time that suits each participant; of course, this rules out taking part in the live online chat, which some people prefer.

Woodbrooke is developing a range of such online courses, which means, in theory, there is no geographic limit placed on participation. However, it does seem necessary that they find a simple method of enabling those across the country with slow broadband speeds to participate more readily.

In Fox's Footsteps

In August two members attended this pilgrimage across 1652 country. Based at Swarthmoor Hall it was a guided pilgrimage covering many of the major sites and Meeting Houses from the birth of Quakerism.

There were two leaders – Jenny Foot who had lived for many years in the area visited and Cathra, a collie cross who accompanied the group everywhere leading to laughter and wonderment at her fortitude of spirit.



Cathra attended all Meetings for Worship wherever they were held. The notion of a Quaker dog turned out not to be such a strange idea – Brigflatts Meeting House has an original dog pen within the meeting room itself. You can see the gate that swings across to prevent the dogs wandering upstairs during the silence.



Cathra's was a pilgrimage of the sticks.



There were small sticks
and large sticks



and they even came in multiples.



The group visited Settle, Brigflatts and Swarthmoor Meeting Houses where either wardens or members of the meeting gave a history and showed how their meeting houses had developed over the centuries. Evident in several of these buildings were the screens that could be left open or closed and that afforded space for the women to hold separate Meetings for Worship for Business. Sawley Meeting House was not visited as it had just been sold to become a private house. Instead Ben Pink Dandelion, a member of that meeting, gave a short talk in the nearby village hall.

Other significant places were visited – Pendle Hill, which George Fox felt compelled to climb; Firbank Fell where Fox preached to about 1,000 seekers; Sedbergh Church where Fox ministered but also had a dispute; Sunbrick burial ground where Margaret Fell and more than 200 early Friends are buried; and Marsh Grange the childhood home of Margaret Fell.

The two members who made this pilgrimage found great pleasure being back at Swarthmoor and were very interested to see how much it had developed with refurbished en-suite rooms, the food now made on site and the café open to the public with seating inside but also in the garden.

The gardens remain a delight with plenty of places to sit quietly or to chat.

Reflecting on the pilgrimage, one member said: “I had expected the pilgrimage to be a time I would remember in years to come because of the places we were to visit. What I hadn’t quite expected was the fellowship and the kindness of the other members of our group. We were blessed to have Jenny as our leader. Our group came from across England and Scotland, but also there were two people from

Australia. Many people were retired and had worked in a range of careers – the civil service, college administration, dancing, medicine both human and animal, research, teaching both school and university. A typical Quaker group one might say – but what interesting conversations we had!”

The next three courses are all MOOCs, i.e. massive open online courses, which offer programmes of study via the internet to very large numbers of people – so participants simply choose their course and sign up. All three are being made available via FutureLearn, an organisation offering free online courses from universities and specialist organisations. These courses are very wide ranging, from *Antimicrobial Stewardship* from the University of Dundee, to *Education for All* from the University of Cape Town, to *How to Succeed in the Global Workplace* from the British Council.

Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers

Led by Ben Pink Dandelion, from Lancaster University in association with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, *Radical Spirituality* is one such MOOC where the lectures are both spoken and written but also all materials are easily downloadable, which means that full participation does not depend on broadband speed. The course covers the start of Quakerism in 1652, considering both the key sites and the major figures of the Quaker movement. By the end of the course the aim is to have an understanding of the Quaker movement, the radical nature of its key ideas and to reflect on the consequences of Quaker spirituality. With almost 8,000 people from across the world signed up for the course, it has attracted many Quakers. Several members of Perth Meeting have signed up for this course, which is now running.

Challenging Wealth and Income Inequality

Having for some time been both moved and concerned by the gross inequalities that persist across UK society, a member signed up for this OU course via FutureLearn, which is now running. While not a Quaker course as such, it relates to a range of Quaker concerns as it explores the nature of economic inequality, the impact of such inequality on society and why this matters. Having heard so much about how Scandinavia manages this better, this member is also reading Michael Booth’s book *The Almost Nearly Perfect People: Behind the Myth of the Scandinavian Utopia* and is keen to explore whether it is possible to create a fairer deal for everyone.

Religion and Conflict

This is another course that, while not overtly Quaker, addresses issues of Quakerly concern. Looking at the many conflicts across the world that are framed in terms of religion, the course aims to unpick what role religion plays in such conflicts; whether conflict and violence are inherent in religion; or whether religion is the pretext adopted while conflicts are pursued. This course comes from the University of Groningen again via FutureLearn and is currently running.

Religion and Violence

And finally, this is an upcoming course, taking place in November at Woodbrooke, which examines how religion is often associated with the causes of violence. Taking Karen Armstrong's book *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* as a springboard, the tutor, Timothy Peat Ashworth, will lead seminars to consider whether the real reasons for war and violence are, indeed, rooted in religion. The seminars will also explore how 17th century Quakers used the imagery of war and how in the present day strongly held religious commitment can be associated with potentially aggressive words and actions.

I hope the descriptions of these courses might inspire an interest for readers to seek out courses that they themselves might enjoy pursuing, either by travelling to venues to take part, or by sitting at home and working online. Thank you to those people from Perth Meeting who gave me details of their courses enabling me to write the above.

Enid Harding

Dundee

Becoming Friends

Over the past eight months, members and attenders of Dundee Meeting have been meeting monthly to discover and explore more about Quaker faith, using as a framework the course book, *Becoming Friends*, developed for *Quaker Life* and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre by Ginny Wall. In her introduction, the author states that '*Becoming Friends* aims to be an engaging, interactive and flexible course that provides an opportunity to find out more about Friends in a way that is true to the experiential nature of our Quaker faith.' Although designed to help newcomers

deepen their understanding of Quakerism, the course recognizes that experienced Friends are also an essential part of the process of exploration. The Dundee core group, numbering about ten, together with periodic or occasional participants, found the course book a useful tool and the discussions which it stimulated both interesting and illuminating. A follow-up series of discussions has already been planned, (re-)starting in October and using the Lancaster University free on-line course, 'Radical Spirituality: the Early History of the Quakers', led by Ben Pink Dandelion, as a basis. All are welcome to join the discussions, but must register individually to follow the course.

Clare Kearns

All-age Worship and Picnic

On the first Sunday of September we were joined by five young people for all-age worship.

Together we made Mandalas, paired up to explain what we had drawn and assembled a group mandala.

The word mandala is from the classical Indian language of Sanskrit. Loosely translated it means "circle" but it is far more than that. It represents wholeness and can be seen as a model for the organisational structure of life itself – a cosmic diagram that reminds us of our relation to the infinite, the world that extends both beyond and within our bodies and minds. The mandala appears in all aspects of life: the celestial circles we call earth, sun and moon as well as the conceptual circles of friends, family and community.

Our drawing and sharing were framed by periods of worship. Young people read two passages from Quaker Faith and Practice.

"Our sense of community does not depend on all professing identical beliefs, for it grows from worshipping together, knowing one another, loving one another, accepting responsibilities, sharing and working together. We will be helped by tried and tested Quaker methods and procedures, but the Meeting will only live if we develop a sense of community, which includes children and adults alike."

(QFP 10.03)

“One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people. This was an unexpected discovery, because I had been brought up to believe that religion was essentially about our relationship with God.

If we are sensitive, we find that everything that happens to us, good or bad, can help us to build a vision of the meaning of life. We can be helped to be sensitive by reading the Bible and being open to experience of nature, music, books, painting, sport or whatever our particular interest may be. It is in and through all things that we hear God speaking to us. But I do not think I am alone in my certainty that it’s in my relationships with people that the deepest religious truths are most vividly disclosed.”

(George Gorman 1982 QFP 10.20)

We enjoyed some further ministry, including a reading of Rufus Jones’ words

“I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles’ in which vital and transforming events take place.”

(Rufus Jones 1937 QFP 24.56)

We then drove to East Haven for a picnic lunch together and here we found a remarkable example of transformation that can occur when a community comes together. Some ground by the railway has been beautifully planted to welcome visitors. Not so obvious is the amazing change which has taken place in an area of waste ground closer to the old cottages. It is now a perfectly kept community garden, complete with vegetables and a bothy for community use where lunch awaited us. Jean Stewart from our Meeting grew up in East Haven and she introduced us to Wendy Murray who shared some of East Haven’s story with us. If you would like to find out more about this tiny village, have a look at their website www.easthavenagus.com . Even the public toilets have been transformed.

Thank you to Jean and Wendy for providing a memorable day, continuing the Meeting’s theme of community.

Andrew Phin



Dundee Friends at East Haven



Meetings for Worship

Dundee Meeting House, 30 Whitehall Street, Dundee DD1 4AF

Sundays 11.00 am

Children's Meeting, first Sunday of each month

Children's Contact: Donna Morgan

Tel 01382 775545

Midweek Meeting for Worship, Wednesdays, 1.15 – 1.45pm

16 November, 14 December

Dundee University chaplaincy, lower common room, coffee and chat afterwards.

Contact: Sheila Phillips

Tel 01382 641043

St. Andrews Meeting House, 2 Howard Place, St. Andrews KY16 9HL

Sundays 10.30 am

Children's Meeting - each Sunday during school terms

Enquiries: Genevieve Orr

Tel 01333 360396

Midweek Meeting, Thursdays 1.15 – 1.45pm

Perth: The Subud Centre, 7 St Leonard's Bank, Perth PH2 8EB

Second and Last Sundays 11.00 am

Children's Meeting by arrangement.

East of Scotland Area Meeting

Saturday 5 November, *Dundee*

Saturday 18 February 2017, *St. Andrews*

Saturday 6 May 2017, *Dundee*

General Meeting for Scotland

12/13 November, *Perth*

11 March 2017, *Edinburgh*

10 June 2017, *West Scotland*