

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

April 2017

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Clerk's Letter

Along with many of us I have been studying Quaker faith & practice over the last 19 months, in a small group of Friends. It has been a rich experience. As what used to be called an 'ancient' Friend, and as someone who worked on the Book when employed at Friends House, I still find new insights arise, often catalysed by the experience of others.

One thing I continue to ponder on is the reasons the Society of Friends survived the 1600s Civil War period, perhaps the only one of plenteous new religiously motivated groupings from that time. Looking at chapter 19 on Openings, it revealed how there are three elements that ensured our survival as a religious body. First we are Gathered (feeling together the power that moves and connects us); secondly we are Guided (by the inward light, leading to us living lives of testimony); and thirdly we are Ordered (we are organised). These together allow us to renew ourselves from generation to generation as the social situation changes. It all started when Margaret Fell and George Fox first got us organised with structures and methods that underpinned the movement. The whole trinity of being gathered, guided and ordered is what Friends call 'Gospel Order', and is about being prepared to respond to the Spirit.

At present the Society is finding it difficult to run the way we do things, at local, area and national levels. Many of us come for the quiet worship as a way of helping us find meaning in the world, but haven't time or situation to take part in the 'order' part of meetings and business. Commitment can be difficult. Yet we will die out if we have no order, no working structures that channel our activities.

So what to do? We can look around us for clues as to what we are being shown. Yearly Meeting is about to start a three year thinking through 'movement building' for instance. Movement building is something that connects the grass roots to the change they want to see in the world together: mobilising; bringing together. Campaigning is more finite in ending – movement building is broader and about changing the narrative. Exactly what Quakers do when we focus on what needs changing in the world. Now we can apply this to our own selves. How do make our structures meaningful and vessels of action without losing the balance of being gathered, guided and ordered? I find the potential really exciting.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

Area Meeting by Telephone, 13th March, 2017

After a complete failure to download and print the relevant documents from my dodgy laptop Michael Hutchinson came to my rescue and send the numbers and draft minutes at the eleventh hour! I am very conscious that I can do very little to help these days so when there was a long pause after the request for a Friend to write a report for the Meeting I recklessly offered to do so. Alas, my sketchy notes are not sufficient to give more than a brief insight to a lively and thoughtful exchange so please read this in conjunction with the Minutes.

There were nine Preparative Meetings represented and after the roll call we were saddened to record the deaths of Ella Ballingall and Jenny Auld, both from Glasgow Meeting. They had been founder members of East Kilbride Meeting many years ago. Happily there were then two applications for Membership, from Carol Evans in Dunblane and Donald Holmes in Milngavie. Visitors were appointed and the transfer in of Tony Ellis and Colin Walton to Wigtown was welcomed.

The resignation of Ian Johnston, of Castle Douglas, was a matter of sorrow and concern. It was given to us to accept his resignation and offer him a visit from Michael Hutchinson and one other.

News of the impending marriage of Phyllida Ball and John Sillince was welcomed

Reporting on the Nominations Committee Gisela Creed reminded us that January, 2018 is the end of the Triennium so more volunteers for various jobs would be needed soon. Meanwhile Layla Al Roomi was appointed as Overseer and Clare Phillips as AM Health & safety Officer both until the end of the triennium in December 2017.

Ed Tyler reported that Junior Yearly Meeting has clashed with the annual Summer Shindig for Young Friends so there are no volunteers to represent Young Friends at the JYM. Our clerk will inform Quaker Life at Friends House of the clash.

There will be an Inquirers Day on 30th September in Dunblane, to be organized by Zem Moffat and Gill Reid.

I cannot comment sensibly on Kate's lively Treasurers Report . Here is the relevant extract from the minutes:

Area Meeting running costs are budgeted at £11,100, with a further £13,650 allocated towards supporting our wider Quaker community. The budget total being £24,750 which we need to raise by income from Friends and Meetings. The contribution schedule for this year has been distributed and we encourage Friends to consider their giving in support of AM. Additionally there is allocated £20,000 from the Barbara Organ legacy fund to support the community and individuals through learning and in other ways, and £25,000 is held for Glasgow Meeting House.

Judith Baines, Arran

General Meeting for Scotland, 11th March 2017

I have to confess that I don't make a habit of going to General Meeting. However, like some other Friends from Glasgow, I went specially to hear the presentation by Gretchen Castle, the General Secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, the body that provides links between four geographical sections of Quakers - in the Americas (north and south), Europe and the Middle East, Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

In this report, I am not going to go over the business matters – important though they are - which came up in the afternoon session. These can be read about in the minutes. Instead I'm going to give my impressions of the morning session, when Gretchen asked us to consider and reflect on the nature of God, and our understanding of the spiritual dimension in our lives and worship.

She introduced us to the views of Friends worldwide, which are extraordinarily diverse. She spoke of a spectrum of belief which ranged on the one hand from Continuing Revelation to, on the other hand, Biblical Literalism. We are all on the spectrum somewhere; and it is interesting to consider where George Fox would place himself in the spectrum of Quaker beliefs that exist today.

Within this spectrum of belief, God is constant, but indescribable. Traditionally Quakers have used a variety of names to describe what might be called God - Source, Light, Seed, Spirit..... As Friends, we use all of these names or none of them. And we

are allowed to use the word God, if that is a term we feel comfortable with. However, with such varieties of belief and practice, we need to work at developing a language that is mutually inclusive.

We learned something about the differences in Quakerism throughout the world. In the US there are programmed meetings, with pastors, and unprogrammed meetings. There are evangelical Quakers and non-evangelical Quakers. The African Quaker meetings are evangelical, with pastors; and Quaker meetings in Ireland are evangelical (a surprise!) without pastors.

Can we be open to the possibility of other ways of worship and other ways of expressing an understanding of God? Perhaps experience of other ways of worship can expand our understanding of God, the indescribable?

We were challenged to look for opportunities to talk about spiritual matters, with each other, in our own meetings, with Quaker Friends and non-Quaker friends, and even with strangers. Do we really engage with other people on a spiritual level? Do we ever ask the question: How is it for you spiritually? It was felt that people in Britain could be more inhibited about talking about spiritual matters, than their counterparts in, say, the United States.

At the end of the session it seemed only natural to be invited to talk about our spiritual life with another person whom we did not know. The session was brought to a conclusion with a period of deep worship sharing. Then, quite unusually for Quakers in Britain, worship came to an end with a prayer, which to me felt like a benediction. I felt grateful for the opportunity to talk about matters spiritual in such an open, warm and sustaining environment.

Margaret Morton , Glasgow

Going forward, dates were set for future General Meetings as follows:

South East AM will host on 10th March 2018

North AM will host on 9th June 2018

West AM will host on 15th September 2018

East AM will host on 17th November 2018

West AM will host on 19th March 2019

The next General Meeting will be in Glasgow on 10th June 2017.

17/22 Further reflection on the developing concern about truth and integrity in public affairs

We are reminded of minute 17/07 of Glasgow LM held on the 5 March 2017.

We thank Sheila Semple for her paper which has been helpful in focusing our further reflection today.

We are aware of the need to give thanks for the fact that we live in a society where we can speak truth to power and are reminded this is not the case in some parts of the world.

The process we are going through has resulted in a deeply gathered meeting in which we were exercised by the question. We have been reminded of our testimonies to truth and peace which underpin our discernment.

While we have anxieties about the current situation, we are not led at this moment to formulate a specific concern. However, we have a particular opportunity in Scotland for further consideration of this matter through the work of the General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Liaison Function Group and our Parliamentary Engagement Officer.

Quakers have historically worked within the political world, but not in a partisan way. We have a responsibility to seek out truth for ourselves and to be conscious that we sometimes struggle to be truthful because of our own preconceptions. We need to be mindful of the way in which we challenge as it can cause hurt and division and be counterproductive. We need to hold people to account in a way that is caring, loving and truly reflective of that of God in everyone.

We are comfortable about our obligation to speak truth to power and would like to be confident power can speak truth to us. The question for us individually and as a group is how we hold those in power to account to the degree in which we are prepared to hold ourselves to account, particularly when there are competing narratives about complex political situations.

We have been reminded of the code of conduct in public affairs, the Nolan principles.

This is a complex issue and we will continue to hold it in the light, alert to future opportunities.

We agree to send this minute to West Scotland Area Meeting.

(Signed) Neil McKechnie, Clerk, Glasgow LM.

Meeting for Worship

Jamie Wrench offers a guide for newcomers

The first thing that hits you is the silence. It's quite frightening initially, especially to us Europeans for whom the absence of noise usually means something has gone horribly wrong, so don't be scared, just listen to the silence... Listen to it, savour it, roll it around in your head, because (and I know this sounds a bit weird) there are many different forms of silence – and you'll get them all at some time in a Quaker Meeting.

- **Type one:** *No-one says anything. This is the same sort of silence you get in a doctor's waiting room or on a train. Most people in the room are probably still thinking – some may be asleep and some may actually be thinking nothing, but most are likely to be thinking, in isolation, different thoughts about thousands of things, from whether they left the gas on to tomorrow's shopping or what they'd say to David Cameron if they got the chance. If you could hear those thoughts, it would be a cacophony.*
- **Type two:** *No-one says anything because they are waiting. It is the sort of silence before the curtain comes up or the orchestra starts playing. This is a kind of coordinated, expectant silence in which people are thinking along the same lines but not sure what's coming next. If you could hear these thoughts, they would be a single note sung in unison, or a collective intake of breath. People are still enclosed in their own little bubble, but they are, as it were, on the same wavelength.*
- **Type three:** *People are silent together. They share the silence. It's less passively expectant, more positively active than type two. Other denominations experience this briefly before, say, a prayer. Quakers call it a gathered silence, and sometimes from out of this silence someone else will put into words exactly what you were thinking, which is pretty cool and rather exciting in a 'wow' sort of way. It is a silence charged with energy – the silence of a wave in the sea. It has power.*
- **Type four:** *People become still together. Like into some great whirlpool, thoughts,*

noise and busyness are drained from the room; and what remains is a deep, profound stillness, all the deeper because we are all holding it together and it is within us and without us. At this level, you become aware of the interconnectedness of all things, of the potential for love in every particle in the universe, of all the souls that inhabit it together, journeying in harmony and perfect step. This is more than silence – it is complete stillness, beautiful, wonderful and rare.

And the weirdest thing of all? At the end of the Meeting, everyone knows what sort of silence it was.

***Jamie is a member of Southern Marches Area Meeting.
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Quaker Faith & Practice Chap 9 & 18

The first of these chapters is on Yearly Meeting and the second on our testimonies. It brought us into a discussion of how we meet others and how we talk about our Quakerism. Two of our group are part of the Glasgow Outreach Team and another is a member of the Learning Group, and others are involved in interfaith meetings.

Whilst there is a difficulty working with other churches, because we have such a different way of worshipping, Interfaith is easier because of not praying to Jesus. And yet, other Christians also have similar difficulty because of all the different denominations. Within the world family of Friends even, we have many differences between programmed and unprogrammed meeting, pastured or evangelical, etc. And within our own Meeting there is enormous diversity.

So, we found chapter 18 challenged us as to where we came from and where we were going. Sometimes the old-fashioned language (e.g. in 18.20) put some off and confused others. The testimonials could be useful. Yet, how were testimonies chosen? Should everyone have a testimony? We thought of interesting Friends we had met and the remarkably strong connections with our Quaker community so we could feel at home in meetings all over the world. Although more known for conflict resolution, which we hoped we could share in a world so torn apart, there are deeper threads that draw us together as Quakers. Is it about NOT having a creedal base, we pondered. Other

churches draw their members together through their creeds, causing great differences between churches. In Quaker meetings we share a deep experience and encounter that reminds us what religion is all about! In chapter 18, we find examples of people putting their faith into practice in a way we recognise as Quakers. We help each other to deepen our faith. Through the testimonies others' lives speak to us. . . We face struggle and darkness but connecting to others' lives, even from the past, strengthens the light between us.

Yet, we were conscious that Although Glasgow is strong in interfaith, Quakers are not very connected to this. As individuals in our place of work, we can have a strong influence but not so our meeting – perhaps we are just speaking for Glasgow? *This might be the next stage in Glasgow Meeting visioning process.*

Some found it difficult to speak to other Quakers about their faith – it was easier to speak to non-Quakers. Speaking to people from other churches we might meet suspicion or feel judged. A bit of a contradiction here as, at Interfaith meetings, we appear articulate and plain spoken. Plain speaking can upset some. When we looked at accountability, thinking of the JRRT, how our activities expressed our faith, we had to ask how we could be truthful without condemning and judging others. It seemed to come down to 'God has come to teach his people', the need to listen and discern.

In the end, we looked at ourselves as a community. If we cannot support each other in spirit, we walk alone. WHAT IS THE TASK THAT BUILDS COMMUNITY? Many groups are bound together by their task. One of our number was astounded at the amount of work and energy we put into the Meeting. Without ministers or a pot of money, everything is done by Friends, by people coming together. We ended up asking if this distracted us. . . from being better known in the wider community? What is at the heart of Quakers today?

EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT RETREAT at Swarthmoor Hall 23rd to 26th June

An opportunity for quiet meditation on the Light in the historic and beautiful surroundings of the birthplace of Quakerism. Interested? Speak to Margaret Roy 01899 220931 or e mail margaret.roy@btinternet.com

"Mysticism is not necessarily something terribly weird or wonderful: it consists of a certain kind of attention to reality in all its facets"

Area Meeting – Is it fit for purpose?

I am the newbie on the block, recently appointed to serve as Assistant Clerk to Area Meeting, and used as I am in my work in doing self-assessments I set off to question my involvement and my role. It raised many interesting questions and observations. I spoke to quite a few people and found recurrent themes, not just in our own Area Meeting. Here are some of my thoughts that you might like to comment upon, or even correct my ignorance.

The first thing that struck me was the attendance. It was a shock to find only around 20 connected to Area Meeting by Telephone but then around only 40-60 attended the face to face virtual meetings. This works out at around 10 and 20% of members. If we include attenders in the total, it is 5 and 10%. The figures are rough because of course they vary but it gives a broad outline. So what does it mean? What is Area Meeting for? Who attends Area Meeting? When I first became involved with Quakers in the early 1970s, it was unthinkable not to attend Monthly Meeting (the predecessor of Area Meeting) so this suggested a change in attitude, if not relationship. Whilst I had a spell away from Meeting due to work, surely things had not changed so much?

One of the most fundamental aspects of Quakerism is that we are a community, more than individuals. We have no ministers. Whilst some may be 'elevated' to positions such as clerk or elder, they serve only for a period and the emphasis is on **service**. We each offer our talents and experience to the Meeting as appropriate. It is not a rotational sharing of posts but a recognition of diversity. Further, there is a role for each individual in upholding the Meeting and its servants in the Light through silent waiting, and of course ministry where appropriate. A business meeting is a Meeting for Worship. It is more than doing business in a worshipful manner. William Tabor talks of seeking the Mind of Christ in our business doings. As in worship, we lay aside the things of the person (although we may sometimes use the meeting for personal guidance or support) to open up to the greater depths of our being, our still centre where we find oneness, a gathered meeting. These days we do not all call this a Godly encounter! We might even be stretched to call it a worshipping community, but it is a community in the truest sense of the word in which our individuality is contained in the greater vision. Today, we feel very much divided in what that vision is although we would all agree that it involves social justice and helping create peaceful relationships in which all might find their potential. That is maybe the fundamental problem. Our current purpose in community may not be supporting spiritual development!!! Early Quakers would have spoken about the Lamb's War and bringing in the Kingdom as their vision. Today there are many people for whom Area Meeting is not even on their radar. It would seem to have

no relevance to attending Meeting for Worship on Sundays.

So who attends Area Meeting and what are they looking for?

It was easier to find out why people do not attend. There are 7 Area Meetings and 4 General Meetings each year. If anyone is in work, weekends are precious. If one has a family, weekends are precious. These days, often the other partner is not a Quaker and that puts strain on relationships if one keeps popping off at weekends and every Sunday too. Then, in our particular Area Meeting, geography is seen by some as an issue, although the west and the south seem to be tackling that problem in their cluster meetings.

So who gets there? Retired people make up a disproportionate number that does not necessarily reflect the age balance of Area Meeting. Here is maybe where I confess that I have been absent for a while too, due mainly to work. But examining my own absence, and talking to more people, I began to realise something else about Area Meeting. I was not interested in ‘business’ or hearing reports. Some go to Meeting for the social aspect of meeting others of the same ilk, just as some go to Meeting for Worship. The first time I heard this it was a revelation. Why go to Meeting for Worship for anything other than worship and Area Meeting was an even bigger and richer experience. The old Quaker adage, when the Meeting finishes the service begins – Meeting for Worship sustained me in the very difficult work I undertook. It supported my values and refreshed my spirit for the fray, even when I did not get there too often.

So in these days of increasing secularisation, I realised the whole purpose of Area Meeting had changed. I found this reflected in the attitude to ‘business’. Those Reports again. Although still called ‘concerns’ and although in West Scotland Area Meeting we still got through the process of discernment at Local Meeting level advancing to Area Meeting level if further discernment and support were needed, the waiting on the spirit moving aspect is different. Over-generalising, and hopefully without judging, it seems more individualistic and less of community. I could go on to talk of egos more than heart, but that is my stuff.

So, I am still exploring and questioning. Maybe you have thoughts that would help me explore this, or get me into gear as a new Asst. Clerk?

Margaret Roy, Lanark

The great danger in our utopian dreams of community is that they lead us to want association with people just like ourselves – *Parker Palmer*.

Update on Militarism & our Young

Motion S5M-02912: Patrick Harvie, Glasgow, Scottish Green Party, Date Lodged: 05/12/2016

The British Army's Increased Intake of 16-year-olds

That the Parliament notes that the Ministry of Defence released its latest recruitment figures on 24 November 2016, with figures showing what it believes is a marked increase in the recruitment of 16-year-olds, making this the single biggest age group entering the army; notes that the army recruitment strategy states that the recruitment of minors is to mitigate a shortfall in recruits older than age 18, particularly for the infantry; believes this to be the most dangerous section of the armed forces, with infantry personnel in Afghanistan, for example, seven times more likely to be killed than from any other section of the British Army; acknowledges that the Royal Courts of Justice has ruled that the British Army does discriminate against recruits who are under the age of 18 due to a minimum service period that is far longer than older recruits, and has given them unlimited powers to do so; recognises that in 2014 a poll found that 78% of respondents who expressed a view thought that the minimum armed forces enlistment age should be 18, and supports calls for the UK Government to launch a review of the minimum armed forces enlistment age.

Supported by: Mark Ruskell, Rona Mackay, Ben Macpherson, Alison Johnstone, Ivan McKee, Ross Greer, Andy Wightman, Gil Paterson, John Mason, Emma Harper, John Finnie, Joan McAlpine, Richard Lyle, Fulton MacGregor, Maree Todd

Faslane and Trident

Twenty years ago this May we held the first Quaker Meeting for Worship, or Silent Witness, at the North Gate of the Faslane Naval Base. Many people were very concerned at the time about the dangers caused by having such indiscriminate weapons so near to Glasgow. And that doesn't even take into account the immorality of hosting such weapons, to be used against other human beings as well as the fragile environment on which all species depend for survival.

The idea of the first Witness came about during a conversation with Elaine Bishop, then warden at Glasgow MH. We advertised the plan, counted numbers, and realised we would need a 54-seat coach. We organised a bring-and-share picnic, the sun shone brilliantly and 73 fFriends came, including several children. Strathclyde police closed one lane of the road at the roundabout and 2 minibuses of officers ensured our safety from passing traffic.

Since then we have held a similar Silent Witness six times each year, though the

numbers never reached those dizzy heights again. The weather hasn't always been clement either, and we have had clouds of super-midges in heavy drizzle once or twice! But there is always a faithful turn-out on each occasion. There is a contingent from Edinburgh with one or two cars full; a smaller number from Argyll but with a goodly supply of banners.

We have gained the respect of the police and many who work at the Base because we show a faithful commitment to our beliefs. We turn up whatever the weather, and we sit in silence. We don't throw stones, we don't shout, though there is sometimes profound vocal ministry on the side of that busy road. There is more need than ever for expressions of abhorrence at Trident nuclear weapons. The UK government avows peace but refuses to make any attempt to limit nuclear weapons numbers. There is a UN Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty under negotiation this last week of March, and in June. Please tell Theresa May and Boris Johnstone we need the UK to support this vital humanitarian Treaty.

A warm welcome awaits you if you would like to join us at the next Meeting for Worship at Faslane. We begin at 11am, worship for an hour and then have a cup of coffee in the carpark of Faslane Cemetery. If you would like to share transport please contact Mary Alice at mamansell54@gmail.com
The dates for the rest of 2017 are: 23 April, 18 June, 12 July , September, 12 November
Mary Alice Mansell, Glasgow

National Quaker Day of Healing on Arran

On March 18th, three of the Arran Quakers who were not at Crianlarich, held a Healing Day in Whiting Bay in the small hall where George and Judith Baines had done "Healing in the Market Place" every Thursday in the late nineties and early noughties. Much to our delight we were joined by three Glasgow Quaker Healers and several interested friends who stayed all day while other people from the Island came and went. It was a lovely day. We set up the hall so there was an area for people to give and receive individual healing and a ring where a fluid group sent constant distant healing to individuals; vulnerable groups of people, such as prisoners, immigrants, etc: and to those who cared for them; countries; places; creatures and the planet. At the end we were moved to give loving thanks for all the many forces for good in the world.

We stopped for a lovely lunch of soup and sandwiches which gave us time to talk to one another and the whole day flowed easily and proved to be a healing time for us

An opportunity for Outreach

Quaker Service Exhibition

As you may now be considering activities and outreach events for this year, I thought it would be a good time to draw your attention to the possibility of borrowing the Quaker Service Exhibition.

Over the last 4 years it has been loaned for use at well over 100 occasions lasting from one day to a month. It has been to Meeting Houses, Church and Cathedrals; Civic Halls, Libraries and Market Squares; Schools and Universities. It can be used for just a small outreach event over a day or weekend, or for a longer public display about Quakers, Peace Testimony and Quaker Service. The 12 banners are portable by car and easy to erect – less than an hour with 2 people.

The exhibition was produced by staff at Manchester University and we have sets available to be collected from London, Bristol, Staffordshire, Manchester, Cambridge, Edinburgh – and (new this year) from Doncaster. Its contents covers a wealth of information including “Who are the Quakers”, “Quakers and the Peace Testimony”, Quaker Service in WW1 and WW2, leading to “Quaker Peace Work To-day”. There is an accompanying leaflet and a dvd of interviews of some who served in the Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends Relief Service during WW2. The cost of borrowing is £35 which covers any wear and tear.

If you are interested in borrowing the exhibition, then do get in touch, giving your required dates and location of collection. I can then make a provisional booking and send you the booking form with further information. I would be happy to receive any further enquiries by email, post or telephone.

Helen Lockwood Quaker Service Memorial Trust qsmtrust@hotmail.co.uk

NEW BOOKS IN GLASGOW MEETING LIBRARY

Rubenstein, David. Essay in Quaker history. Quaker Books, 2016. H/RUB

Needham, Andrea. The hammer blow: how ten women disarmed a warplane. Peace News Press, 2016. P/NEE

Garthwaite, Kayleigh. Hunger pains: life inside foodbank Britain. Policy Press, 2016. S/GAR

Mendoza, Kerry-Anne. Austerity: the demolition of the welfare state and the rise of the zombie economy. New Internationalist, 2015. S/MEN

Librarian, Paul Burton will send books at cost of postage. paulfburton@btinternet.com

Tree Planting at Wiston Lodge

Sunday the 26th March over twenty friends gathered in the gloriously large sunlit sitting room of Wiston Lodge, Biggar. Friends had travelled from Dunblane, Paisley and Glasgow and met with local friends of Lanark Meeting and a few from Edinburgh South. We were there for worship and to plant trees and we couldn't have asked for a better day. The sun shone out loud and proud.

Glasgow Quakers have been organising trips to plant trees at Wiston Lodge for over a decade. Planting them for peace, for memories and for people passed. This time our job was to check in on the work we'd done last year and in previous years and nurture what we had and replace a few trees that hadn't survived. We would like to create a record of all those trees that have been planted for someone or an occasion, so if you have done so, please let Mary-Alice Mansell know and the record will be kept in the library at Glasgow's Meeting House.

Wiston Lodge couldn't have been kinder and Lanark meeting more hospitable and next year we will be back again. So do watch this space and do come along. This year I did little to help the digging - suffering from an anxt sciatic nerve - so instead I soaked up the sun and the beautiful atmosphere and upheld the tree planting! Next year I'm hoping to go out and camp before. Wiston Lodge had cabins, camping pitches, dormitories and B&B accomodation, so definitely an option to consider for all. A few friends even cycled there, but in terms of access, driving is (unfortunately) the easiest way.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's trip a success!

Zemirah Moffat, Glasgow

This poem was written in the stillness of a deep all-age worship at Wiston Lodge 26/3/2017 by **Derek Read**

Tree planting

In this space – dwells love and friendship
joys and adventures
sweetness and laughter
sunshine - rain - snow
sorrow – remembrance
cycles of life and death

We plant – and nurture

the trees grow – sustain us
the life of the planet
fire – water – healing – shelter
miracles of life, spirit – death-
decay
rising and becoming
rising and becoming
into the Light

Gleanings from Annual Reports of Local Meetings to Trustees.

These reports are compiled in order to fulfil item 7a of the Memorandum of Understanding between Local Meetings and West Scotland Area Meeting (2015 revision).

Dunblane Quaker Meeting continues to meet every Sunday in the Braeport Centre. The doorkeeper usually reads their choice of reading from Advices and Queries. The children normally stay to hear this reading. At the end of 2016 we numbered 19 members, 20 attenders and 12 children, with an average of some 15 at Meeting for Worship each week. We welcomed two Friends joining us from a Quaker Meeting in New Zealand and a family of five Friends transferring from Glasgow Local Meeting. Those Meetings' loss is our gain. Other new attenders have joined us, and two Friends who have moved out of the area now attend other Local Meetings.

Children's Meeting, held every week, continues to thrive, with up to six children attending. The Children's Committee have some fourteen Friends helping to run the programme. Children's Meeting is much enjoyed and appreciated by both adults and children. We see the children as a vital thread running through the whole Meeting. The Children's committee arranged a family outing to the Camera Obscura in Edinburgh in May and an all-age Meeting for Worship in June.

Five Enquirers' evenings were held in the home of our Friend Mary Scott Watson in the autumn. They covered membership, the sacred and the everyday, the testimonies, and other questions.

On Sunday 29th May Mark Gean-Hughes ran the Edinburgh marathon and raised money for Strathcarron Hospice.

Following recommendation from our Local Meeting, West Scotland Area Meeting nominated Rowena Loverance and Alison Burnley to prepare a *Testimony to the Grace of God as Shown in the Life of Christine Davis*. This has now been completed and recorded for posterity. A tribute to Margaret V. Giles, a loyal Dunblane LM Friend and one-time LM Treasurer, was composed by two Dunblane Friends and sent to *West Scotland Quaker News*. Helen Steven, well-known peace activist and former long-time member of Dunblane LM, died in April.

As a Local Meeting, during 2016 we collected for various charities including Start-Up Stirling, Stirling Citizens for Sanctuary, HealthProm for a donkey saddle for pregnant women in Afghanistan, Salvation Army, Logos (a Crieff-based charity), and Stirling & District Women's Aid.

Ayrshire Meeting holds its Meetings for Worship in Ayr four times a month. No meeting is held on a fifth Sunday. We are a small meeting with an average attendance of 7 or 8 Members and Attenders. During the course of the year it was decided to lay down our monthly MfW at Ardrossan.

All Members and Attenders are kept informed of events and activities electronically and through Notices being shared at Meetings. We believe that moving our Meeting from Ayr Citadel to our present centre at Riverside Flats Community Centre, Ayr has been a success. The increased frequency of meetings has drawn us together as a group whereas previously it may be fair to say we felt more dispersed.

On third Sundays, we have a shared lunch followed by discussion after worship. In the past year we looked at a range of topics including various chapters of Quaker faith and Practice using Woodbrooke's 'Being Friends Together' as a guide. In October to celebrate World Quaker Sunday we watched a short film from the General Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation on a variety of Friends around the world. Members have spoken on peace and Quaker beliefs to two Guilds and to an Interfaith Forum. We have an involvement with Friends worldwide including attending The Friends World Committee for Consultation in Peru and through visiting Sweden Yearly Meeting.

Lanark Quaker Meeting takes place on the first and third Sundays of each month at Wiston Lodge, near Biggar. Our numbers at Meeting for Worship remain at the higher level reported in 2015, usually around 10 – 12.

Our Friends Meg Beresford and Malcolm Crosby continue to fulfil the roles of Elder/Overseer and Clerk respectively. Margaret Roy was appointed Assistant Clerk for WSAM during 2016, remains Editor of WSAM Newsletter and represents GM on the World Day of Prayer Scottish Committee. David Rees is an Area Meeting trustee. Douglas Shaw is on the Executive Committee of Northern Friends Peace Board and Janet Fenton has been co-opted to NFPB. In this capacity both participated in a lobby of the Scottish Parliament in December to promote the move within the United Nations to outlaw nuclear weapons.

Each Christmas we are joined by Friends from South Edinburgh and Penicuik Meetings for our annual Christmas lunch and carol service ably lead by our clerk who sings in Fife opera and the Edinburgh Festival Choir. This year we missed Douglas Shaw who sings with Rudsambee. Of course our other passion is sustainability. To highlight the plight of bees, Meg our clerk and some friends walked all the way from Edinburgh to Wiston Lodge – a beeline. Glasgow Meetings joins us annually for tree planting. We don't have a children's meeting of our own but when joined by these other meetings can hold an all-age meeting for worship.

STATE OF DUMFRIES MEETING 2016

Dumfries Meeting continues to carry out the requirements set by BYM Trustees as mentioned in our previous State of the Meeting reports. Unfortunately our numbers have dropped this year due to people moving away to be nearer their families & several have bad health & are now unable to get to Meeting. In March our Friend Glay Robinson died. However, eight to ten of us meet regularly. Our photograph album goes back 40 years & we send out a regular newsletter.

Most months we hold a collection for different charities suggested by our members & this year we have sent off almost £800.

Each fourth Sunday a number of us gather before Meeting to share thoughts & ideas. On second Sundays we hold discussions when our subjects have been: 'The Juniper Peace Project in local schools'; Sarah Booth gave us an interesting insight into Human Rights; the Scottish elections; the Scottish prison system; Economics & Quaker Faith & Practice. We find these Meetings very interesting & useful as they help us get to know each other better.

One Sunday three of us joined Castle Douglas Friends at the gates of the Dundrennan Military Base for a thoughtful Quaker Meeting.



Argyll Meeting at Campbeltown

In Campbeltown, we continue to meet on the fourth Sunday of each month from January to November at 1400. Mainly, we meet in an anteroom of the New Hall at the Lorne & Lowland Church, but sometimes, as in February 2017, we use the Session Room in the main complex. Over the last year we have welcomed several different enquirers and attenders, resulting in a 5 - 6 persons meeting, even in the winter months. Although we generally meet and wait in silence, sometimes we have an open discussion session about particular issues that have arisen in the world.

Argyll Meeting in Minard and Tarbert

Friends were finding it difficult to travel to Tarbert twice a month so we decided, at the end of 2015, to hold alternate meetings in Minard where 4 Friends actually live. This has proved

to be a success, a peaceful homely venue and equally accessible for new members who live in Lochgilphead. We have been delighted to welcome our new Friends, and continue to try to reach out to other Friends who have moved to more remote locations in Argyll. Whilst ministry is not frequently given the meeting is always followed by excellent refreshments and passionate discussions. These are often centred around our shared concerns of peace, sustainability and ecumenism which members are actively involved in as far as time and transport permit.

Gatherings

Maintaining face to face links can be a particular challenge for us, however, in March a number of us were able to meet other Friends for a weekend at the Westerly Friends Gathering at Crianlarich Youth Hostel. This event enables Friends living in remote areas, including some of the islands, to come together. In the summer we met with Arran Friends at Skipness village hall and also hosted Area Meeting at Tarbert village hall.



Crianlarich this year

MILNGAVIE holds a Meeting for Worship on the Second and Last Sundays of every month in The Fraser Centre. We are generally an older generation so we have not held a children's meeting during the year. Attendance on Sundays is regular and loyal, averaging 16 - 20 Friends. On the 2nd Sunday, we have an additional hour after MfW for study. Recently this has been taken up in the reading of QFP and this has worked reasonably well.

We have created a list of charities (12, one each month) that we wish to support. We also have a collection each meeting to cover our out of pocket expenditure. On the last Sunday of the month we continue to collect for the foodbank operating from a local Church. They report that the "local" need has increased.

In the past, Milngavie had more active friends. However over the years we have lost a number of Friends with the result that the meeting had become reliant on a couple of Friends for local activities. We are now making efforts to involve more people. As well as Treasurer and Correspondent we are represented on the local churches group and contribute to the "Yours Faithfully" column of the local newspaper.

Arran LM has held Meeting for Worship each Sunday alternating venues between Brodick library and Friends' homes. We have been pleased to welcome to our Meeting a number of Friends who were visiting Arran. Some Friends from Arran have attended Area Meeting in Glasgow and in Argyle and we have appreciated being able to join in telephone Area Meeting. In March two of us attended the Crianlarich gathering and in June we met up with Argyle Friends for a shared lunch and Meeting for Worship.

On May 12 Jeny Faulkner, a pivotal member of Arran meeting for many years, died. Her daughters organised a celebration of her of her life which was attended by many F/friends from near and far. We were able to share memories and appreciate what an interesting and varied life she had had,

During Quaker week we held an open midweek session in the library which was attended by a few people from other local churches on the island which generated an interesting discussion. Some Friends from our Meeting have regularly supported the local group of "Women in Black" who witness for peace for an hour once a month on the last Saturday in the month, distributing leaflets and entering into discussions about peace issues.

Islay and Jura Local Meeting continues to meet twice-monthly, on the last Sunday afternoon and 2nd Monday morning of each month. Since early 2016 we stopped our practice of meeting in a Friend's house and now hold all our Meetings in the Baptist Church in Bowmore. This offers much greater consistency and accessibility for both regular attenders and the occasional visitor and enquirers. It provides a comfortable and simple worship space which suits Quaker worship very well. We also held Meeting for Worship at the Jura Care Centre in Jura about four times during the summer months, and continue to do so whenever the opportunity (and weather) presents itself.

We "lost" one of our members in October, owing to her move south to Cornwall, but we have two new attenders, and our numbers at Meeting for Worship vary from two up to eight or nine. Our Monday Meetings seem to be particularly popular, when we are frequently joined by attenders whose first loyalty is to another church, but who also value Quaker worship. We have started the practice, at our Monday Meetings, of holding worship for about 40 minutes and then having 20 minutes or so of "led reflection" introduced by different people on any text or passage or topic they find interesting or helpful.

In October we held an open afternoon, preceded by a short article in the local paper, the Ileach. We put out a small exhibition including slide shows of Quakers in action around the

world and a number of leaflets and publications provided by Friends House. Not many new people turned up, but we gained at least one new regular attender as a result, and the whole exercise prompted an interesting discussion amongst ourselves.

Wigtown Local Meeting has held a Meeting for Worship every Sunday and an afternoon Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month. We have not held a children's meeting during the past year. Attendance at Sunday meetings continues to increase, with several new regular attenders. The Wednesday meetings continue to attract members of other churches in the area.

In the Autumn we commenced a series of discussion groups based on the themes on the 'Our Faith in the Future' leaflet.

The responsibility for holding Meetings for Worship at the gates of Dundrennan military base has passed to Castle Douglas Meeting.

The Meeting House and our recently refurbished garden continue to be available to the wider public as a community resource; the meeting house is let to local groups on a regular basis, raising both a useful revenue stream and also our profile in the community.

Castle Douglas Local Meeting (LM) We are glad to report that the meeting has enjoyed healthy attendance figures.

Spiritual Focus Activities: During the year we began a study of QF&P following the recommended programme, and covered the first eight sessions. Two extra meetings were held; one was a Quaker Awareness Meeting on Quaker beliefs. The other was to cover one of the Reading QF&P sessions in more depth.

One of our attenders was able to go to "Experiment with Light" weekend course at Swarthmoor Hall.

Quaker Quest was evaluated by the meetings of the Cluster Meeting from the point of view of the preparation needed set against the likely gain. (Early in 2017 it became clear though, that QQ wasn't a practical option for our three small and widely spread meetings.)

Library: We continue to maintain a library with active updating of the catalogue. (Several of the new entrants have been received as gifts - these are most welcome.) Our librarian has also agreed to take on the role of archivist, where his experience is very welcome.

Other Activities: In 2016 we assumed the lead role in the holding of MfW at the Dundrennan artillery range. We held two such vigils during the year.

Our meeting wrote to Dumfries and Galloway Council, having discussed in two Meetings for Worship for Business (MfWfB) the council's enthusiastic response to the Armed Forces Community

Covenant. We pointed out the positive aspects of the Covenant, but we questioned whether the council "concerned itself enough with the down side of army life". (Children of 15 being encouraged to make application to the military.) There was a reply from the council; it did not allay our concern and we wrote again, telling them so.

During Quaker Outreach Week, we held an event outside Castle Douglas post office.

Statio X Iesus vestibus spoliatur*

Two Station Tens; one in St Margaret's
near my home. Caretaker lets me in.
'Austrian plaques' he said, 'Not sure
who brought them here.' A pause.
'We'd a German priest in the War -
strange.' Then, to me, 'What parish are
you from?'

On whitewashed wall, pale Jesus stands
above us,
one shoulder bared like senator in Rome.
He looks down calmly on his captors.
Crown of thorns leaves smudge of rouge.
Cringing servant at his knee proffers a flask
of gall;
another gently plucks his sleeve;
a third has got a knife but it is sheathed.
These underlings are faced with God.
The other Station**, shows the man;
held trouble-maker, humiliated on his
knees,
red cloak whipped roughly off him. Naked
but for rag around his waist.
So weary, can't hold up his head,
gall shoved into his face.
Two Romans haggle for his cloak,
they smile, indifferent to his fate.
Crow-black sky above Golgotha.
Take the God and take the stories
if you must. I'm with the man.

Pete Stuart, Glasgow

The Story

*All religious traditions have their story-telling.
Here is a Buddhist one adapted from Ringu
Tulka Rinpoche, from Dreams and Clouds. In
this book the lama is explaining the different
kinds of reality and distinguishing between the
path of the intellect and that of devotion.*

The story is set in Tibet. The son is a
merchant who travels to India selling
and buying merchandise. His devote
mother asks him to bring back a relic
from the land of the Buddha.
He forgets.
She asks him again before his next
expedition.
He goes about selling his merchandise
and sourcing goods to take back, but
he forgets the relic for his mother. Very
disgruntled, she tells him she will kill
herself in front of him if he forgets
again.
Off he goes again. Busy buying and
selling he has a successful trip.
However, on his way back he
remembers. He knows his mother is a
stubborn woman who will carry out her
threat so he looks around for
something, anything, to bring back to
her.
He spies the skeleton of a dog. He
takes a tooth from the dog home to his
mother telling her it is the tooth of the
Buddha.
'His mother wept with joy and put the
dog's tooth on her altar. She would
pray and pray all day long with the
deepest devotion. After a while
rainbows and five-coloured rays started
shining from the tooth and when the old
woman died, many wonderful things
were seen.'

A Quaker Journey

When Margaret Roy asked me to write about my journey into Friends I felt It had something to do with an early experience of attending Mass at my Convent school, which only made sense to me when the priest invited us to take ‘a few minutes of silence for personal prayer’.

My curiosity had already been seeded when I’d been told as a child the story of my grandmother’s escape from Austria after the Anschluss in ’38. A family friend, an English Quaker, had stood as her guarantor and offered a roof over her head while she adjusted to becoming a refugee in an unfamiliar country. Although I’d never met this lady she became my heroine.....so when I was invited by a thoughtful Friend to attend a Quaker meeting I came with high expectations and not a little apprehension that in my waywardness I’d feel uncomfortable. I remember that first meeting well and how each of the ministries spoke to my condition. I left feeling I had found a spiritual home.

I knew what had called me but what was/is it that has kept me? Firstly, more than anything, it is Friends and the trust and friendships that have grown over the years which have become a bedrock. It is also my growing respect and appreciation of the structure of our Meetings which offers the framework in which we can develop both individually and together our mutual care of the Meeting. Above all it is the experience of Meeting for Worship which continues to amaze and inspire me by offering this spacious holding where the Spirit can be heard.

Last year I attended a Peace Camp in Zone C of the Disputed territories. It was my first visit to Israel and the workshop was facilitated by an Interfaith Minister from the UK in a makeshift women’s eco-camp in the Jordanian desert. Many of the those attending came from a Healing background and the camp itself was run by the women who were dedicated to the practice of non-violent communication. It was an international group open to both Palestinians and Israelis with two translators one for Arabic speakers and one for Hebrew speakers. It was an intense week, where we came together in loss, grief, anger and, well life! The conflict which I had assumed would surface was unexpectedly not the issue - the mostly young Palestinians were tired of politics and wished to explore power and gender issues within the confines of their own community and potentially the camp was offering a safe space. The spirit of openness and acceptance was the healing balm that was for some a transformative experience, and this was also part of my Quaker journey - a journey I would not have contemplated without feeling the implicit support of Friends.

My 18 year old granddaughter Flora who is in India for a year teaching in a primary school in Gujarat wrote saying she was reading ‘Living Our Beliefs’* and hadn’t realised that there were similarities in Buddhism and Quakerism, that there are parallels in Eastern and

Western thought. Her times spent at Shindig* have been one of the influences in helping her navigate the challenges that have faced her and finding connections between cultures is part of that mix.

I have an emotional attachment towards my Jewish heritage even though I've never been connected in any tangible way. This year I and my family will be part of an inauguration ceremony in Vienna to lay a memorial stone in honour of my Great Grandmother, Flora Rosanes, who perished in the Holocaust. The shadow of this loss has been a motivating force in my life as the experience of my mother's family is deeply embedded in me. Glasgow Meeting is the field in which I've integrated different parts of my life and my sense of gratitude towards this community is a mark of the inclusiveness and generous goodwill that drew me to Quakers over thirty years ago and which is still as alive and robust as ever.

I would like to quote a poem by Rumi - one I have used when offering Focusing workshops over the years and which I found was painted on the wall at the entrance of the eco-camp.

Somewhere beyond ideas
Of right and wrong
There is a field
I'll meet you there.
Will I see you there?
See you there
See you there.

Barbara Robinson, Glasgow

DATES FOR THE DIARY

8th April AREA MEETING AT WIGTOWN 11.30 – 4pm
10th June General Meeting for Scotland in Glasgow 10.30 for 11am
12th June AREA MEETING by telephone 7 for 7.30pm
29th July – 5th August BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING at Warwick
26th August AREA MEETING IN TARBERT
11th September AREA MEETING by telephone

BYM Warwick 29th July – 5th August

An opportunity to meet Quakers from all over the country. Programme for children and young people + JYM means all the family can go. But you need to book soon – www.quaker.org.uk/ym.

Interested? – contact Michael Hutchinson mjhridrie@btinternet.com 0141 770 7865 or Ed Tyler 01583 421 275.

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