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Quaker News
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This newsletter is available
in other formats.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the view of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

New Years Day 2009

This morning as soon as it was light, two of us set off to walk the two miles to Ostel Bay, a wonderful sandy beach looking south to cloud-capped Arran, not on a public road. The tide happened to be well out and we made footsteps in the sand at the edge of the sea. By the time we were climbing up through the woods away from the bay the sea had covered our tracks. We saw no one else until we were nearly home again.

Meanwhile Israel continues to bomb Gaza, which is already short of basic food supplies, fuel and medical facilities. I do not see how this can reduce the prospect of terrorist attacks.

A Peaceful New Year.

I am very grateful to Janette Walkinshaw for proofreading this issue.

Editor

The deadline for the next edition of *West Scotland Quaker News* is
Wednesday, 18 February.

Copy should be sent to the editor, Jane Mitchell, either on paper or disk, by post to

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Clerk's Letter

Trust me - I'm a Human Being

A few days ago I had to climb on our roof to remove some twigs which a family of jackdaws had helpfully stuffed down the chimneypot to build a nest. I made a special roof ladder and as I climbed up it I realised that if I had been acting in my engineering capacity I would not have been allowed to do this without a written risk assessment, safety ropes and at least one other person. Maybe I shouldn't have taken the risk but I trusted my own abilities and the strength of the ladder – and I survived.

The tragic death of 'Baby P' highlights what happens when we rely on following procedures rather than finding out what is really happening; and when something goes wrong we find an individual to blame as if that will sort out the problem. In reality the responsibility rests with many people, not least the two adults who directly contributed to the death. What was it in their lives and upbringing which allowed them to do such a thing? We dump so many of the problems which our society has created on the desks of social workers and expect them to sort them out. Certainly there should be checks on social workers but these should be in the form of inspections of the work they do rather than the procedures that should be followed.

I have just finished reading a book about a violent offender who was brought up in a family in Saltcoats where there was routine physical abuse by the father. He spent his early years in a succession of approved schools, borstals and prisons but he gradually began to see the pointlessness of his violent behaviour and he started a Standard Grade course. He eventually obtained a Masters degree in social work and now works as a senior social worker in Ayrshire. One would expect that he would be an ideal person to relate to and help young offenders in a similar position, but he admits that he is discouraged from using his personal experience in his work. In fact if it had happened today he would never have been allowed to even start a social work course because of his background.

The jackdaws have a lot to answer for.

Martin Mansell

Reports

Area Meeting (AM): Milngavie, 15 November Another Meeting House?

Report by Anne Dunford

Milngavie is some distance away from us, so we decided to take the camper van and stay overnight after the meeting. Leaving the van near the station, we were glad of the walk up to St Andrews Church to stretch our legs after the three-hour journey.

The reading (29.06) was a piece written in 1987 by Helen Steven, reflecting on her time spent in Vietnam in the 1970s, commenting on our destruction of the earth's scarce resources and how extremely arrogant the western world can be in thinking we have the monopoly of spiritual truth. This reading fitted well with Alastair Macintosh's talk in the afternoon.

After the usual reports had been delivered, it was with some relief that I heard our clerk say that the thirteenth item on the agenda – our proposal for the purchase of a building in Wigtown for a meeting house – was being brought forward.

Newton Stewart Meeting had discussed at length the possibilities and practicalities involved in this venture. We were prepared to 'live adventurously', but we

wondered what the response from other Friends would be to our proposal. After Les and I had presented our case, Newton Stewart Friends were heartened to hear the very supportive comments, but it was time for lunch and the matter, officially anyway, was put on hold.

Four choices of soup! Thank you Milngavie for stepping in at short notice to provide generous hospitality. Over lunch we had very positive comments from Friends. All seemed to support our proposal.

After a slight diversion when the alarm went off, we returned upstairs for the talk by Alastair Macintosh.

Images of melting glaciers, a graph showing the drastic effect of burning so much fossil fuel, maps showing how sea levels will rise, examples of motivational marketing all combined to reinforce the message that our planet is suffering as a direct consequence of human behaviour. Can we as the older generation bring some spiritual wisdom into society? Will this help? Climate change is happening but can we

use it as a spiritual opportunity? Can we switch people on to the idea of that of God within? Can this counteract the appeal of the great temples of consumerism, or will shopping still be the main religion for many? Many questions. Much food for thought.

More food for thought regarding the purchase of the building in Wigtown followed. The trustees had discussed the situation over lunch, and agreed in principle to the purchase. It took a while however for us to clarify the fact that Area Meeting would be buying the building, not our local meeting.

This is an exciting opportunity, but it will take a lot of time and effort over the coming months. It is good to know that we have Friends' support.

We then returned to the business of nominations and appointing post holders for the coming triennium. This is always a difficult task, and the Nominations Committee was thanked for their work on this. There are still some names yet to come, at the next AM in January.

Membership issues were dealt with and then, Nicola Maharg, who had been waiting patiently, gave her report on the *Quaker Identity and the Heart of Our Faith* conference. This she described as "exciting, diverse and gathered". It was interesting to hear how the varied views of the six leading the conference inspired people to think how bridges can be built. The conference was an inspiring experience and we can benefit too from the resulting study materials. (We were waiting for these to be reprinted, but they have since arrived.) The book list at the end of Nicola's report in the November Newsletter provides suggestions for further reading, so there's plenty for us to get our teeth into at this winter's discussion groups.

It was a long day with a lengthy and weighty agenda, but surprisingly we got through almost all of the items. As it was already dusk, we weren't able to linger for tea. We knew we had to find the campsite and get hooked up to the electrics before it got really dark.

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS): 1 November, 2008 Same-sex relationships

Report by Margaret Peacock

This meeting was not so riveting as last. Most of the morning was taken up with threshing the report and draft minute from Quaker Life (QL) on same-sex partnerships. Three Friends had spoken on this in opening worship — all very acceptably; as Phil Lucas noted, they included our late Friends George Gorman and Willie Shakespeare: “Let not to the marriage of true minds admit impediment.” Nevertheless, in *the Friend* that week there was criticism of Friends at Yearly Meeting pre-empting the subject (at which they might not have been called to speak) by getting their point of view across in the opening worship.

Contributions were very varied. The most notable were a gay Friend who spoke very warmly of her long-standing committed relationship and the support of her meeting. Another Friend was very clear that wrong behaviour doesn’t become OK just because a meeting says so, and therefore we shouldn’t change anything. Another disagreed, pointing out the change in our perception of morality which has led to our condemnation of slavery. It surprised many of us to hear that a large number of Friends think they have no gay people in their meetings, so no problem, and have no idea that meetings to celebrate same-sex commitments happen in other meetings. Some Friends worry about unintended consequences — but we have to follow the Spirit, as George Fox did. The draft minute from QL suggests we alter both *Quaker Faith & Practice* to include equal procedures (as far as possible) for all kinds of couples and *Advices & Queries* to inspire all kinds of couples as well as single people.

In our home groups we considered Sufferings’ new role. Are we behaving as envisaged? Has the word “crucible” run its course? We decided yes and YES. We considered that we were going to be an information exchange, a post office...

Finally we were introduced to the next operational plan for centrally managed work. Clearly it was adopting the principles of the Long Term Framework. The Trustees are budgeting for money to be available for devolved work to take place on behalf of us all. Local Meetings have had a letter from the Recording Clerk encouraging them to discuss the Framework and, if desired, write in with comments, proposals, advice from experience, requests for advice... I hope that before long there will be nobody who has not heard of the Framework. One letter in *the Friend* even seemed to think it a suitable outreach document!

QL Representative Council: 17–19 October, 2008

Light & Outreach

Report by Liz Anderton

About 80 Friends from all over Britain gathered at the High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire for the Quaker Life (QL) Representative Council. This was a wonderful opportunity for Friends to meet Staff from Friends House, share ideas and hear about what is going on in other Meetings.

The conference opened with a session introduced by Trish Carn, editor of *Quaker Monthly*. She asked us to share our ideas and thoughts on how this journal can support us and newcomers in our meetings.

The Light in our Conscience

Helen Rowlands, Alex Wildwood and Phil Lucas led an inspiring session on this theme, working with the study materials from the *Quaker Identity and Heart of our Faith* Conference. (See the November Newsletter.) The booklet outlines a number of topics which could be used by meetings in study groups or as part of shared worship. After the introductory talk we continued our worship in small groups.

Using Beth Allen's section in the booklet, we were reminded of the basic principles of worship-sharing, namely:

-Speak for yourself, using 'I' statements.

-Receive contributions worshipfully, without responses, comments or questions.

-Allow a short pause between contributions.

-Spoken contributions can be what rises up in your mind, and they don't have to feel as if they carry the full weight of 'vocal ministry'.

We focused on two questions: What difference does meeting together make to us?

Am I changed (over a period of time) by meeting?

News from Meetings

Several meeting houses have been refurbished. A new meeting has been established in Ely; meetings have had a range of events for National Quaker week. Quaker Quest is very popular and has been established in many meetings throughout the country. Those who have participated said how much they had learned from working on the project and how it had strengthened the meeting.

Some area meetings reported difficulties in filling posts.

Suggestions made included having paid assistance for the treasurer.

It was encouraging and inspiring to hear about exciting new projects and growth within the Quaker community. We had a worship-sharing meeting on Sunday to reflect on the work within our meetings.

Quaker Life — what it does

It provides training, advice, and support and welcomes comment and information on best practice in meetings. It has recently set up the QL Network, which is a group of interested Friends from all over the country who can support and extend their work in local meetings.

QL also works in the following areas.

- Children and young people
- Criminal records checks
- Meeting safety
- Outreach
- Diversity and inclusion
- Pastoral care, including eldership and oversight
- Library
- Swarthmoor Hall
- Wardenship and employment
- Resource Room.

Quaker Life is a national resource available to all Friends.

On Saturday evening we had a very interesting, stimulating, and entertaining talk from Jeffrey Durham on his experience of Quaker Quest. He asked why many Friends were so keen to tell newcomers about George Fox when what they really wanted to know was, “Can I have doubts about my faith in God?”

Never be surprised by some of the assumptions that people will make. For instance, one lady said to him, “I can never be a Quaker because you have a testimony to simplicity and I wear make-up.”

Never underestimate the importance of the doorkeepers and the tea makers.

For me, one of the most important aspects of the weekend was that we met in a spirit of worship, listening, learning, and sharing with one another.

Thank you, West Scotland Area Meeting, for giving me the opportunity to take part.

The Kipper *(continued from facing page)*

*The quote on the facing page is from William Penn; it is referred to in *William Penn: Mystic – as reflected in his writings* by Elizabeth Gray Vining. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 167, 1969, page 15.

Features

The Parable of the Kipper

A woman went downstairs one morning for breakfast. She had travelled far to the hotel to rest from her busy life, and today she needed to return. Her mind was full of all that might happen.

Normally she would not choose a kipper for breakfast. In the past it had proved to be rather indigestible and as a result omnipresent throughout the rest of the day... subsequent meals had seemed to have a fishy essence about their taste. But as a final treat, the kipper seemed the right choice.

The woman ate the kipper. It occurred to her that this required a lot of concentration and care – whenever she lost focus on the kipper she would find a bone in her mouth. Eating a kipper, she concluded, was a meditative experience.

When she had finished the kipper, she realised her mind had been stilled, that she had been for that period truly aware of the essence of the kipper rather than her worries.

On her journey back she was indeed revisited by essence of kipper from time to time. Previously this would have been irritating and uncomfortable. But today she remembered the stillness of breakfast, and was able to touch that stillness again. She smiled as she thought how bizarre it was that a repeating kipper could be a call to prayer.

The day passed peacefully. Would instituting the routine of a morning kipper, she wondered, lead to a more centred life? But what would be the consequences for her digestion, and for the smell of the kitchen?

The woman remembered something she had read*, how it was important not to live on past experiences, but constantly to expect new openings.

‘Don’t bow down thyself before thy old experiences but behold the arm that has helped thee and that God who has often delivered thee. Remember that the manna descended from heaven daily; that it daily must be gathered and eaten, and that manna that was gathered yesterday cannot serve today for food.’

The kipper had been the answer, manna for that day only. Who knew what God would send tomorrow?

Sheila Semple, Glasgow

Gospel of Thomas Seminar October '08

Logion (Saying) 11

Jesus said: This heaven shall pass away and the one above it shall pass away and the dead are not alive and the living shall not die. In the days when you devoured the dead, you made it alive; when you come into light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you have become two, what will you do?

And almost as an answer

Logion 111

Jesus said: The heavens will be rolled up and the earth in your presence, and he who lives on the Living (One) shall see neither death nor fear, because Jesus says: Whoever finds himself, of him the world is not worthy.

These are the translations used to introduce the Gospel of Thomas short seminar on 26 October. They are the original Coptic text translated and published in 1959 by A.Guillaumont, H.Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till and Yassah 'Abd Al Masih, and I now read this in preference to any other translation as it is without colouration added by single translators who often express opinions of their own within the translation.

I began reading the Gospel of Thomas about ten years ago after being very impressed by *Jesus Untouched by the Church* by Hugh McGregor Ross, which is his own translation and presentation, which I thoroughly recommend as a beginning to this difficult collection of 114 sayings of Jesus.

Unlike so many more recent translations Hugh Ross allows the words to speak for themselves without too much personal comment, and it has become my experience that these sayings do reveal their inner meanings to each individual, on repetition and familiarity. The sayings begin to become understood as an illumination in a quite unexpected way; as one absorbs the words their deeper meaning is often quite suddenly revealed. A good practice is to write them out by hand I have found.

The sayings do have a self-authenticating quality which can be summarized within the text of the first three. Within the text of Saying 3 is found —“when you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will become aware that you are the sons of the Living Father.” Is this not the same marvellous truth as in the last statement in Saying 111?

The eleven of us gathered on 26 October spent a very lively afternoon

of general discussion, questions, suggestions and the general sharing of our personal feedback from a reading of these two logia. The Genesis story was discussed at some length with references to duality and separation, of darkness and light, and also various differing opinions on what is meant by “devouring the dead”. It was suggested that this could be interpreted as absorbing what will only cause a kind of death within, although the Logion 11 does actually state that “when you devoured the dead, **you** made it alive”. I emphasise ‘you’ because the logion suggests that **you** are that key factor.

It is impossible to record all that was discussed in those three hours but as always it was stimulating and engendered a great feeling of love and companionship.

Our next seminar will be the weekend 5-7 June 2009, venue to be advised.

Rosemary Gascoyne, Castle Douglas

Burns, Politics & War

In 2009 the January celebrations of Robert Burns will mark his 250th anniversary. This annual endorsement by the Scottish establishment would have surprised and possibly infuriated Burns in equal measure. It may be explained by the popular focus on his songs of love, conviviality and patriotism. These, and the occasional maudlin transgression, are usually preferred to more challenging verse. But Burns’ verse can still be relevant to us today. The narrator of *Logan Braes* (on the next page) would never know of bloodshed on the streets of Baghdad or the Helmand killing fields, but she was already at one with our world where widows bravely clutch children alongside flag-wrapped coffins. Her story stands the test of time: unfamiliarity with Scots is no obstacle to grasping the passion of the message. (“Faes” for “foes” is the one essential piece of glossary)

Mike Brown, Castle Douglas

Logan Braes

O, Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride;
And years sin syne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the simmer sun.
But now thy flowery banks appear
Like drumlie Winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing owers;
Blythe Morning lifts his rosy eye,
And Evening's tears are tears o' joy;
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile:
But I wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, Men o' State,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tear, the orphan's cry;
But soon may peace bring happy days
And Willie hame to Logan braes!

Robert Burns (1759–96)

Notices

Financial Support in 2009

Urgent request from the Treasurer

Quakers are fortunate in having modest financial needs which are met through the financial support of our members and attenders.

Please take a little time to look at the Contribution Schedule enclosed with this newsletter which tells you about the money required to keep the Society going and how you can contribute.

It would be really helpful if you could return a Contribution Schedule form if you intend to send a contribution to West Scotland Area Meeting. Because of complicated accounting regulations, the treasurers can no longer assign your donation for you, so we ask you to mark clearly how your donation should be divided between your local meeting, West Scotland Area Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting.

Everyone's circumstances differ, as well as their ability to give. If you already support our Society through a standing order, you might like to reflect on the level of your donation and whether you wish to change it, downwards or upwards. If you have not already done so, please consider how you can support our Society financially in 2009, preferably through a regular donation.

Margaret Morton, Treasurer, West Scotland Area Meeting

Recent publications from Friends House

The following documents have been published by Quaker Peace & Social Witness in the last few weeks. They can be downloaded from www.quaker.org.uk. Click on **Friends and attenders** and then look under **Recently Added Documents**.

Better World Economics Autumn 2008, 12pp. This has many articles including progress on the Millennium Development Goals, climate change effects in Bangladesh, trade rules for developing countries, and 'The Folly of Growth'.

Making Waves, newsletter of Turning the Tide Autumn 2008, 16pp. This has information about Transition Towns and very interesting reports by youngish people on the 2008 Climate Camp.

Dialogue for a nuclear weapon-free world, 2pp. This encourages engagement of Friends with decision-makers about the issue.

Editor

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. It must be emphasised that grants cannot be made to reimburse someone retrospectively, for instance, for an event that has already occurred, or for goods already purchased.

Applicants should complete an application form, which can be obtained by telephoning 01620 829117 or 0131 447 3268. The completed form should be passed to a Quaker of long-standing, who is well known to their meeting. The Quaker will countersign it to confirm that (to the best of his/her knowledge) you fulfil the criteria in the first paragraph above. S/he will then send it to the trustees to arrive by 31 March or 30 September.

Applicants will normally hear the result of their application within 8 weeks of these dates.

Gardening work sought

Attender seeks position as gardener/ groundsman, full- or part-time.
Central Region, Glasgow or north of Glasgow.
Telephone: 01360 850740

Library

The following books have recently been added to the Area Meeting Library in the Meeting House in Glasgow. They are located at the shelf mark at the end of the entry, e.g., PL/BIR

Birkel, Michael, *The messenger that goes before: reading Margaret Fell for spiritual nurture* [Pendle Hill Pamphlet 398], Pendle Hill (2008) 36pp PL/BIR

Gibson, Tony, *Streetwide, worldwide: where people power begins*, Jon Carpenter (2008) 306pp S/GIB

Gordon, Mick and Wilkinson, Chris(eds.) *Conversations on religion*, Continuum (2008) 221pp R/GOR

Krosny, Herbert, *The lost gospel: the quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, National Geographic (2006) 308pp B/KRO

Lundstrum, Peter, *God: the short version*, Lion (2008) 96pp R/LUN

Sharman, Cecil W, *George Fox and the Quakers* (new ed) Quaker Books (2008) 256pp B/FOX

Zelter, Angie (ed.) *Faslane 365: a year of anti-nuclear blockades*, Luath Press (2008) 278pp P/ZEL

Paul Burton, Librarian

January Area Meeting

The meeting will be in the Meeting House in Glasgow at 11 for 11.30 on Saturday 17 January.

Dates for your diary for 2009

7 February AM Glasgow	7 March GM Edinburgh
18 April AM Glasgow	20 June GM Glasgow
27 June AM Newton Stewart	
22 August AM Dunblane	12 September GM East Scotland
17 October AM Castle Douglas	21–22 November GM Aberdeen (residential)
5 December AM Glasgow	

25 July–1 August **Yearly Meeting Gathering**, York
Information as it becomes available and booking forms can be found at www.ymg.org.uk

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