



February
2011

❖ Contents ❖

Scottish Friend

End-of-Life Legislation	Elizabeth Duncann - 4
Northern Friends' Summer Shindig	Bronwen Currie - 5
Quakers and Business Spring Gathering	8
Response to Government Cuts	David Sterrat - 10
Progress on Marriage Equality	Phil Lucas - 14
Area Meeting by Teleconference	Elizabeth Allen - 17
General Meeting in Dunblane	Martin Burnell - 19
Report from Representative Friend	Leslie Stevenson - 22
Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship Spring Gathering	24
Meeting for Sufferings December 2010	Margaret Peacock - 26
Meeting for Sufferings February 2011	Peter Kennedy - 28
Invitation to General Meeting	Robin Waterston - 32

Margaret Peacock took the cover picture.

Please send material for next *Scottish Friend* by 30 April to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk.

For the front cover I like to publish photographs of your meeting places. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures. Many thanks to all who have made suggestions.

Scottish Friend will be posted on the GM website at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email scotfriends@gmail.com, to let Bronwen Currie know.

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



Scottish Churches House, where General Meeting was held in November



Some time ago, I responded to an invitation to make submissions to the End-of-life committee considering the proposed Bill to go before the Scottish Parliament. I did so as I felt very strongly about this Bill and its consequences. I was not surprised when it was defeated but was, nonetheless, disappointed.

It seems to me that we cannot base our legislative system on the (potential) mythology of a 'God'. Only if someone can prove that 'God' exists and that He wants us to behave in a certain way, would we have to take it into account when making our Laws.

What about basing our Laws on 'ethics'? Well – whose ethics? That would still leave us in the realm of subjectivity which is no basis for law-making as it automatically invites discrimination over whose standards are adopted and whose are not. We (almost) all accept that some crimes are so wrong that they must be outlawed but, actually, these are still based on what makes for the smoothest running of the societies in which we live and co-exist with others in as peaceable a state as possible, to maintain maximum 'profit' from our lives.

So if 'God' cannot be invoked to argue for or against the End-of-Life Bill, and ethics are dubiously biased, what can we base our arguments on?

I feel that only the person affected directly has the right to say when s/he has had enough and wants to end their existence in this world. Having nursed three people, I can say with utter certainty that palliative care is not the answer – even when it is available. Palliative care is just that – and more often makes the onlookers feel better but not the patient. Who has the right to say that

someone must continue to exist even though their body may be racked with pain, with no hope of amelioration let alone cure, and even if that continued existence is only maintained by keeping the patient too doped-up to communicate with the world? An unbearable existence is all the more hideous if the patient cannot even communicate to others how awful it is. Just because the patient is kept silent and thus unable to complain is no reason to assume that the situation is acceptable.

Choice should be available to us all in every aspect of our lives – why do people object to this final choice being ours and ours alone? No one except me can say what is acceptable to me with regards to what I can or am willing to suffer. 'Walk a mile in my shoes before you criticise me' is a good piece of advice: the trouble is, we cannot subject opponents to suffering the end-stages of another person's life just for them to have some experience – we have to hope they are empathetic. And that is just not good enough as it is again purely subjective and discriminatory.

I watched three good people end their lives in pain, distress and the enduring belief that they had had enough and should have 'gone' months earlier. 'The Earth is for the living', 'resources should be spent on those who can benefit from them', 'why won't they let me go?' are three quotes from them.

Each wanted to die in their own homes with their family about them. Each was denied this. Each wanted to be free from pain and was denied this, despite being on the maximum doses of analgesia permitted. Each wanted the dignity of being fully compos mentis but was denied this. Each wanted to die while in a relatively peaceful and content frame of mind, remembering pleasant events from their lives with loved ones, but each was denied this. How was that good for them?

They became not human individuals but, literally, just bags of bones that belonged to others who had the right to say what happened to them and who took no account of what they actually wanted or were feeling. Do you want that for yourself? I don't.

I – like many others - shall take responsibility for myself but (given the lack of help I can legally ask of others) I shall have to consider going sooner rather than later – while I can still take an active role in managing my own fate and don't have to rely on help from others when my limbs let me down. But perhaps that is what 'they' are trying to force us into, leaving 'them' with no expensive care bills and clear consciences! Am I cynical or what?

Northern Friends' Summer School - 50 Years and Still Going Strong!

As promised in my article in the last Scottish Friend, plans for the Grand Reunion to celebrate 50 years of Northern Friends' Summer School (Summer Meeting / Gathering / Shindig... according to which decade you attended it!) are now taking shape. And whether you were a young participant, a member of staff or even a trustee in more recent years, we hope you will come and join us to celebrate and give thanks for a wonderful event which has inspired several generations of young Friends.

The reunion will take place in Edinburgh on Saturday 7th May, and will be in two parts:

i) a Meeting for Worship at 2.00pm in the Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, followed by tea and cakes and an opportunity to meet up and reminisce.

ii) a Shindig Event (which we hope will include a bit of a ceilidh, some vintage Radio Ayton / A-Drax / A-Bell / A-Lo sketches), starting at 7.30pm in the Debating Hall, Teviot Row House, Bristo Square, Edinburgh EH8 9AJ.

In order to keep track of numbers, please let us know you are coming - even if only to one of the events - giving us your name (as it was then!) and if possible the years you attended. As a secondary purpose of this Reunion is to raise bursary funds in order to keep youngsters coming to this amazing event, and also in order to cover the costs of the reunion, there will be a charge for the evening Shindig Event. We are asking for a minimum donation (more if you can manage it!) of £15 (waged) and £10 (unwaged/student) per person (partners are also welcome of course). You can order your ticket(s) by sending a cheque, payable to "Northern Friends Youth Events Trust", to Bron Currie at the contact details below or by electronic transfer.

Please email summerschoolreunion@gmail.com for bank details.

Please note that owing to licensing regulations at Teviot Row House, the evening event is only open to over-18s.

We really want to see you there in person! But there are one or two other things we want too.

PLEASE:

1. Spread the word! We are trying to let as many people as possible know about the reunion but we are sure there will be people missed. If you have any way of contacting others please share this information with them. We also have a Facebook group for the facebook-literate – search for NFSS 50 year reunion).

2. Share with us your memories and photos. We hope to be able to create memory and photo board to display at both

parts of the reunion. If you are able to scan in photos please then email them to us (summerschoolreunion@gmail.com) letting us know which year(s) they are from. If you are unable to make them electronic, you can send us postal copies to the contact details below. We will take great care of them, and if you write your name on the back and send us a SAE we will return them to you after the reunion. Please also send us your stories and memories – typed or handwritten and we will endeavour to add these to the boards too.

1. SKETCHES – do you have any favourite skits, sketches or songs from your summer school days? Are you willing to recreate them at the evening shindig? If so, please contact Ken Latham (contact details below) who is overseeing this part of the reunion.

2. If you have any further ideas or would like to offer help in any way, please do get in touch. We'll be delighted to hear from you.

Finally, to get in touch with us you can email any of us at summerschoolreunion@gmail.com, or contact us by phone or snail-mail

Roz Currie, 1/2, 5 Torrisdale Street, Glasgow, G42 8PZ 0141-423 7746

Bron Currie, Taigh na Torraig, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay, PA49 7UN tel: 01496-850 006

Ken Latham, 38 Baldovan Terrace, Dundee, DD4 6LS - 07887-840 367

We - Roz and Bron Currie - are looking forward to hearing from you!



Quakers & Business
Spring Gathering and AGM 2011

Mainstreaming Ethical Futures -
Inspiring Economies and Businesses for a
Sustainable World

Friends' Meeting House, Edinburgh,
Saturday, 2 April 2011, 9:30am - 6:00pm

Help to make change happen the Quaker way (QF&P 24.56) -
Take up and strengthen your own role in mainstreaming ethical,
economic and business change.

All are welcome to the Gathering. An attendance fee of £20 for
Q&B members and £25 for non-members will cover room hire,
refreshments and donations.

Note from Daphne Wassermann (Glasgow Meeting).

We do hope that this event will be well supported by Scottish
Friends and others. Please bring it to the attention of anyone you
know with an interest in how organisations can work ethically.

PROGRAMME

0. 9.30 Registration. 9.45 Meeting for Worship

I. 10.00 am - 10.45 am: Q&B's AGM: Join Q&B now or on the
day, to join our work of promoting Quaker principles in business
and the workplace. Q&B is the recognised network for Friends in
or interested in business and the world of work, plus those in
sympathy with us.

II. 10.45 - 4.45 pm: The Discussion: Mainstreaming Ethical Futures - Inspiring Economies and businesses for a sustainable world. Led by: Alastair McIntosh, a member of RBS, and members of the Eigg Community: living the reality, grasping mainstreaming issues, and building vision

III. 5.00 pm - 6.00 pm: The Q&B Lecture: - delivered by Alastair McIntosh, author of: Soil & Soul, and of: Hell and High Water

The Gathering's outputs will feed all participants, and also will feed Q&B's work for change in the economic and business world - a world which exists to serve us all, and so, we contend, needs to be held in trust by and for us all, in new and creative ways.

Come and be part of the movement to help make change happen the Quaker way, via quiet processes and small circles (QF&P 24.56). Leave with new ideas and understandings to guide your own life generally - including its spiritual, economic, charitable and business aspects.

To Book and for queries, contact Tim Phillips via: clerk@qandb.org

We welcome payments by BACS transfer to Sort Code 08-92-99, Account Number 65066607 (please include "<your surname> SG" in the reference field) or pay by PayPal: <http://www.quakersandbusiness.org.uk/>

A response from Quakers in Scotland to Government cuts

David Sterrat

In November and January South East Scotland Area Meeting considered the UK Government spending cuts which are presently happening most severely south of the Border, and which look set to start in earnest in Scotland after the May elections. We were concerned that the effect of the cuts is likely to be hardest on the worst off in society. There was a feeling that we should do something about this, but what?

One suggestion was that we could put forward alternative cuts, such as getting rid of Trident. This would be a very good place to start, and I am sure that we could find other areas where money is wasted - for example in locking up minor offenders in prisons rather than trying to rehabilitate them. However, even these good cuts may well not balance the budget.

Among the major political parties, there seems to be an implicit assumption that we should deal with the budget deficit by cutting Government expenditure rather than by increasing its income. At all costs, income tax cannot be raised, not even on the higher rates of income. "Hard-working" families cannot afford to pay more income tax. However, the low-paid and those on benefits are, apparently, able to afford the recent VAT increase in spite of it having a proportionately greater impact.

People with the lowest incomes in society are going to be affected most by the cuts in services too. Cuts will fall in areas like social services and children's services, which tend to be used by the least well-off. Even cuts which affect people on all incomes will have a disproportionate effect on the poor. The better-off may mourn the loss of a library, but they will still be able to afford books; the same library closure will cut off some of the poorest from their only source of books.

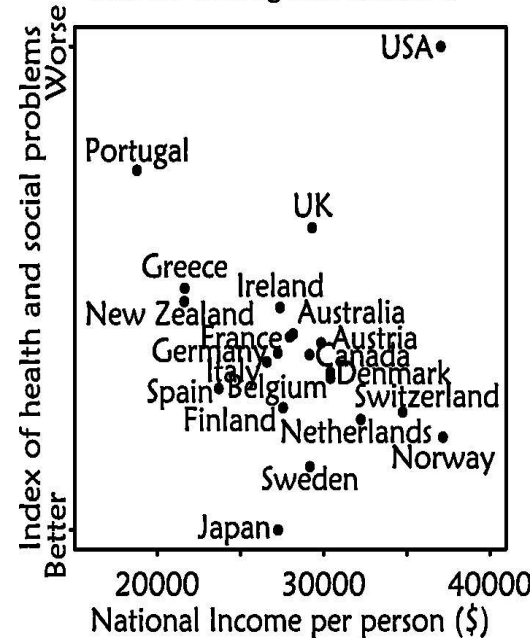
This amounts to an increase in inequality in society, and this goes against our Testimony to Equality. We felt in the words of the STUC's campaign, "there is a better way": if the budget cannot be balanced by "good" cuts, the richer should pay more taxes and the poorest should not lose out.

Furthermore, many of the cuts seem to be false economy. For example, withdrawing support for children in their early years is likely to lead to them having greater problems later in life – which will be a personal tragedy and costlier for society to manage.

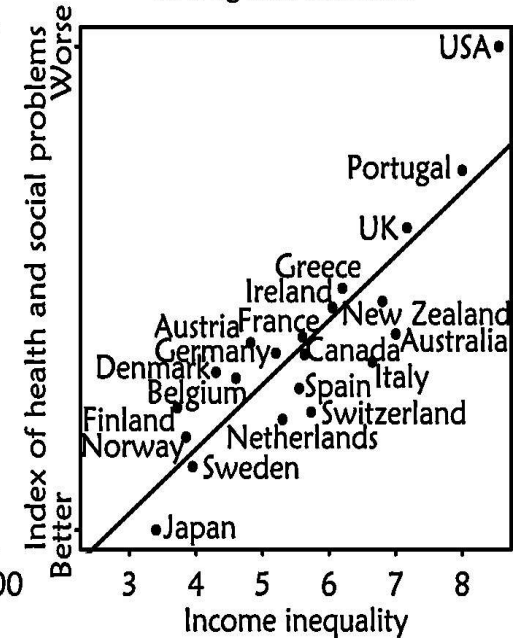
We felt that Quakers should add their voices to those from various bodies including the unions, charities and churches and make these points to leaders of the political parties in Scotland before the May election. We hope that interested Friends from around Scotland will be able to draft a letter to political leaders that March General Meeting will be able to unite behind. If you are interested in joining in, please email David Sterratt <david@sterratt.me.uk> or phone on 0131 556 1367.

In the letter, we might want to mention the recent evidence that Equality is not just a spiritual imperative, but that it is actually in everyone's interests to make society more equal.

Health and social problems are only weakly related to average national income among rich countries



Health and social problems are closely related to inequality among rich countries



Source: Wilkinson and Pickett: *The Spirit Level* (2009)

In their book *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett show that in richer societies, increasing average per-capita income does not imply that people live longer, are happier or that the society is less violent (left-hand graph). However all these things are correlated with the amount

of inequality, as measured by how many times more the income of the richest 20% is than the poorest 20% (right-hand graph). More equal societies seem to do better.

It might be thought that only those on low incomes would benefit from a more equal society and that those on higher incomes would gain nothing in return for lower net income. In fact, there is evidence emerging that in more equal countries people of all social classes have longer life expectancy than their counterparts in the corresponding social classes in less equal countries.

Why equal societies seem to do better is not proven. The authors of the Spirit Level put forward the hypothesis that it is easier for more equal societies to be more cohesive, which reduces differences in social status and also promotes trust between people. Increasing trust could be key to making progress in a number of areas. For example, stress levels are likely to be lower in a more trusting society and, given the evidence that chronic stress can lead to ill-health, this would lead to improved health. There is also evidence that differences in social status could affect health: a study of civil servants, all of whom worked in a similar office environment, shows that those in lower positions were likely to suffer more disease.

Interestingly, it does not appear to matter whether a more equal society is created by taxing more, or paying more equal wages: the high-tax Scandinavian countries top the equality charts with low-tax Japan, but they both score highly on measures such as health and happiness. In Scotland surely we can improve on both fronts!

Marriage Equality in Scotland

Phil Lucas, Convener
GM working group on same sex marriage

Following the decision taken by Britain Yearly Meeting in 2009, General Meeting for Scotland appointed last year a small group to research and advise on ways of bringing about equality for all couples seeking legal recognition of their partnerships. An Edinburgh-based group of Friends had already done some work on the issue, had established links with the Equality Network, which we have been able to pick up and had established that, as down south, Unitarians and Liberal Jews share our objectives.

We first sought an interview with Fergus Ewing, the minister with responsibility for this area. He declined to meet us but suggested we talk to Simon Stockwell, the civil servant to the Scottish Government assigned to this area of work. John Phillips and I met with Simon in October. He was very straightforward and encouraging, told us that the issue was not high on the present Government's agenda, that there was no hope of getting it raised in Holyrood before the election in May 2011 and that our best way forward was to try to get some commitment in parties' election manifestos. He gave us the names of some MSPs who he knew shared our concern.

Subsequent letters have brought little return but we do know that both the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats are committed to working towards equality in this area, in Scotland as in England. Iain Grey, the leader of the Labour group, happens to be my constituency MSP. Having received no reply to a letter, I met him at a constituency surgery. The issue was clearly not even a small blip on his radar and he certainly had not thought of including it in

Labour's manifesto. Was the civil partnership legislation not enough, he asked. I told him about the Marriage Equality Symposium I was shortly to attend and he did ask me to write to him after the event to put him in the picture.

The Symposium was organised by the Equality Network and took place in a hotel close to Holyrood. It was well organised and attended and I found it both enjoyable and informative. I was impressed by Tim Hopkins' (Director of the Equality Network) clear analysis of the legislative landscape and the main legal issues requiring attention. Most of you will be aware that at present Scottish Law allows religious, humanist and civil marriage for mixed but not same sex couples while allowing civil partnership for same but not mixed sex couples and only in a secular context. Quakers, since our Yearly Meeting in 2009, have been seeking full equality. In England and Wales, Quakers were among those who have been successful in lobbying for a step towards that goal: it will soon be possible for civil partnerships to be celebrated there in a religious context.

Kenneth Norrie, Head of the Law School at Strathclyde University and a specialist in family law, gave an entertaining account of the international scene and I was impressed by the number of countries which have moved much further towards equality than we have. One knew about Canada and could have guessed this would be true of Scandinavian countries but Spain and South Africa came as surprises to me. We were also given a salutary reminder that for most of the world there is continuing huge discrimination against and often persecution of gays and lesbians.

John Curtice (Professor of Politics at Strathclyde and a familiar TV pundit) presented the result of surveys which reflect changing attitudes in Scotland and elsewhere over the past fourteen years.

The change in climate is very recent, he said, but quite dramatic and there are indications that the civil partnership legislation has moved public opinion on significantly, though there remains a 'non-trivial minority' which still considers same-sex partnerships to be wrong. A survey of attitudes of church attenders in Scotland reveals that a majority across all denominations, including Roman Catholics, now favour same sex marriage (though this would not seem to be reflected in official views!)

A panel session included representatives of SNP, Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem and Green parties. Lib Dems and Greens have marriage equality in their manifestos. The spokespeople for Labour and SNP were both circumspect, though pro equality themselves, indicating that their parties were far from united on the matter and that it was not high on their party agendas. The Tory, a member of the LGB Tory group, thought there would be greater support for equality from his party in Westminster than in Holyrood. Opinion at the conference was divided about whether we should seek to get the law changed for Scotland via Holyrood or to go for a whole UK approach via Westminster.

I left unclear what the hope may be of getting legal change during the present Westminster or the next Holyrood parliaments. Public opinion has moved perhaps further than the politicians realise (as I am telling Iain Grey). It is one we shall need to keep working at. As far as religious groups are concerned, Quakers, Unitarians and Liberal Jews share the same aim and, according to the research, a majority of adherents of the larger churches would support change and that proportion is growing steadily.

West Scotland Area Meeting by Telephone Conference Elizabeth Allen - Clerk, West Scotland AM

In Wigtown on a sunny day in June, we set the dates for Area Meeting for the following year, being mindful that in the winter months it would be prudent to hold our meetings in the city. As the time drew near for bleak December's Area Meeting, sunny June was just a memory and severe weather warnings, road closures, dangerous driving conditions, snow and more snow was the reality. Events were being cancelled everywhere but there was still over one week to go before Area Meeting and there might be a thaw or at least an easing of conditions! Snow continued to fall and e-mails from Friends in our scattered Local Meetings and from Glasgow suburbs started to arrive in flurries in my mail box and it became evident, even to an eternal optimist like me, that the only people who were going to be at Area Meeting in Glasgow were those who could walk and even they were going to have difficulty. It looked like we would have to cancel it, or was there something else we could do.? Phones were ringing, Friends were talking, bright ideas were in the air and a Meeting for Business by telephone conference emerged as something we might try.

It was simple to set up. The system we chose was one where Friends joined the conference at the pre-arranged time by dialling in and entering a code number. We set a clear time frame for the meeting, one hour, which cost each participant £3. The agenda was re-drafted and focused on routine and essential business. Full draft minutes were circulated in advance.

Eleven Friends from seven of our nine Local Meetings took part. During our opening worship 2.84 of Quaker Faith and Practice was read out and Friends were reminded that God is with us in every place. This was an inspirational moment. We settled into the telephone conference, we dealt with the business and we held together in that worshipful spirit until the end of our meeting.

So what was it like to take part in an Area Meeting by telephone conference? Friends were pleasantly surprised at how well it worked and those who live in more remote places found the ease of joining in from their own home a striking contrast to their usual long journey to Area Meeting. Of course, by not meeting together we missed our time of fellowship.

It might be said that this was a rather exclusive event, as there were only eleven participants. However in the feedback I received afterwards there was the following practical suggestion for making it more inclusive. On the day of the telephone conference Friends from a Local Meeting who wished to take part could meet together and join in, using a speaker phone. They might even gather earlier for a period of worship and to read through the reports, so that they joined in the conference call as a gathered group, with hearts and minds prepared.

So what of the future? The experiment worked and could certainly be repeated in similar circumstances. But we might also use it in other ways, for instance to clear routine business in advance and allow more time at Area Meeting to devote to a topic of special interest. It has even been suggested that we could plan to hold some of our Area Meetings by telephone conference, the benefits being: it might be a good way to get more people to participate; it would reduce travel costs and time; it is more environmentally friendly; it would be inclusive of those who cannot travel to attend.

We were living adventurously on 4th December. If we allow ourselves to continue to do this and to experiment and play with new ways, we will discover what works best and will surely gain in the long term.

Residential General Meeting, Dunblane
13-14 November 2010

Martin Burnell

General Meeting for Scotland met in the peaceful surroundings of Scottish Churches House in Dunblane for what may be the last time. This residential centre owned by Action for Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) has been struggling financially for some years and, despite a successful appeal and physical improvements to the buildings, it seems that the plans for it to be run by a separate self-supporting charitable company have fallen through.

We heard that ACTS is now urgently considering the future use of the premises and that a paper on the possible options would be available the following week.

This could also affect Dunblane Meeting who use the premises as their Meeting House. Friends in Scotland have been actively involved in ACTS, currently providing one of the Trustees as well as being represented on the broader Members' Meeting. We heard that the options paper, when issued, would be made available by email to interested Friends and that views should be expressed to our representative, Leslie Stvhenson, prior to the Extraordinary Members Meeting planned for 6th December.

The main afternoon and Sunday morning sessions were devoted to the work of Quaker House in Brussels. Martina Weitsch, one of the Quaker representatives there, gave a broad outline of the history, governance and activities of Quaker House which was established in 1983, although work in Brussels began four years earlier. Over this time there have been eight sets of representatives and fifty interns working there.

The purpose of Quaker House is to provide a Quaker viewpoint to European institutions, both the European Community and the

wider Council for Europe. They also work closely with other European NGOs. A monthly newsletter is published and over 60 publications have been produced on different issues. The centre organises conferences and study tours, receives ad hoc visitors and provides opportunities for younger Friends through the internship programme. Further details www.quaker.org/qcea

The Centre selects projects in areas on the European policy agenda where Quakers have a distinctive viewpoint and which are not already being tackled by other NGOs - for example: peace (currently with particular reference to the Middle East); human rights; economic justice; and most recently sustainable energy. Liz Scurfield, also from Quaker House, then described in more detail one particular project on criminal justice which was started in 2004.

The concern was with the rising proportion of women in prison. Initial research was undertaken by questionnaire and a gender critique published on the new European Prison Rules. They enlisted the support of a sympathetic MEP on the Social Health and Family Affairs Committee and under her sponsorship produced a report for the Committee with 32 of their 45 recommendations being accepted. Follow up work is now being undertaken to encourage countries to adopt the recommendations.

Friends were encouraged to subscribe to the QCEA Newsletter and to become involved with the British Committee www.qceabc.org.uk which works in Britain to support Quaker House and organises conferences in its own right.

Among the normal business before General Meeting was the budget, a report from our representative on Christian Aid (we also welcomed Kathy Galloway from Christian Aid to our meeting), a proposed policy on records produced by the Archive Group, and

a minute from North of Scotland AM on the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill - Friends were left to make individual representations if they wished.



Some pictures of Leighton House, the residence for Residential General Meeting.

Report from your Representative Friend

Leslie Stevenson

I have been acting as "Representative Friend" for just over a year now, so I guess a report back is due. I took over the role from Pamala McDougall in autumn 2009, but I have not attempted to emulate her in the number of meetings she attended with great enthusiasm. I have concentrated my efforts on the core activities of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) in its regular Members Meetings.

Friends will have been painfully aware that much of ACTS efforts in recent years has been devoted to trying to keep Scottish Churches House in Dunblane going. I came in at a fairly late stage of this protracted process, and I confess to some bewilderment at the managerial, financial and legal complexities. Much energy, emotion and money has been invested in keeping alive the vision of this ecumenical centre for the whole of Scotland. But it has become ever more clear, especially in these times of recession, that the bookings for SCH are nowhere near enough to pay its staff, and that the various churches, who finance ACTS activities, cannot keep on pouring money into this black hole. So the Trustees of ACTS (distinct from the Members) who are responsible for running SCH have at last grasped the nettle and set a closing date in July 2011. The Members have the responsibility for selling property, and have already agreed to the sale of Mosset, one of the outlying houses. They have not yet agreed to the sale of the main building; rather bids for leasing it are being invited by April 2011 (details can be found on the ACTS website). If no viable bid is forthcoming, the likelihood is that the main property will also be put on the market.

A more positive slant on this is that our ecumenical vision need not be tied to this particular set of stones and mortar in Dunblane. All

our denominations have buildings and facilities that are under-used, and perhaps there is no longer need for a “neutral” common ground. It might be a positive thing for ACTS meetings and other conferences and events to move round the different parts and denominations of Scotland. And there is still the possibility that some other organization with aims in harmony with ACTS may find a use for the Dunblane complex. If a sale is effected, there should be funds available for other ecumenical uses.

Important though that is, it is not all that ACTS has been doing! There have been the regular Members’ Meetings, at which I find myself seated round the table with an R.C. Cardinal or Archbishop, the Moderator, the Episcopalian Primus, various leaders of other Protestant Denominations, plus a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Salvation Army! I sometimes have a feeling of “faking it”, and I have to remind them that I am not a “church leader”, only a representative, since Quakers do not have leaders. I am also aware that were we to start discussing theology, or same sex marriage – which has not happened so far – we would probably encounter intractable disagreements. But we have been able to worship and pray together, and some of our most valuable meetings have been those devoted to worshipful reflection rather than practical business. Over a period of a year or more, one can begin to develop some personal relationships and friendships with the other leaders or representatives. There was a two-day event, clerked in the Quaker manner by Christine Davis, in which we discussed the example of the Australian Churches covenanting together; in this case I was more impressed by the process than the product (I didn’t detect any great enthusiasm for emulating the Australian model). I also accepted an invitation from the First Minister to a reception in the Great Hall of Edinburgh Castle to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland. This was a very splendid affair with swords on the walls, choir, trumpets, bagpipes,

exhibition of historic documents, and speeches from Alex Salmond and the Moderator. I took the opportunity to have conversations with a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Sikh, and a pagan (in a sober Edinburgh suit!). There was an opportunity on the way out to view “the Honours” – the Crown Jewels of Scotland – free of the usual charge!

Other invitations come our way. Pamala is going to the Royal Highland Show again this year. I have been to Synods of the United Reform Church (in the Scottish Police College!), the Free Church, and the Episcopalians (the latter ending with a dinner in a posh Edinburgh hotel, with a rather over-the-top after-dinner speech, very witty but with lots of in-jokes). Such invitations are normally dealt with by GM nominations group, so if you might like to attend such an event, please let Pat Lucas know.



Quaker Lesbian & Gay Fellowship
Residential Spring Gathering at Scottish Churches House,
Dunblane 8th-10th April 2011.

The QLGF Committee decided some time ago to have this year’s Gathering in Scotland to encourage established and newer members in Scotland to attend. Some Scottish members of the Fellowship have come to recent Gatherings, but even those Gatherings held in the North of England mean a long journey for many. Mary Woodward has put in a lot of work over the past few years promoting QLGF to Quakers in Scotland, so we also thought it also

was a good time to see who has responded, what their interests are and what their work in Quakers has involved. For this reason we have not yet set a full programme as we wanted to find out from members what they would like the Gathering to include.

I have been in touch with a Scottish Friend (not a QLGF member but active in LGBT work) to see if he could speak about working with the Scottish Parliament about introducing same-sex marriage, but his involvement is not yet confirmed.

Although the Gathering is primarily intended for QLGF members, non-members may come to the Saturday; the estimated charge for this is £20, including refreshments and lunch. Final costs will be confirmed when the programme is set.

You might be a QLGF member, an LGBT Quaker who is interested in QLGF, or a non-LGBT Quaker who is supportive of or interested in LGBT concerns for Quakers in Scotland. If so, please let me know;

- if you are interested in attending (this will not be binding, it just gives me an idea of numbers)

- any ideas you have for a subject to discuss - and any offers to help run this or any part of the weekend

In Friendship, Alistair Gault, Gatherings Officer
alistair.gault@phoncoop.coop

Meeting for Sufferings 4 December 2010

Margaret Peacock

By the time you get this yesterday's appointment of Paul Parker as Recording Clerk/CEO will be old news. But you will not have been a party to Susan Seymour's enthusiastic account of the appointment process. From twelve excellent candidates six were shortlisted and Susan said the group was strongly led to select Paul. He has impressive CVs in both Quaker and professional circles. As co-clerk to the Yearly Meeting Gathering of 2009, he is already well known to many Quakers, and as Assistant Head Teacher of a comprehensive school he attracted a glowing recommendation of his organisation and leadership abilities. He will take over at the end of May.

In a financial report, Ron Barden told us good news and bad news. Good news is that we have two large legacies which make all the difference to this year's balance. Bad news is that, but for one AM and one LM Friends are not reaching the recommended average of £150 per member, even though they have welcomed the release of this figure to aim at. Meetings are urged to ask Katie Frost to speak to them and communicate her enthusiasm about the wonderful work that Friends do, supported by dedicated and hugely competent staff.

Rex Ambler, the originator of *Experiment with Light*, wishes to retire from close involvement with Light Groups. He wishes Sufferings to consider what body might take over the administration. We were unable to think of a suitable niche, but hoped that the forthcoming weekend at Glenthorne can bring out a group willing to take over the enterprise's future.

Our main theme of the day was related to global warming - a final

look at Sustainability. We spent an hour in home groups and in plenary session listened to each other's minutes. In an inspiring and passionate introduction, Sunniva Taylor, the QPSW sustainability person, wanted us all to Act Now. Pursue imaginative initiatives; support those of others; change our lifestyle; start or join Transition Towns; and try to do things publicly as Quakers.

We are aware that mere sustainability at the present level of consumption is not enough. Neither is a successful year conforming to 1010. We have to reduce much more - eventually to zero. Otherwise, as harvests diminish, whole populations will flood across borders and war is likely.

QPSW has produced a set of helpful questions that they hope will be discussed locally and lead to useful exploration at YMG next year in Canterbury, and eventually to corporate action. One home group called for helpful hints and local ideas to be published alongside A&Q for inspiration and discussion.

Meeting for Sufferings has to report annually to YM, and we received the draft for 2010. Thus we were reminded of our residential weekend at High Leigh; our yearning for effective two-way communication with AMs; our letter encouraging a positive approach at the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review; our letter to Kenneth Clarke about sentencing policy and restorative justice; and our letter to the Border Agency regarding detention of immigrant children. The Clerk will write to Theresa May about this last item, since nothing has changed.

Meeting for Sufferings 5 February 2011 Peter Kennedy

We had a new Clerking team, Christine Cannon is the new Clerk, with Jeffrey Dean supporting her as Assistant Clerk. Michael Hutchinson was at the Table as Acting Recording Clerk. Paul Parker, who takes up his duties as Recording Clerk in May 2011 was present by invitation.

Before Meeting for Sufferings starts at 10am there is a 45 minute surgery where the BYM Trustees Clerks meet with Friends to answer a range of questions about their work. It was good to see eleven members of the meeting engage with the Trustees over a wide range of issues as sometimes there are only a handful of Friends there. If only some of the Friends who ask questions of the Trustees in the main sessions availed of the surgery, they would probably find themselves with much more illuminating answers!

During the opening worship, we heard about the 14-day imprisonment of Sylvia Boyes, an area representative on Sufferings from Keighley and Craven AM. During 2010, as part of the Trident Ploughshares movement, Sylvia demonstrated at the Faslane Naval base where she was arrested and subsequently fined. This latest imprisonment was the result of refusal to pay the fines imposed by the courts.

The Clerk gave the Meeting an update of action points from previous meetings. In September 2010 her predecessor, Susan Seymour, wrote to Theresa May, the Home Secretary expressing the Meeting's concern that the UK Government were imprisoning the children of Asylum Seekers along with their parents. Sufferings reps were concerned that no response had been received, although informal sounding indicate that something might be in the pipeline. Friends were invited to write to both their own Westminster MPs and Theresa May urging the Government to take action to ensure no children are wrongly imprisoned in any detention Centre.

We were informed that Rachel Rees, Head of Communication and

Fundraising for Britain YM had resigned due to long term ill-health. The Meeting wished to offer their loving support to Rachel for her five years of service, during which time her department had developed a professional approach to fundraising and engaging with Friends.

Jonathan Fox, Clerk to the BYM Trustees, gave the Meeting an update on some of the issues the BYM Trustees had been grappling with over the last couple of months. Jonathan was able to report that BYM had managed to regain control of the lease from the defaulting tenant, with all rental incomes paid up to the end of December 2010. Following a tendering process, a new tenant had been secured with a new lease for 125 years in its final stages of negotiation. The property is to be used as student accommodation.

Friends asked the Trustees questions on the following issues :

- * the possible use of development of the 'airspace' above the existing Friends House – this has previously been explored and found not to be viable;

- * the impact of the recent disposal of BP shares – these were sold at a loss on the advice of the Investments Group of Quaker Finance and Property Central Committee who were acting on previously agreed criteria. Trustees intend to look at what changes might be needed ;

- * the possible use of volunteers in carrying out some administrative tasks – the Acting Recording Clerk said they had to be careful not to use volunteers to carry out tasks which would normally be undertaken by paid staff;

- * 'Relationships' – the Clerk to Trustees spoke about the work the Trustees proposed to take in regard to the Triangular Relationships between themselves, the Recording Clerk, and Management Meeting (the heads of Departments of the Centrally managed work);

- * the refurbishment of the Large Meeting House at Friends House – plans are being drawn up at the moment and the final decision on

whether to proceed with this project will be made in July 2011;

Marigold Bentley of Quaker Peace and Social Witness introduced a series of papers related to the thorny and emotive issue of Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions against Israel to protest against that country's treatment of the Palestinians. Initially one hour had been pencilled in for consideration of this issue. The planning group had vastly underestimated the amount of interest this issue could generate.

After several contributions it was evident that the Meeting couldn't unite on the proposed action we were being asked to take, though we did agree to the following:

- * Reaffirming the BYM commitment to the EAPPI programme

- * To support EAPPI calling for proper labeling of settlement goods from the occupied Israeli territories

We agreed to encourage Friends' Meetings to consider an economic boycott using the documents – available from local Meeting for Sufferings reps, or the Recording Clerks Office at Friends House.

Chris Skidmore, Clerk to YM Agenda Committee introduced a flavour of what Friends attending the Yearly Meeting Gathering in July/August at the University of Kent at Canterbury could expect. We considered Future Patterns of Yearly Meetings agreeing to a proposal that would see residential events taking place every third year, with London based Yearly Meetings alternating between being held in early May in year 1 and late May in year 2. This is a change from current cycle of residential events every two years and will come into effect from YM2014.

Friends considered, in both Home Groups and plenary session, the final report of the Review Group for Meeting for Sufferings and the BYM Trustees which will go to Yearly Meeting this summer. The most radical proposal is for a decrease in the size of Meeting for Sufferings from

around 200 members to around 100 members with one representative per AM. Friends seemed mostly content with the majority of the recommendations. The report will be given further consideration before going to Yearly Meeting Gathering this summer.

The Meeting agreed to the creation of a new Area Meeting for North Somerset and the change of name for West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting for the remainder of the former North Somerset and Wiltshire Area Meeting. We heard a Concern from South East Anglia AM on "How We Speak Out".

Friends were reminded that there are 300 open, or self funded places for the World Conference of Friends to be held in Kenya in April 2012. Further information from the conference website - <http://www.saltandlight2012.org/>



Directions to the Day Care Centre, Montrose

From the station cross over the roundabout and head right to Hume St. At the end of Hume St, cross the High St (where buses stop) and head right towards the Old Church (tall spire). Before the church go left along Churchyard Walk, and straight along Museum St. Turn right into Panmure Place and the Day Care Centre is on the right, just after the Museum. For a map, try <http://maps.google.co.uk/> and search for Montrose, or Museum Street, Montrose. Churchyard Walk is rather hidden amongst the trees!

General Meeting for Scotland in Montrose, 5 March 2011 From 11am until about 4pm

"If we ... have not prepared ourselves in some measure for dying, what have we been doing? To face up to the fact of death gives a fuller awareness of God-given life... Can we prepare ourselves in some measure for dying?... From the closeness to my own dying, I know God is. Death is not a negation of life but complements it: however terrible the actual dying, life and death are both parts of the whole and that wholeness is in God."

Jenifer Faulkner, 1982 - Quaker Faith and Practice 21.57

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

Our special topic for this GM arises from discussions on the End of Life Assistance Bill. That Bill has fallen, but we will use the afternoon session to engage in a process of listening and sharing our deep feelings and experiences and convictions, so that we are better able to come to unity in the future if we have cause to make a corporate statement. We will reflect together on what our responsibilities are as Friends, as members of a community and as members of society to end of life issues and how we can support each other. We hope to begin but probably not conclude this process. We ask Friends to come prepared in heart and mind.

We will also discuss a variety of business items including a report from the same sex marriage working group that we set up a year ago, the timing of residential GM and an update on the future of Scottish Churches House.

Please join us in Montrose, keep up to date with Scottish Quaker work, meet Friends from across the country and uphold our business method, depending as it does on good participation from as many of us as possible.

Robin Waterston, Clerk