



October
2011

❖ Contents ❖

Scottish Friend

Meeting for Sufferings	Margaret Peacock - 3
General Meeting expense claims	John Phillips - 6
End of Life (Scotland) Bill	David Yelland - 7
Quo Vadis Quaker?	Roger Quinn - 9
September General Meeting	Eva Deregowska - 12
ACTS Update	Margaret Peacock - 15
Same Sex Marriage	Phil Lucas - 16
Silver wedding celebraton	Norman Peacock - 20
Residential GM Booking form and Information	21
Invitation to General Meeting	Robin Waterston - 28



Tarbert (Argyll), where West Scotland AM met
in August

Norman Peacock took the cover picture.
Please send material for next *Scottish Friend* by Christmas to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk. I shall compile between Christmas and New Year. 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.



Report of Meeting for Sufferings, 1.10. 11

Margaret Peacock

I mention first the conversation I had just before leaving. Is it better to voice the opinion of one's Meeting, having virtuously ascertained it, or is it better to voice one's own opinion, knowing oneself to be a trusted representative?

At the beginning, as usual, the Clerk of trustees introduced their minutes. Many find this to be "routine, and therefore dispensable", but I always find it interesting. He emphasised accountability, right up to the top, where Clerks of trustees, Sufferings and YM are in the end accountable to YM. With respect to the remodelling of the Large Meeting House, it is a huge undertaking, and will use up 10 of the proceeds of sale of Courtauld House. Detailed plans will go to the council by the end of the year. Written suggestions from individuals are still welcome; each is read carefully. What sort of main entrance from Euston Road? What sort of toilets? seats? lights?

A main item for the morning was concern over the impact of government cuts on those least able to endure them. Disability allowance and legal aid were singled out as examples. Michael Bartlet, Parliamentary Liaison Officer, sought our blessing on a representation to Ian Duncan Smith, pointing out unfairnesses in his proposals, especially to people with disability, and inviting him to create an equality audit on his proposals.

Catherine West, leader of Islington Council, spoke about its population - very mixed, and they want to keep it that way, although poor people are finding it increasingly difficult to afford London prices. The council is forcing private firms who work for it to pay a living wage, not just a minimum wage, and has brought

its cleaning services back in-house, paying a living wage and also saving money.

She introduced us to its Fairness Commission, drawn up by representatives of community council, police, and other local organisations. It is an assessment of fairness, to which all setters of budgets must submit their plans. It is popular, and is being taken up by other councils - Nottingham for one. We were encouraged to approach our own councils to ask them to always assess fairness in a similar way, with an equality audit and a set of fairness criteria. [Wwww.islington.gov.uk/fairness](http://www.islington.gov.uk/fairness).

There were many contributions to the discussion, with special emphasis on the cuts to disability allowance and legal aid. If your allowance is cut, on the grounds of an inappropriate medical test, you need the legal aid to get it restored. Yet legal aid lawyers estimate that 90% of their clients will be unable to afford the new fees. Beware the secondary effect of a cut - the double whammy!

We had been asked to find out what use has been made of *A Framework for Action*. Three contrasting contributions followed. The first said she had not been able to obtain a copy in her AM. Almost nobody had heard of it. The second said their trustees used the 7 priorities as headings for its report to the charities commission. The information was more than that body requires, but the report was informative for all Friends. Finally an AM Clerk voiced "strong criticism", saying it is ill-expressed, mutually contradictory and unhelpful. He wants a strong statement of Quaker faith and linking to the Testimonies, and would love to be asked to undertake the necessary fundamental revision. I noted that nobody said the undertaking had been a mistake and that there should not be a second edition.

The afternoon session on "Strengthening our Meetings" was introduced by Paul Parker, who has produced a checklist under three headings.

1. What is the purpose of AM?
2. Is your AM fit for this purpose?
3. What can FH do to help?

The questions are pertinent and I am sure they will be circulated to all AMs

The purpose and functions of AMs are set out in 4.02 of QFP. Originally they were held within the range of Friends travelling on horseback, and were for the testing of concerns, support of elders and overseers, and for "seeking the will of God in testing times". Yearly Meeting Gathering had 270 children, and was hugely successful at being inclusive. Quaker Life launched there a new resource on children - a lot of help is available to AMs.

It was pointed out that in the days of horseback, business meetings started with a whole hour's worship, and worship is the whole purpose, though sadly curtailed nowadays. A picturesque idea was that elders should be like midwives - supporting representatives to Sufferings as well as all committees! Outreach shouldn't be an add-on, but should flow from a vibrant, welcoming, rooted Meeting. It is good to have meetings of all office-bearers, to see what each does, and how it all fits together.

The discussion had opened with the Clerk of Devon AM saying telephone conferencing is the future, but she hated the whole idea. She asked for a set of instructions that would make it really easy. The General Secretary of Quaker Life, Richard Summers, responded that QL is on the ball and would be producing a pamphlet in a couple of months. I responded that West Scotland's instructions

were available now, and that in view of our huge distances we are sensitive to our use of petrol energy, and many of us are enthusiastic about saving it, as well as empowering Friends who cannot get to an ordinary AM. As well as the Clerk of Devon, the Recording Clerk asked me for a copy, and I hope that contact with QL will prove mutually inspiring. I came home highly delighted.

Expenses claims for 2011

Please contact John Phillips
(john.h.phillips@blueyonder.co.uk) if you wish to claim for
expenses that you have incurred on behalf of
General Meeting.
It is a great help if claims for 2011 are sent to him before
the end of the year.

END OF LIFE ASSISTANCE (SCOTLAND) BILL

David Yelland

In response to Roger Quinn's call in the last Scottish Friend (August 2011) for articles opposing the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill, I should like to give you the views of Milngavie Friends.

Milngavie Friends held a meeting in November 2009 to discuss the question of physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill. The general feeling was that euthanasia, from both ethical and practical standpoints, should not be legalised.

The terminally ill are in a particularly vulnerable situation, and could feel pressurized into requesting euthanasia to avoid being a burden on their relatives. Making the means of ending life available could also encourage suicide; often suicide is an impulsive action, and patients may be glad that they had not earlier been given the option of euthanasia.

There is also the danger of a slippery slope towards extending mercy killing to groups other than the terminally ill. There would be no logical reason to withhold voluntary euthanasia from the chronically clinically depressed, or from the long-term disabled with an unacceptable quality of life. Hard-pressed medical services could also be under pressure to obtain the consent of next of kin to end the lives of those not able to make a choice but for whom life is demonstrably pointless, such as the elderly demented.

The two medical doctors who were present at the meeting were strongly of the view that good palliative care, that takes into account the views of the patient, was the best way to deal with unbearable suffering. There had been many examples of lives that

had been destined to have permanent pain and suffering but within a relatively short time had become enjoyable and worthwhile. There is a real danger that the short-term agony is not properly addressed in the haste to consider ending life. A side-effect of palliative care may hasten death by the use of drugs that are aimed at that suffering, but the principal purpose is to allow the patient to properly express their own humanity as much as possible.

There are deficiencies in the provision of resources for palliative care, particularly with the coordination with other services, and the incentive to invest in improvements in palliative care may be threatened by the extraordinary measures that would have to be brought in to safeguard the practice of euthanasia. The pressure to allocate resources to the improvement of palliative services would be seriously reduced if an instant escape from suffering was readily available. The responsibility for the administration of euthanasia would also downgrade the medical profession, and doctors would be less trusted if they were perceived as potential mercy killers.

One or two Friends seemed prepared to countenance the hastening of death in certain circumstances. However the general sense of the meeting was that the legalisation of euthanasia would be not only unethical but also detrimental to the long-term interests of patients and of society as a whole. Milngavie Friends would therefore be opposed to the passing into law of the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill.

QUO VADIS QUAKER?

Roger Quinn

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help,
My help cometh from the Lord
Which made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved
Behold, he that keepeth thee
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The recent somewhat one-sided debate over the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill has raised the question — Whither goest thou Quaker in Scotland? ²

Forty years ago Hugh Doncaster brought his Concern “Our Corporate Commitment” to Friends. Today that commitment is still being questioned by Friends in Scotland.

One hears from time to time comments about long term attenders who have no intention of applying for membership. Yet without their commitment the Society would grind to a halt. Why do these attenders wish to remain attenders? Is it because they do not see the way open to commit themselves to a church which makes no credal statement, believing the Almighty to be too big to be tied into words? And is therefore open to all people regardless of how much or how little faith they have in the Divine? This certainly was the experience of the author, and the lack of definitive Christianity in oral ministry kept him from applying for membership for six years.

By then Dublin days had begun and a spiritual home found in Churchtown Meeting, where Sunday after Sunday the spoken ministry of Charles B. Lamb and other outspoken Christian Friends would be heard.

Why do some of us feel embarrassed when the Name of the greatest teacher the world has ever known is mentioned? Indeed it was said recently that in one Friends’ Meeting that the name of Jesus has become unmentionable.

It is unfortunate that this Name has been used all too often for political and personal gain. Should it not be the Dear Name the Rock on which we build our Shield and Hiding Place”? ³

Today in this country there are Friends who question the religiousness of the Society and the existence of the Divine. In Ireland too there are Friends who claim to be agnostic. ⁴ It is to these Friends in particular that this article is addressed. In the light of the current financial turmoil, to whom will these Friends turn when their income dries up and the greedy masters of the financial universe call in their loans and mortgages? To whom can they cry when their very Lares and Penates ⁵ are fallen? As the situation worsens and both countries apply austerity measures, the one far more Draconian than the other, the words of Abraham Lincoln ring out “I have often been driven to my knees because there was nowhere else to go”.

As the Republic of Ireland faces its Dunkerque and we in this country tighten our belts let us remember the words of the Book of Common Prayer - “ It is right and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to our Heavenly Father”. ⁶

This is a time of opportunity for us all to have a corporate Commitment in what George Fox discovered over three hundred years ago and to share his vision of a great people waiting to be gathered in. For it is when times are hard that people know their need of God. Let us give thanks for this hour of austerity.

References

- 1) Psalm 121 AV
- 2) Scottish Friend May 2010 August 2010. October 2010 March 2011
- 3) Hymn 176 A&M
- 4) Appendix to IYM Minutes 2011 p61—62
- 5) Lares and Penates - Roman mythological gods of the household, often represented as small statuettes. Modern usage encompasses household valuables
- 6) Matthew 5³ - NEB



General Meeting for Scotland 10 September 2011 in Glasgow

Eva Deregowska

Sixty-five Friends and Attenders were present, including a representative from the Congregational Federation. Alastair McIntosh, who is our representative on the Iona Community Board, gave a report on its work. He gave a brief outline of the history of the Community, started by George Macleod, who is believed to have had a Quaker family link. The mission of the Community is to make the link between the inspiration from Iona and its historic Abbey, and the lives of people living in deprived communities in Scotland. It has links with many parts of the world and operates in a decentralised manner. The values of the Community include peace, social witness and economic justice.

Bronwen Currie reported on the Northern Friends' Summer Shindig, the residential event for 11-16 year olds from Scotland and the North of England. It took place with 48 young people at Loretto School on the theme of "Got any Change?". Two young people from Ramallah in Palestine attended this year also. For many young people this event may be their only opportunity to experience Quakerism in practice. The depth of spirituality and worship especially in Epilogues can be profound. We were concerned that few 11 year olds attended this year and ask Friends to promote the event to young people in their Meetings.

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on same sex marriage. We were keen that GM should make a submission to this consultation on the basis of the policy agreed at Yearly Meeting in York in 2009, so the Same Sex Marriage Working Group was asked to prepare a draft submission for consideration

by GM in November, in time for submission before the deadline on 9 December. Friends wishing to give their individual input to this process are encouraged to read the online consultation document

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/05153328/0>)

and send any comments to Phil Lucas or respond directly to the questions in the document.

David Turner reported briefly on the work of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network. The network was set up by GM over a decade ago to assist Friends with a concern for criminal justice and related issues in Scotland to work more effectively together.

Elizabeth Allen, as member of the QPSW Crime, Community and Justice Group, then spoke about the concern that the Quaker voice should be heard at the Scottish Government level. Criminal justice is one of the priorities of "A Framework for Action". Across Britain, the responsibility for this work comes under the QPSW Crime, Community and Justice group. Much of their work involves responding to legislative proposals at Westminster which do not cover Scotland. Scottish Quakers have no effective mechanism at present for their views on legislation before the Scottish Parliament to be heard. QPSW have accepted that their Crime, Community and Justice Group should be the correct vehicle for considering legislation to the Scottish as well as the Westminster parliament.

This GM would be the correct body for submitting representations arising from this. GM agreed that it is important that Friends' historic interest and involvement in this field in Scotland should be

continued and therefore asked Elizabeth Allen, David Turner, Philip Bryers, Eva Deregowska, Martin Mansell and Mike Nellis (subject to consent) to help discern and report to GM how we can best move forward on this matter, recognising the key role of QPSW and the devolved position in Scotland. We are anxious that we have missed opportunities in the past to respond to major bills, as for example the Criminal Justice and Licensing bill, which has now been passed. A start could be made if Scottish Quakers had representation on the Scottish Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice, and we asked the Clerk to make such a request to them.

It so happened that later in the day we appointed a Friend (Alex Cole-Hamilton) as GM's Parliamentary Liaison person with the remit to identify opportunities for GM to engage with the current political agenda by regular liaison with the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office and communicate relevant information to the GM Clerk and the convener of the Communications & Outreach Function Group. This could also provide a way of taking this concern forward.

The afternoon session was led by John and Diana Lampen, who described how Rex Ambler developed the Experiment with Light. He had begun by asking whether a process is available to us today to rediscover the life and power which energised and transformed early Friends. The process takes the form of four stages: Mind the Light; Open your Heart to the Truth; Wait in the Light; and, Submit to the Truth. We then went into small groups, where we were led by John and Diana into a "taster" experience of some of the principles underlying the Experiment with Light. Although far too short, this was a powerful and moving experience for many of us, and confirmed the wish of Friends in North Scotland AM to try to persuade John and Diana to come to our AM in Pluscarden next year, where we shall have more time, to lead us in the Experiment.

The main range of Scottish Churches House is now on the market for lease or sale. At the time of the decision it seemed too big a step to get rid of Leighton House as well, so at the last ACTS members' meeting we inspected the building thoroughly and invited ideas for its use over and above reoccupation by ACTS office. It was clear that any remodelling of the building would be very expensive and dependent on the proceeds of sale of SCH.

The Trustees have asked for a nomination from each church to consider together the next step - to provide a rough estimate of the costs of the various suggested uses and, if appropriate, to prepare a remit for an architect to obtain detailed costs. Our next meeting is on 26th October, and I think it possible that there may be a decision that expensive alterations to this very solid building could not in the end produce a viable ACTS centre, and the proceeds of sale of SCH could be better spent.

Our next meeting will incorporate a celebration of 21 years of ACTS, with a special service of praise, prayer, reflection and re-commitment in Coatbridge Calder parish church at 7-30. Singing will be led by groups from Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic parishes, a Salvation Army band and a Praise band. All are welcome.



Phil Lucas,
Convener of the GM Working Group
on same sex marriage

You will, I am sure, be aware that the Scottish Government is conducting a consultation exercise on same sex partnership/marriage and that our Yearly Meeting and General Meeting are committed to supporting a change in the law to allow same sex partnerships to be celebrated and registered in our meeting houses, in the name of both our testimony to equality and our stance on religious freedom.

The deadline for responses to the consultation exercise is 9th December. Our GM's response has been drafted and will be considered at General Meeting in Edinburgh on 12 – 13 November. The preamble to our response follows below. Our full draft response is available from me by email or post – phil.lucas1@gmail.com or phone 01368 850227. It will be helpful if you can consider this carefully before we meet next month.

You will also be aware that the Roman Catholic hierarchy have launched an unprecedented attack on the consultation exercise, claiming (quite inaccurately) that marriage law is not the secular authority's responsibility and threatening to withdraw their co-operation from the Government if the consultation goes ahead. They are encouraging their members to support them by mounting a postcard campaign (although the evidence is that 55% of Scottish Catholics support same sex marriage).

Individual Quakers are encouraged to make their own responses in support of the proposed legal change, either by writing a letter or by completing and returning the questionnaire, which can be found at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/law/17867/samesex>.
If you write a letter (or send a postcard, even) the address is:
Scottish Government, Consultation on Same Sex Marriage,
St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

A general statement to accompany the response submitted
on behalf of
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
General Meeting for Scotland

Quakers are a non-hierarchical and radical Christian body which emerged from the turmoil of mid 17th century Britain. Our faith is living and experiential and we resist defining it in terms of creed or the external authority of holy book or church. Our authority is the light of truth, which many of us call 'God', within each one of us, tempered by the discipline of corporate discernment.

The principles of integrity, equality and religious liberty have always been at the heart of our faith, the latter reinforced by our experience of being a persecuted minority. These principles now lead us to welcome the Scottish Government's consultation on same sex marriage and civil partnership and to support strongly the mooted changes to the law. We believe that a just and stable civil society is built upon stable and committed relationships between

individuals – relationships anchored in love and respect. We believe, furthermore, that such deep relationships reflect the love of God as we understand this.

We have for centuries held religious ceremonies to ask for God's blessing on couples who seek to commit themselves to each other in marriage and have had the right to register such marriages within the context of worship. Our recent corporate experience is that lesbian and gay couples can demonstrate in their relationships the same committed and often life-long love for each other as can opposite sex couples. Within the past twenty years we have agreed to celebrate such committed same-sex partnerships in the context of our meetings for worship and to regret that current law prevents such partnerships being recognised in the same way as other sex marriage. Same sex couples do not have equality or religious freedom in this important respect.

Quakers have been strongly supportive of civil partnership legislation, appreciating the valuable contribution that this has made in implanting the recognition of the equal rights of all throughout our society. However, we are also aware that this legislation itself, however welcome, implies a form of discrimination against same sex couples. We have become aware of how such couples feel about the separateness of the "civil partner" description that is applied to them, and about the discrimination that is implied in legislation that permits churches and faith groups to hold religious ceremonies of registration for those embarking on marriage, but not for those entering same sex partnerships. This is a matter not only of equality but, just as importantly, of religious liberty.

In consequence of this the annual gathering of British Quakers (Quakers in Scotland, Wales and England) agreed two years ago that henceforth (though without breaking the law) we should treat all couples equally when they are seeking marriage, and when they seek God's blessing for their union within their Quaker worshipping communities.

It is fundamental to Friends' understanding of the solemnisation of marriage that those who are marrying should make their marriage promises in front of their friends and in the presence of God, seeking God's blessing on their union. We continue to uphold the insight of George Fox, one of the founders of Quakerism, who wrote (1669) that

"... the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or the magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance and not man's, and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are but witnesses."

Marriage is to be celebrated; it should be available for all committed couples who seek it.

We do not wish to see our own discernment of what is right imposed on those of other religious faiths which are not yet ready to take this step. We seek a permissive law which allows religious freedom, and therefore which allows the possibility of same-sex couples marrying within a religious context if that is what both they and their religious communities wish, while not putting anyone in a position where they have to act against their conscience.

Silver Wedding Celebration

Norman Peacock

Introducing its chapter on marriage, Quaker Faith and Practice (16.03) quotes:

"We think it right to remind our members of the ancient testimony of our Society, that marriage is not a mere civil contract, but a religious act."

Yearly Meeting in London, 1848 - possibly a response to the new institution of national registration of marriages in England initiated by an Act of 1837.

Diane and Bryan Bowes made their civil contract in 1985 but felt it inadequate with the lack of any religious backing. Coming to the 25th anniversary they were at last able to fill this gap at a special meeting held by Milngavie Local Meeting after its normal Meeting for worship on Sunday 9th October. The form of the Meeting and wording of the vows were based on that of a Meeting for Marriage without its legal trappings and indeed it could well be said that the couple conducted the Meeting themselves. The vows (which included a reference to the happiness of the past 25 years together) were inscribed on a certificate which was duly witnessed by those present.

The passage from QFP given above is only part of a paragraph which goes on to say how important the religious ceremony is. But the earlier QFP (para. 16.02) quotation from Thomas Ellwood " We sensibly felt the Lord with us and joining us, the sense whereof remained with us all our lifetime and was of good service and very comfortable to us on all occasions" probably best expresses the outcome for Diane and Bryan. Our prayers and good wishes go with them.

Residential General Meeting for Scotland

12-13 November 2011

Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh

Please join us in Edinburgh for what promises to be a stimulating weekend, and enjoy meeting Friends and attenders from across Scotland.

The Meeting House is accessed from the top of Lawnmarket or from the George IV Bridge or Victoria Street. Look for the blue pointers. There is metered parking nearby (free on Sundays) in Johnston Terrace, Victoria Street and Grassmarket. Buses 23, 27, 41/41A, 42, and 45 pass nearby.

Accommodation

Hospitality will, as far as possible, be provided by local Friends. We will try to accommodate everyone and will allocate on a first come first served basis. If we run out of bed spaces we will send you information on local B&Bs. Please note that whilst catering costs will be covered by General Meeting, commercial B&B costs will not.

Children and Young People:

Child care can be arranged, and the activity will depend upon the ages of the children.

Saturday evening:

A social evening will follow dinner on Saturday - more details, and a full timetable for the weekend, nearer the time.

General Meeting for Scotland - 12-13 November 2011

"Economics and the Quaker Way"

"Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?"

(A&Q 33)

"Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind."

(QF&P 23.01)

Our speakers this weekend will be Tony Weekes, a member of South Belfast Friends Meeting, and Annie Miller, a member of South East Scotland AM.

Tony has spent many years as a lecturer, writer and researcher in the fields of economics and sustainable development, including a period as Ferguson Fellow at Woodbrooke, where the early drafts of a "Quaker response to the economic crisis" were completed. He is a member of EcoQuakers Ireland and an honorary associate of the School of Environmental Planning in Queen's University, Belfast.

Annie lectured in economics at Heriot-Watt University for most of her working life and is a co-founder of The Basic Income Research Group, which in 1992 became the Citizen's Income Trust. Together they will raise the question "What is 'the economy' for?" and ask whether there is another way of running it which respects creation, which loses the obsession with growth of GDP as a measure of success, and which, by means of a "citizen's income", might free people to do work that needs to be done rather than looking always to balance artificially-created jobs against unemployment. They will offer us a radical vision to which we as Friends may be able to make a distinctive contribution.

Robin Waterston, Clerk.