

# SESAME

Number 193: February 2015

Visiting other Meetings / Truce (a poem) / News from the Library / Meeting for Sufferings / AM Minutes/ Wedding and poem

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free. 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be, And when we find our-selves\_ in the place just\_ right, It will be in the val - ley of love and de-light. When true sim - pli - ci - ty is gained, to bow and to bend, we will not be a-shamed To - -turn, to\_\_ turn, will\_\_ be our de-light, 'Til by turn - ing, turn - ing, we come round right.

**The Shakers:** *Simple Gifts* (See pp 4,5)

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to the editor, Alan Davies, at 49a Lockharton Avenue, Edinburgh EH14 1BB, (email: [a.davies@ed.ac.uk](mailto:a.davies@ed.ac.uk)), at the latest by Tuesday 31 March, for distribution week commencing 12 April. The Editors reserve the right to condense articles. If possible please submit articles by email, sending as an attachment as well as in the body of the email, or on CD-ROM typed in Word <sup>TM</sup> accompanied with hard copy. Email versions of Sesame are available in PDF and Word <sup>TM</sup> format. Contact the Editor

## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**11 am on Saturday 28 February 2015, at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace**

We shall spend the morning considering another aspect of the future of Scotland in the light of our concern for economic and social justice. The session will be led by Alastair McIntosh, previously a member of our Area Meeting and now based in Glasgow. Alastair is one of Scotland's leading thinkers on the issue of land reform, on which the Scottish Government has recently been consulting, and advised on the community buy-out of the island of Eigg. His approach is rooted in his Quaker Christianity.

We shall break for lunch from about 12.45 to 1.30. Please bring a packed lunch – or you can visit one of the sandwich shops nearby.

The afternoon will include a report on the life of Penicuik Meeting, a number of interesting membership matters, an update on Quaker engagement with the Scottish Parliament and a first look at alternative ways of providing pastoral support in our Local Meetings. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

**Phil Lucas, A.M. Clerk**

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## Intervisitation

*To strengthen the links between Friends in our Area Meeting, we are encouraged by Elders to attend, from time to time, a local meeting other than our own. A programme for visiting has been arranged for 2015; please hold the meeting in the Light if you cannot go. Meetings, dates, times and addresses are:*

**Portobello/Musselburgh:** to be arranged  
**Central Edinburgh** 29 Mar 11:00 7 Victoria Terrace  
**East Lothian** 12 Apr 11:00 St Andrew's Centre, 9 Bayswell Road, Dunbar  
**Kelso** 17 May 10:30 Abbey Row, Kelso  
**Tweeddale** 14 June 10:30 Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles  
**North Edinburgh** 28 June 7 pm Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh  
**South Edinburgh** 12 July 10:30 Open Door, 420 Morningside Rd. (AM at 2 pm)  
**Polmont** 30 Aug 10:45 Greenpark Community Centre  
**Central Fife** 27 Sep 10:30 Hunter Halls, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy (*opposite old Kirk*)  
**Penicuik** 4 Oct 11:00 Valleyfield House, 17 High Street (bring & share lunch)

## Truce

I do not find it surprising that boys who were  
like my sons  
saw these other sons and recognised that  
like them  
they had mothers and brothers  
like them  
they had stories, hopes, thoughts  
of home.

I do not find it extraordinary that ordinary men  
remembered that they were ordinary,  
and, being cold, uncomfortable, frightened,  
lonely, that they wanted to make life ordinary  
for a little while  
because of the date.

I do not find it amazing that  
following no orders,  
they met and talked and sang and kicked a ball together,  
learnt one another's names. Friedrich and Frank,  
Victor and Wilhelm, Harry  
and Heinrich.

What is more surprising  
is that not long after,  
following orders,  
they again tried to kill each other.

And I wonder  
(can't help it)

what  
if  
they  
if Heinrich and Harry, Frank and Friedrich, Wilhelm and  
Victor,  
if they had said  
no  
?

Jane Pearn

## Library News

*Encountering Imaginary Friends: Quakers in Fiction* is the title of a course being held at Pendle Hill this February, where the following books are to be considered:

**Harriet Beecher Stowe** *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)  
**Sarah Stickney Ellis** *Friends at their own Fireside* (1858)  
**Marguerite de Angelis** *Thee, Hannah* [a children's novel] (1940)  
**Jessamyn West** *Friendly Persuasion* (1945)  
**A.S. Byatt** *The Game* (1967)  
**Chuck Fager** *Murder Among Friends* (1993)  
**Margaret Lacey** *Silent Friends. A Quaker Quilt* (1995)  
**Sue Monk Kidd** *The Invention of Wings* (2014)

*Friendly Persuasion* is the only one of these we hold (at L7) in the Victoria Terrace library, but there are a number of other novels, as well as poetic and humorous works on the L shelf. We also have a "swap" shelf where you may well find Quaker (and other) novels that Friends have handed in, and you can exchange for other books you have finished with.

Other news from Pendle Hill is that their latest pamphlet has arrived and will be displayed for a while on the Recent Accessions shelf before being filed in the Pendle Hill boxes. Some may be interested to know that many of these pamphlets are now available as e books.

And, finally, a plea. It would be very helpful to the Library Committee if one or two others were able and willing to understand and maintain the Library catalogue. This is not an onerous job.

Brenda McGovern

## The Shakers

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, a breakaway group from Quakers in England called themselves the **United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing**. They became known as Shaking Quakers or just Shakers because of their ecstatic behavior during worship services. Persecution drove them, led by

'Mother' Ann Lee, to seek asylum in the New World; over the next two centuries a number of Shaker communities were established, mainly in the eastern part of the USA. Their commitment to celibacy and the lack of new adult recruits has meant that few if any Shakers are still left. But their contribution to song (such as 'Simple Gifts'), to dance and to furniture making is widely recognized and cherished.

### Editors

#### Meeting for Sufferings, 6 December 2014

Our December meeting took place in the refurbished Large Meeting House and was the first Quaker Meeting for Worship for Business to be held in the space since the renovations. We were joined for our opening worship by 30 young people who were taking part in a participation day looking at the Long Term Framework. As the completion of the new electricity sub-station had not been completed the heating was not operational so we all felt a bit chilly but this might have aided concentration.

We received several minutes from AMs. A minute from Cambridgeshire AM expressed concern about the injustice in the current tax system and in particular the issue of tax avoidance. We were told that this issue was already being considered by Finance and Property Committee in relation to BYMs investments and by QPSW who are considering joining Christian Aid's campaign on the issue. It was suggested that Friends and Meetings look at their own practices and also consider joining the Christian Aid campaign.

Sussex West AM was concerned in the reduction in search and rescue operations for refugees in the Mediterranean. The Deputy Recording Clerk, along with officers from other religious groups, has written to David Cameron asking him to reverse the government's decision not to support these. We also forwarded the minute to QPSW for advice.

A minute from Brighouse West Yorkshire expressed concern at the prevalence of Islamophobia and we were encouraged at all levels to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Muslim community.

Trustees asked Sufferings to assist in discerning whether BYM should be registered under the Lobbying Act. This act requires organisations to register as non-party campaigners if spending over a certain amount on campaigning activities which could influence how people vote in the period up to the General Election. Registering will not stop us speaking out and the aim of the act, which most agree has been badly drafted, is to prevent large organisations having disproportionate influence. The feeling of the meeting was that BYM should register, and, over the lunch-break, Trustees met and minuted this decision. (A press release has been issued on this which can be read on [www.quaker.org.uk/news/quakers-raise-concerns-over-lobbying-act](http://www.quaker.org.uk/news/quakers-raise-concerns-over-lobbying-act)).

After lunch we heard a report on the work of The Retreat, including a short film which can be seen on youtube. The emphasis is on a holistic approach to mental health treatment. Most of the patients are funded by the NHS but it is becoming more challenging to maintain the level of service in a relatively small facility. Retreat staff have embarked on a governance review and they have been heartened by the warm response to activities, over the year, such as the session during YMG.

We then had a report from Quaker Life which included information about the committee and the range of work undertaken.

At the central committee's meeting in September they had spent time considering various aspects of end of life concerns as a number of minutes from AMs on this subject had been passed to them, including on medically assisted dying. They feel that these issues need much more discussion and Friends are encouraged to share their stories.

The committee also raised the issue that they feel that there may be a limited understanding among Friends of the nature of Quaker Concern and the special way we use this word. We expect to return to this issue.

We finished in time to enjoy mince pies, hot spiced apple juice and some conversation before the journey home. As usual the minutes *etc.* are on the website, and there are reports in *The Friend* of 12 December.

**Janet Grimwade**

### **How Free is Speech?**

In his *Areopagitica* (1644), the English poet, John Milton, made an impassioned plea for freedom of expression and toleration of falsehood, stating:

*Give me liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties'*

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America states:

*Congress shall make no law ..... abridging freedom of speech*

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, adopted during the French Revolution in 1789 states in Article 11:

*'The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for speech abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.*  
(my underlining)

And an Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive*

*and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers*

Strong claims for freedom! Considerations of freedom of speech and concerns about attacks on it have been much in the public eye recently, for example the events in Copenhagen and Paris (both about cartoonists), in Egypt and Saudi (both journalists), in Russia (pop singers) and in the UK (using non pc terms for an ethnic group). Of course it is much wider and older than that. Books, plays, films have been banned, blasphemy as well as obscenity, lèse majesté as well as refusal to name the names of communists and fellow travellers, all have come within the censor's scope. James Kirkup, the poet, was arrested for blasphemy as recently as 1971 for publishing a poem in *Gay News* in which he suggested Jesus might have been gay.

So are there any limitations on free speech? One is, as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen declared, that free speech does not allow you to break the law. But what if free speech conflicts with other values and rights? The *harm* principle is sometimes invoked in the case of, for example, pornography or hate speech. It was John Stuart Mill (1859) who introduced the *harm* principle. He wrote:

*The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.*

But what if something spoken or written breaks no law but is still felt to be harmful by an individual or a group? How is harm to be decided since interpretations of the limitations of harm to free speech are culturally and politically relative? Satirists and cartoonists are aware that they may cause offence because their work normally targets the powerful but others may say or write something they consider innocuous, only to find that someone somewhere takes offence. Such a scenario must mean that all speech is potentially offensive in some context. That has to be viewed as absurd. What is needed is sensitivity to the potential harm our speaking and writing may cause, especially to those who are powerless.

Friends have always been concerned to speak truth to power and, as our long established Meeting for Sufferings attests, are prepared to take the consequences if their speaking of the truth causes what some feel harms them or the groups to which they belong, particularly the political, the ethnic and the religious.

**Alan Davies**

## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

### **Minutes of Area Meeting held at 2 pm on Sunday 11 January 2015 at the Open Door, Edinburgh**

#### **2015/01/01 Worship**

During opening worship, para 2:89 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* was read to us. This reminds us of the value of our practice of listening for the will of God in our meetings for church affairs.

#### **2015/01/02 Introductions**

Alastair Cameron has been asked to serve as clerk for this meeting, in the absence of Phil Lucas, with the assistance of Elizabeth Allen.

We have ensured those present know each other's names and meetings. The attendance will be recorded in the concluding minute.

**2015/01/03 The minutes of our last meeting**, held on 29 November 2014 at 7 Victoria Terrace, have been signed and entered in the minute book.

#### **2015/01/04 Matters arising**

**a) Militarisation in society** (Minutes 2014/10/06 and 2014/11/04a refer)

Replies to our clerk's letters have been received from City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council.

Edinburgh reports that the armed forces are represented at careers fairs in schools, and assist in outdoor education and teambuilding. The council feels it promotes a balanced view, and will take the

matter forward with head teachers, including providing contact details of organisations such as Forces Watch, if asked.

We ask our Clerk to follow up on this, and to offer Quaker speakers on peace education.

Midlothian says it works within a code of standards that prevents head teachers from using schools to support the direct recruitment of young people by the military, and does not feel that the development of further policy is needed.

We ask our Clerk to compile further responses as they come in, and to respond in due course. He might take the opportunity to draw attention to and seek support for the proposed memorial to conscientious objectors in Edinburgh.

We encourage the new Scottish Quaker Parliamentary Engagement Officer to raise this matter at the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government level.

We note the proposed parliamentary vigil, to be organised by Campaign Against the Arms Trade in connection with the week of action on military spending in April, and offer our support.

**b) Marriage of Tony Gross & Mark Bitel** (Minute 2014/11/08b refers)

AM Elders have put forward the names of Mary Woodward and Kerstin Phillips to serve as elders at the meeting for worship for the marriage of Tony Gross and Mark Bitel on Saturday 14 February 2015, at 2.00 pm at 7 Victoria Terrace. We appoint them accordingly.

#### **2015/01/05 Membership matters**

**a) & b)** [Applications for membership have been received and visitors were appointed.]

**c) Fiona Forsyth** (Minute 2014/11/07(b) refers.) Our Friend Liz Law has reported on a meeting she and Alastair Cameron held with Fiona Forsyth to discuss her membership application. We accept Fiona into membership and ask Sue Buxton to welcome her.

### 2015/01/06 Nominations and appointments

a) Nominations Committee has put forward the following names: to serve from end of Yearly Meeting 2015 to end of Yearly Meeting 2018:

Representative on Meeting for Sufferings – **Henry Thompson**  
 Alternate Rep. on Meeting for Sufferings – **Kate Arnot**

We appoint these Friends.

To serve from January 2015 to end of December 2017:

Elder – **John Fox**.

We appoint this Friend.

To serve from January 2015 to end of December 2015 in the first instance:

Area Meeting review group, as established by minutes 2014/10/13 and 2014/11/04b, **Alastair Cameron, Don Stubbings, Jane Pearn, Rachel Fitzgerald**. We appoint these Friends, recognising that a group membership of six or seven would be best. We ask the group, together with Nominations Committee, to consider who else might be approached to participate, and bring names to a future AM. We authorise the group to start its work with the present membership.

b) The following one-off appointments are proposed:

QPSW Spring Conference – **Ursula Fearn** (East Lothian LM) & **Abby Boulton** (Edinburgh North Worshipping Group) have been asked and have agreed to attend.

Junior Yearly Meeting 2015 – **Mairi Jones** (Central Edinburgh LM) has been asked and has agreed to attend.

We appoint these Friends accordingly.

c) Request for release: Rachel Fitzgerald has asked to be released from service on the Quaker Social Responsibility and Witness group. We release Rachel from this service with immediate effect and thank her for the work she has done on this group.

### 2015/01/07 Britain Yearly Meeting consultation on long-term framework

Britain Yearly Meeting is consulting on the long-term framework for Quaker work. We spent time in our November Area Meeting considering some of the questions posed, and today we have split into groups to consider others, specifically *'What are we led to do together?'* and *'How do Quaker structures and networks help us to flourish?'*

In introducing the session, our assistant clerk has drawn attention to some of the things that are already happening within the Area Meeting and its constituent meetings, and invited the small groups to relate work such as this to the bigger picture of what we are able to achieve as a small but highly active community.

Our groups have each identified worship together as the core and starting point for other learning, action and witness. As a community, we seek to provide a safe space for all to explore their own sense of the spirit, without looking for agreement or endorsement.

From listening to each other, and to the promptings experienced in worship, we can develop the personal the Quaker community and the wider community beyond Quakers. The Becoming Friends programme has made an impact on many, in helping to build our local community. From the strength of this base, we can take the leadings of our testimonies to the wider community. Through this, we are led to make a distinctive and reflective contribution to politics.

We heard of the importance of how discernment is practiced in testing the concerns of individuals. We are conscious of the need to avoid dissipating energy through a scattering of interests.

We need to keep our structures simple, and to pass on an understanding of the roles and structures as new Friends come into our communities. The Quaker Life network was mentioned as a good example, with potential to be developed.

### 2015/01/08 Report on Meeting for Sufferings, December 2014

Janet Grimwade has reported on Meeting for Sufferings on 6 December 2014: the first meeting for worship for business in the refurbished large meeting house at Friends House.

The main items of business included: tax avoidance; rescue operations for refugees in the Mediterranean; the Lobbying Act. There were reports from the Retreat and Quaker Life. A report will be published in the next edition of *Sesame*. [See page 4.]

#### 2015/01/09 Any other business

None.

#### 2015/01/10 Correspondence and notices

a) AM Elders have arranged a series of Sundays on which Friends are invited to visit a meeting other than their usual one. We are asked, even if we cannot go, to hold each meeting in the light. The list is appended to this minute. [See page 2]

b) Mary Woodward has drawn our attention to a performance of the play about the life of Ettie Hilversum, originally to have taken place in autumn 2014, on Thursday 22 January at 7.00 pm for 7.30, at 7 Victoria Terrace, to be followed by discussion.

c) Alastair Cameron has told us of a talk by Bronwen Currie about her experiences as an ecumenical accompanier in Israel/Palestine in 2014, to take place at Portobello & Joppa Parish Church, Brunstane Road North, at 7.00 pm on Sunday 18 January.

#### 2015/01/11 Concluding minute

29 members and one attender representing six of our Local Meetings have attended all or part of this Area Meeting, as indicated below:

<b>Central Edinburgh</b> 14 + 1A	<b>Central Fife</b> 1	<b>East Lothian</b> 1	<b>Kelso</b> 1	<b>Penicuik</b> -
<b>Polmont</b> -	<b>Portobello &amp; Musselburgh</b> 7	<b>South Edinburgh</b> 5	<b>Tweeddale</b> -	

We next meet at 7 Victoria Terrace, on Saturday 28 February 2015 at 11 am.

**Alastair Cameron**  
Assistant Clerk

#### Marriage of Tony Gross & Mark Bitel

More than 100 Friends and friends met to celebrate the wedding of Tony Gross and Mark Bitel on Saturday 14 February 2015, at 2.00 pm at 7 Victoria Terrace. As the first single-sex wedding in Scotland held according to the manner of Friends, this was a historic occasion.

*Two people, yes, two lasting friends.  
The giving comes, the taking ends.  
There is no measure for such things.  
For this all Nature slows and sings.*

*Elizabeth Jennings (1979)*

#### Information from Alison Burnley:

##### Dates for your diaries

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##### ASLANE:

8 March, 12 April, 10 May, 14 June, 27 September, 8 November  
(It is advisable to bring something to sit on, some weatherproof clothing and something to eat. Leave Open Door, South Edinburgh at 08.30am).  
Meeting for Witness for Peace: 11.00am

##### Scrap Trident Coalition

Saturday 28: Demonstration in Glasgow  
Monday 15 April: Blockade at Faslane, North Gate

##### World Day of Prayer

Fridays 10.30am: Church of Scotland Office 121 George Street  
Friday 6 March: at a church near you

## The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket

*Whenever winds are moving and their breath  
Heaves at the roped-in bulwarks of this pier,  
The terns and sea-gulls tremble at your death  
In these home waters. Sailor, can you hear  
The Pequod's sea wings, beating landward, fall  
Headlong and break on our Atlantic wall  
Off 'Sconset, where the yawing S-boats splash  
The bellbuoy, with ballooning spinnakers,  
As the entangled, screeching mainsheet clears  
The blocks: off Madaket, where lubbers lash  
The heavy surf and throw their long lead squids  
For blue-fish? Sea-gulls blink their heavy lids  
Seaward. The winds' wings beat upon the stones,  
Cousin, and scream for you and the claws rush  
At the sea's throat and wring it in the slush  
Of this old Quaker graveyard where the bones  
Cry out in the long night for the hurt beast  
Bobbing by Ahab's whaleboats in the East.*

(This is Stanza 2 of Robert Lowell's poem (1946) which he wrote in memory of the sailor Warren Winslow who died at sea. Quakers were much involved in the whaling industry based in Nantucket. )

(Alison Burnley also informs us that John Hancock was the first person to sign the American Declaration of Independence. Ever since his name is sometimes used as a request for a signature: viz: *Put your John Hancock here!* It has happened to her more than once.)

### *Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland*

#### **Every Sunday**

Central Edinburgh: 7 Victoria Terrace	9.30am&	11.00am
South Edinburgh: Open Door, 420 Morningside Road,	10.30am	
Polmont: Greenpark Community Centre	10.45am	
Kelso: Quaker Meeting House, Kelso	10.30am	

#### **Every Wednesday**

Mid Week Meeting: 7 Victoria Terrace	12.30pm-	1pm
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#### **First Sunday in the Month**

Penicuik & Peebles Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik	11.00am	
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*Children welcome, bring and share lunch.*

Portobello & Musselburgh: Old Parish Church Hall, Bellfield Street	7.30pm	
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#### **First Tuesday in the Month**

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms	1pm-1.30pm	
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(opposite the Weir Buildings) at Kings Buildings: contact

Sarah Martin 07818050853 or [sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk) for more details

#### **Second Sunday in the Month**

Portobello & Musselburgh St James Church Hall, Rosefield Place	11.00am	
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Portobello EH15 1AZ

Tweeddale Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles		
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All welcome but please phone to confirm.

01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389.	10.30am	
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Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy	10.30am	
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(in Kirk Wynd opposite the Old Kirk)

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00am	
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#### **Third Tuesday in the Month**

Edinburgh Uni Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms	1.00- 1.30pm	
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#### **Fourth Sunday in the Month**

Portobello & Musselburgh as above	11.00am	
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Tweeddale: Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles		
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Central Fife Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy as above	10.30am	
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Barony St Meeting, Broughton St Mary's Church Edinburgh	7.00 pm	
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#### **Fifth Sunday in the Month**

Central Fife Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy as above	10.30am	
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#### **Last Sunday in the Month .**

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00am	
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#### **Distribution of Sesame & Scottish Friends Newsletter**

The current practice is to distribute one copy of *Sesame* and the *Scottish Friends Newsletter* to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of *Sesame* are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer, Mark Hutcheson. An email version of *Sesame* is more ecological and is free! A large print version is available on request. Published by Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain: South East Scotland Area Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Scottish Charity No. SC019165

