



April
2009

Contents

Scottish Friend

3	SACRO Annual Conference	David Turner
8	Meeting for Sufferings - February	Peter Kennedy
11	" " " - April	Margaret Peacock
15	Book of Members and Attenders - the Future	
	Bronwen Currie, Beryl Milner and Margaret Peacock	
19	Support FiSCAF	Pamela Brunt
21	Gospel of Thomas Seminar	Jack Squires
22	Report from Representative Friend Pamala McDougall	
25	Report of March General Meeting	Alyson Buchan
32	Invitation to June General Meeting	Robin Waterston




Alistair Milner took the cover photograph - see Report of March General Meeting.

The next *Scottish Friend* will be constructed in the middle of August, or as soon as the agenda for September GM is known. Please send material to me, Margaret Peacock, at 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk. Many thanks to all who have made suggestions. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures.

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.



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The Conference, entitled "RESTORATIVE JUSTICE - REPAIRING THE HARM" was the first to be organised jointly by SACRO (SAFeguarding Communities, Reducing Offending) and Victim Support Scotland. It began with some remarks from Paul Morran, Sacro Chairperson. He made two points

1. It is no longer possible in any enlightened system of justice to put offenders and victims in separate compartments, any more than we can separate two sides of a coin.
2. Justice involves speedy processes which stand or fall by their effectiveness - anything less fails communities, offenders and victims alike.

First Conference speaker was Frank Mulholland, Solicitor General for Scotland. His key focus as a senior law agent is considering what is in the public interest, both immediate and longer term. No single principle can dominate. A case-by-case approach is favoured. Restorative Justice is not seen as suitable in every case. However "repairing the harm" is a principle that has growing appeal - not just a lofty ideal. It is highly relevant to the current theme of reducing the likelihood of re-offending and runs in parallel with the concept of looking at the underlying causes of crime if a cycle of repeat offending is to be broken. In every case justice for all involved is the aim, within which restorative practices have a major part to play. An education process at all levels is necessary, however. If advances in these practices are to develop further, ways must be found to bring the benefits to public attention and in this the role of the media is critical. At court level a shift in policy and practice is already under way, including wide-ranging reform. Not least is to change the way prosecutors think, a process now showing results in the encouragement of take-up of diversion schemes, mediation, compensation and work orders. Measures to integrate this with

the perspective of the victim have been a growing feature and more is planned, since this is at the heart of the "repairing" agenda. Tradition can be a drag on all this and is a huge challenge; the process demands listening, openness, flexibility, imagination and cooperation across the whole spectrum of the justice services and voluntary sector.

Restorative Justice Policies - Lessons from Abroad.

Ivo Aertson, Professor of Criminology, outlined how Restorative Justice is being implemented in Europe, including France, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Holland, also the Nordic countries, giving some of the main features of the restorative approaches that have "repairing the harm" as the common principle. An enormous amount of information was given, though much was statistical and his fast delivery made both these and his comments on them hard to follow or to remember. It is clear that there is continuing growth and diversity in developing models of practice along two fairly distinct lines - the social work model found mostly in Europe and the independent mediation approach favoured in Nordic states. Some examples and a lighter touch would have perhaps brought the learned and wide-ranging presentation to life for me.

Workshop on Community-based Reparation - Aberdeen

This was my choice of workshop among a number of others of great interest. The Aberdeen Community-based Reparation Service (CBR) was established in 2004. The service is managed by Sacro and funded by the Scottish Government through the city's "Building Strong, Safe and Attractive Communities Initiative". CBR gives the person harmed by crime a voice in how he/she would like the harm caused to be addressed. Young people and adults accused of crime are given the opportunity to take responsibility, apologise and take some action to repair the harm caused by their behaviour. The process becomes appropriate when all parties agree that the person

responsible for an offence could repair the harm through some voluntary work, either directly for the person harmed or indirectly within the local community. During the workshop examples were given of the types of behaviour, the harm experienced, and the reparative work undertaken. Offences included vandalism, assault and theft. There were 71 referrals within a given period - 44 Youth Justice (under 16 years), and 27 adult RJ. There was a 97% completion rate. 87% of Youth Justice cases did not re-offend. Less than 4% of adult cases had to be re-referred. The Service has received an "Outstanding Scheme" award from the Howard League for Penal Reform in June last year.

Victims and Restorative Practices

Susan Gallagher, Director of Development, Victim Support Scotland made an engaging and robust presentation on the continuing concerns that need to be addressed in any justice system that proclaims "victims at the heart of all proceedings". She asked "What makes a victim?" and made some suggestions but she is aware of no universally agreed definition - any two victims see it differently. Can we "repair the harm"? Well - yes and no, if one asks a cross section of victims. Much seems to depend on factors that arise in a particular case - the nature of the offence is obviously one. Others include an individual's personal philosophy, and family and community supports. However at the level of justice promotion much depends on whether the victim is involved from the start and whether the person has been enabled to express needs in his/her own way. Even when this ideal has been realised (as it rarely is) and a consequent restorative process has resulted in "satisfaction" declared, recovery is another matter. Even the fact of full participation can bring distress. When the offender in question is not willing to be involved directly, and any reparation made is impersonal, how restorative is this? Victim Support research indicates that only 29% of those most severely affected by a crime make a full recovery and for a high number of these it is a long term process.

Further concerns raised passionately by Susan would require a report of greater length. However her view is that current positive actions will be reinforced by a newly emerging project to which Sacro, the Scottish Government, and her own agency have signed up. It involves a commitment to work together on victim issues in all restorative developments under way. This has the potential for addressing the questions raised in her talk to the Conference, and for achieving not just something "added on" but totally different. For this vision to be realised three principles must take precedence for redress of victim disadvantage:

1. immediate attendance to needs;
2. routine access to practical assistance, to information and to psychological support;
3. continuous monitoring of on-going needs. Over the "if", the "how" and the "when" the victim must be able to decide.

A Sacro overview.

The final speaker, Keith Simpson, Head of Development and Research, affirmed that for Sacro the evidence is more than adequate to support a "roll-out" for Restorative Justice in Scotland. The aims are:

1. Reducing repeat offending for both violent and property crime.
2. Maximum benefit for victims, through, wherever possible, "face-to-face" encounters for offenders and victims over the harm caused, with both short-term satisfaction and long-term recovery in mind.
3. Clearing up more crime - evidence shows participating offenders commonly volunteer information on this.

Work now under way - Restorative Practices with Young People.

There is an ever-growing involvement with schools and residential units. Alongside anti-social behaviour orders go restorative interventions such as acceptable behaviour contracts.

The Children's Reporter makes referrals for restorative actions wherever appropriate.

Restorative Justice at all stages.

Under way now are initiatives such as Fiscal referrals for diversion from prosecution schemes (in 3 areas), pre-sentence requirements of restorative activities - sentence influenced by compliance. A growing development is involvement in some form of reparation during sentence. And so on to opportunities for engaging in post-sentence encounters which may include dealing with harm left unrepaired which can blight someone's future.

There is thus a wealth of emerging initiatives through which Sacro, with its widely-dispersed and well-resourced locations for contact, is capable of offering a full range of restorative opportunities in Scotland. Wherever organisations such as local authorities and the new Community Justice authorities want to engage with Restorative Justice at any such level it is within their reach.

In conclusion, I would like to register my appreciation of being able to attend this stimulating event, leaving me with a sense that greatly promising developments are firmly under way for the realisation of a system which truly equates justice and repairing the harm from crime.



February 2009 Meeting for Sufferings Peter Kennedy

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) is the standing representative body entrusted with the care of the business of the Britain Yearly Meeting through the year.

The body has a visionary and prophetic role for the whole Society in Britain. It decides the priorities and sets the direction of the Yearly Meeting in the Long Term Framework. BYM Trustees are accountable to Meeting for Sufferings for central implementation and report regularly to them. Meeting for Sufferings also plays a vital role in fostering communication throughout the Yearly Meeting and in reviewing and testing concerns referred to it by Area Meetings. It also gives guidance on policy issues referred to it by BYM Trustees.

During our Meeting on Saturday 7th February 2009 we spent time considering various issues. The morning session was divided up between discussion in Home Groups and then a formal plenary session where we considered the draft response of our Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) to a paper from the World Council of Churches entitled "The Nature and Mission of the Church".

This was the second time the issue had come to the Meeting for possible endorsement. Last September, Sufferings asked CIR to revisit their first draft and make substantial changes in terms of language, etc. On the face of it, the document now before the Meeting appeared to address most, if not all of those concerns.

However, it seemed that not everyone was happy with the document, with one Friend describing it as an "untruthful and misleading picture of what Quakers believe today."

The issue was: 'does this document in its entirety express what the

generality of Quakers in Britain feel and believe?' The Friend felt that the answer was no and that the most that could be said 'is that most Quakers feel that Christian behaviour is more important than Christian belief'. There were a number of passionate contributions during the three sessions the issue stretched over, and it seemed that the majority, perhaps as much as 95% of the contributions made felt that sufficient changes had been made from the document presented in September 2008, that the Meeting could endorse the document. So in practically any other grouping this would have been seen as sufficient to grounds to endorse the document.

However, it was clear that there was not total unity around the Meeting endorsing the document. In reality, the document did not require the approval of the Sufferings to be sent to the World Council of Churches since that authority lies with CIR. In the end the Meeting side-stepped the issue of endorsement by a rather mealy-mouthed minute which in part read 'our lengthy discussion led us to a sense that we should embrace the spirit of this response' and 'offered' the document to other churches, rather than endorsing it.

Arriving late from a snow-bound Northampton, the Clerk to Quaker Finance and Property Central Committee came bearing his usual sprinkling of jollity and full of jokes.

You may recall in November it seemed that he had foregone his suit, when he addressed us in a blazer. Fortunately, once again he addressed us in his full suit, which reassured a number of us that BYM had not lost its shirt in the financial markets. However, he came bearing profound apologies for having to present a revised budget for 2009 after an error in the earlier version had been picked up.

The mistaken 'double accounting' did not make a major difference to the expected income and expenditure for the coming year, but did

provide an opportunity to remind Friends of the seriousness with which our Finance and Property Central Committee is taking the current recession. Whilst income for 2008 was ahead of expectations, this was due entirely to contributions from dead members and attenders gifting legacies. Contributions from the living were down. "Our problem is with the dear Friends who have not yet departed", he said, adding, perhaps mischievously, "We're trying to address this!"

We approved the splitting up of Hereford and Mid-Wales AM, thus creating a third Welsh Area Meeting, to be known as Mid-Wales AM, from April 1st, 2009.

Lastly, following minutes from two Area Meetings on changes in budget funding for overseas work, the Meeting was given an explanation from the Recording Clerk, as to how budget decisions are made, viz.: -

- 1) Meeting for Sufferings sets the overall priorities for the centrally managed work of Britain YM. These are set out in A Framework for Action (Long Term Framework)
- 2) BYM Trustees are then responsible for approving the Operational Plan and annual budget, keeping to the Framework priorities and ways of working, and for monitoring progress.
- 3) There is an inclusive process that leads to BYM Trustees agreeing a Plan and budget. This gives responsibility to:

* Central committees to decide what their more detailed priorities and choices are for the work in their areas and to monitor the work done by departments. They do this in consultation with others involved, such as their subgroups, and with advice from their General Secretaries.

* Management Meeting (which is led by the Recording Clerk and includes General Secretaries of the central committees) to prepare a draft budget and Operational Plan, taking account of the committee priorities.

* Quaker Finance and Property Central Committee to examine the budget proposal and financial projections and make recommendations to trustees about that budget.

* Trustees to consult Meeting for Sufferings and then agree the budget and Operational Plan.



Meeting for Sufferings, 4.4.09.

Margaret Peacock

This was a particularly interesting meeting, with “Quakers around the World” as its principal subject. We had brief introductions from

Sheila Gatiss, Clerk of Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC), Mary Lord, of Pendle Hill College, Pennsylvania, and Julia Ryberg of Sweden YM.

Sheila Gatiss reminded us that QWRC is the BYM central committee which engages with work in the international arena. BYM needs to exchange experiences with YMs in the rest of the world, which exist in very different circumstances and often with very different expressions of our faith. Yearly Meeting Gathering will be a very busy time for QWRC, hosting the initial foreign visitors’ tea, caring for them during the week and holding a listening session. QWRC is connected with Pendle Hill USA by appointing a Friend in Residence for each autumn term.

Pendle Hill, said Mary Lord, is a kind of crossroads, a meeting place in Baltimore YM for Friends from everywhere in the world. There is diversity enough even in the USA, where Baltimore YM is part of Friends’ General Conference - a group of YMs much like BYM - liberal, unprogrammed, universalist. A second group, mainly in the

west, is Friends’ Church International, the evangelical branch, which believes in the authority of scripture, and has spread into African countries. The third group is Friends’ United Meeting, occupying the middle, both geographically and theologically. They have also spread into Africa.

BYM is active in looking after Friends in Europe, and Julia Ryberg has been working with Woodbrooke in developing an on-line education course that isolated Friends can follow in their own languages. This has been very popular, not only with single enquirers but with their whole families and circles of friends. In Scotland we are used to thinking of ourselves as isolated but in, I think, Czechoslovakia, it takes one Friend four hours and another three hours to get to Meeting to worship together.

These three speakers were then joined by three others, leading six groups, of which we could choose two. I chose to learn more about American diversity from Nancy Irving, General Secretary of Friends’ World Committee for Consultation, and African diversity from David Kikaya from Kenya.

Nancy is often asked what the different Yearly Meetings have in common, and finds the answer very difficult. Part of the answer is in our history. She invited us to a brainstorm on the beliefs and practices of the early Friends, calling it “George Fox Pie”. Then she showed us how different YMs (including our own) have chosen different “flavours” to preserve. Thus the “Conservative” YMs follow Fox in his letter to the Governor of Barbados, and the Evangelical YMs (Friends’ Church International) add to this the tradition of long sermons and vocal prayer. Evangelical YMs have Friends’ “churches”, with a pastor, and may be fully programmed or semi-programmed. Some pastors perform sacraments if a Friend wishes. Also within one city there may be Friends’ churches of different flavours, as well as unprogrammed Meetings. Needless to say, each kind of YM thinks the others are the breakaways!

So fragments of history is one thing that YMs may have in common, together with a lifestyle of truth and peacemaking. Beliefs - no. The name "Quakers" - no.

David Kikaya introduced us to the colonial scramble for Africa, which was matched by the Christian missionary scramble. (I wish I had paid more attention in geography lessons at school!) British Quakers spread into Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, ("Zuid Afrika" completes my mnemonic.) but it was American traditions that were absorbed into most African countries, some from Friends' United Meeting (e.g. Kenya) and some from Friends' Church International, (e.g. Rwanda, where you may see a baptism pool in the church). Regardless of tradition, though, all are known as working at peace-building, and are trusted. So, when there was a cease-fire and rebels came out of the forest to lay down their arms, apprehensive that these would be immediately used against them, they were reassured by being invited to deposit them in the Friends' church.

Less interesting but vitally important was consideration of the year's accounts, presented in an impressive colour diagram. As before, we were told that those of us who have left legacies had better die soon!

Or, rather, that those of us still alive had better try much harder to maintain or increase our contributions. If any area Meetings have funds designated for BYM, that they are hanging on to just in case of local need, they are urged not to, for fear that laying off Friend' House staff may be the next consequence of the recession.

BYM Trustees are wondering whether the recession may generate work in FH in support of Friends who are in difficulties, and they ask Sufferings representatives to be channels of communication about personal and community conditions relating to the recession.

Please, therefore, give information to me or Peter Kennedy or your local rep - anything that would interest BYM Trustees, even

if it is just background.

We had a minute from Bristol AM regarding the Colnbrook detention centre for rejected immigrants, "hoping that new and innovative ways can be explored to attend to the plight of those who have no criteria, mechanism or public strategy to bring hope of release." We have also a preliminary document about climate change, encouraging Friends to consider it and brief their representatives for June's MfS.

Below is Peter Kennedy's account of the workshop that I didn't go to - the one on European matters.

`I attended a workshop led by Julia Ryberg who is employed by the Friends, World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) European and Middle East Section (EMES) as their ministry and outreach coordinator and also works as the co-ordinator of the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre's European project.'

`Julia told us about, and showed us (while the gremlins permitted!) the online e-learning course for people to find out about Quakerism from the comfort of their own homes and in their own languages and mostly at their own pace. The course units are spread over ten weeks with a mixture of articles and follow-up email groups or e-forums for discussion in a typed conversational form in e-messages. These courses are available in a wide range of languages - French, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Dutch, Norwegian, and some of the languages of the former Soviet Union. An e-forum using the "moodle" programme has been set up and we looked at some of the messages that participants of the courses had sent us. The 30 or so Friends in the first workshop were visibly excited at the way this opportunity has been embraced. Friends interested in learning more about this can go to the European project's website at <http://www.moodle.woodbrooke.org.uk> to find out more.'

The Book of Members and Attenders - the future

In the light of our current thoughts about sustainability and the right use of resources GM has appointed a small group to consider the format and frequency of production of our Book of Members and Attenders (the BMA). So we are investigating the practices of some other AMs and GMs around the country, and, most importantly, seeking the views of you, the users of the Book.

We still hope to work eventually towards an online database, along the lines outlined in the February edition of Scottish Friend. But we anticipate that there will still be a demand for a printed BMA for some years and we want to establish the best (and most economic) way of doing this.

One important element to bear in mind in your thinking and discussions is cost. The actual cost per book in 2009 including transport costs was around £5.80 (i.e. more than the cover price of £5). However we have seen a fall in demand in the past two years so if we continue to produce an annual book we shall need to reduce the print-run, and this is likely to mean a cover price that is higher still.

We have learnt from our enquiries that our annual BMA is not the only model. For instance, some areas publish a book only biennially or even triennially; some areas offer a choice of a bound or a loose-leaf (for which Friends provide their own ring-binders) or an electronic (pdf) version, or a large-print option.

Possible choices .

The following suggestions are not exhaustive just possible options to start you thinking:

1. *The status quo - a complete BMA, revised and produced each year.*
2. *A complete BMA produced, say, every second year.*

A checking list would still be sent out annually to Meetings and the database updated so that mailing lists for e.g. Scottish Friend would be kept up to date.

3. *As (2), but with a supplement of amendments produced in the intervening year.*

The supplement could include the GM and AM pages with up-to-date meeting dates, office holders, overseers and elders etc, but would otherwise list only additions, deletions and amendments, referenced by page numbers relating to the previous year's BMA. It would be used in combination with the previous year's BMA.

The cost would depend on the size of print-run, and on how it was distributed eg:

- (a) as a master produced in-house and provided free of charge to Meetings to copy and distribute locally. This could encompass the whole of GM, or just your local LM.
- (b) as a bound copy, approximately 1/3 the size of the current BMA, for purchase.

We suspect that use of and demand for the BMA varies widely across Scotland for instance larger Meetings accumulate a large number of amendments during the year and may need an annual update, whereas changes may be easier to keep track of within smaller Meetings, who may therefore see an annual update as unnecessary. So we would ask you to discuss in your Local Meetings what would be best for your Meeting, and we are asking Local Meeting clerks/correspondents to report their Meeting's views back to Bronwen at the address below.

Incidentally we currently hold approximately 70 surplus copies of the 2009 BMA owing partly to this year's drop in demand and partly to the printer's generosity, so should have enough to meet retrospective demand if it were to experiment with option 3 in 2010

We would also like you to complete the questionnaire at the end of this article and send it to Bronwen Currie, Taigh na Torraig, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN. It can also be downloaded from the GM Publications web page at <http://www.quakerscotland.org/gmpublications> (you'll find it at the bottom of the page) and emailed to scotfriends@gmail.com

We look forward to receiving your responses as soon as possible and hope that a decision can be made at June or September GM.

Questionnaire

NAME (optional) AND MEETING.....

Any further comments or suggestions:

1. How often do you currently buy a book?
 - a. every year G
 - b. every 2 years G
 - c. less often G
 - d. never G

2. Do you mainly refer to the book for contact information within:
 - a. your Local Meeting G
 - b. your Area Meeting G
 - c. the whole of General Meeting G

(please tick all that apply)

3. Would you prefer:
 - a. a bound copy (as at present)? G
 - b. a loose-leaf copy (to fit your own A5 ring-binder)? G
 - c. a free pdf version emailed to you to save and print out as needed? G
 - d. other, e.g. large print A4 (please specify) G

.....

4. If the book was not produced next year, would you wish to obtain a supplement of amendments encompassing
 - a. the whole of GM? G
 - b. just your local LM? G
 - c. neither I would not want a supplement G

5. If no book were produced next year, would you need to obtain a copy of the 2009 book to use with the supplement?

Yes /No

6. If in the future Friends' and Attenders' addresses, phone numbers and email addresses were (securely) available on line, would you still want a printed book?

Yes / No



On Wednesday 11th March I attended on behalf of Quakers the launch of FiSCAF – Faiths in Scotland Community Action Fund. The Scottish Churches Community Fund, set up 7 years ago, has become part of a larger organisation – Faith in Community Scotland. It continues with the same vision of helping faith communities to tackle poverty and deprivation in their local area by providing a little seed money and support.

The venue was Discovery Quay, Dundee. From the window we could see the ship Discovery which was built in Dundee and had been on various explorations including taking Scott to the Antarctic. The launch theme was of a journey of discovery from the initial conception by the Church of Scotland to the inclusion of other churches and now other Faiths.

“My faith demands – this is not optional – my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try and make a difference”

President Jimmy Carter.

This has been the basis from the beginning. There is an endowment of £100,000 and an annual income from contributions of the various churches. By being part of a larger organisation, the aim is to increase the funding base from ongoing contributions from member groups and be able to tap into other funding streams. Experience has shown that along with the money assistance is also required to help small groups to develop sound governance and financial management and to meet the various legislative requirements of health and safety, and employment law. Only with a larger funding base will it be

possible to employ a worker to undertake the support work. At present the fund only employs a part time administrator and hence such work is limited.

The concern was to put faith into action to encourage faith groups to use their resources and help them develop projects to alleviate poverty in their communities. To quote: “The fund works with local faith groups as they build hope and struggle against poverty by providing grants and support for their initiative in Scotland’s most fragile urban and rural communities.”

At the launch we heard of various projects. One was a community project in Alloa where there are few resources in the town, especially for young people. The initial grant enabled the church to develop its premises and train volunteers so that it now offers a range of youth programmes - young mothers’ club, over 50s club etc. It has successfully attracted ongoing funding. In speaking to the worker afterwards, she spoke of a woman who had in the earlier days when she was on drugs, attacked the worker causing considerable harm. She is now back and being helped. ‘She doesn’t understand how we are able to forgive her’, said the worker. This is a sorry indictment on our society that puts out the message of retribution rather than restitution, and indicates the need for caring and accepting community projects such as the one in Alloa. The vision is not just to alleviate poverty, but to provide those more intangible benefits of feeling valued, developing self worth that come from belonging to a caring community.

I have written this because I know that each Quaker Meeting in Scotland has various special collections during the year. I would like to suggest that raising funds for FiSCAF be included. Although GM for Scotland makes a small annual donation, local groups can also own this initiative of which we have been a part for the last 7 years. It is an appropriate choice given it is a cooperative initiative of the Scottish Churches, now Scottish Faiths. Donations can be sent to the Administrator FiSCAF. Faith in Scotland Community Action Fund, 759a Argyle Street, Glasgow G3 8DS. In these electronic times, you can find out more information from the website: www.fiscap.org or borrow a video showing various project achievements.

We will be meeting at Wiston Lodge near Biggar on Saturday the 6th June. All welcome including those new to The Gospel of Thomas.

A brochure and information sheet is available from Rosemary Gascoyne, 57 Main St. Dalry DG7 3UP. Tel 01644 430468

Or by email from Jack Squires at cummertrees@btinternet.com
PLEASE let us know as soon as possible if you intend coming.



As usual there have been many opportunities to represent Friends at a variety of meetings and gatherings and on ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) groups.

1. In January it was down to London for an overnight stay to attend the meeting of CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) as an ACTS Trustee. We were booked in to St Katherine's monastery in Southwark which is now a conference centre and offers very reasonable modern B & B in an oasis of tranquillity (contact me for details if this is what you are looking for). There are radical changes afoot at CTBI as a crisis of funding and a change in direction of management, and indeed ecumenism, has led to staff redundancies and complete reorganisation. Briefly, further changes include the proposal to cease the 'common pot' which CTBI administers for the 4 nations to the ecumenical instruments, and ACTS therefore will, in common with the equivalent bodies of the 4 nations, receive subscriptions directly from the churches and administer their own funds. CTBI Commissions have already been laid down and new networks set up to respond to the changes in ecumenical activity.

A Reminder of CTBI aims –

- * To be an expression of the churches' commitment to 4 nations ecumenism.
- * To recognise and work with complexity.
- * To offer theological reflection across the shared areas of work.
- * To listen closely and respond to the shared needs and aspirations of the churches

and of CTBI values -

- * Recognition of diversity and difference within the churches and nations
- * Every church's contribution
- * Respectful relationships at all levels across member organisations

The culmination of the financial discussions and difficult decisions made at our Trustees' meeting will be the final decisions to be made at the Senior Representatives meeting in May.

2. At the end of January I attended the annual meeting of churches reps. with MEPs at Scottish Churches House when a variety of topics were discussed. All 5 MEPs were willing to engage with us on items such as human rights, homelessness, nuclear energy and the Decade to Overcome Violence. Struan Stevenson MEP remembered my comment of last year when I said that what I knew about the Common Fisheries Policy before I attended the meeting would fit in a hen's ear! Thank goodness we gave that topic a miss this year (but of course I know how important it is – it's just not my subject ~ ~)

3. A Review of the ACTS Networks was carried out recently by an independent group and a meeting to look at the results was held at Scottish Churches House on February 5th. Network conveners and members, ACTS staff, Trustees and representatives to Members' Meeting 'reviewed the Review' and a paper has since been produced of our findings. Please contact me for a copy if interested.

4. Next in my diary in early March was the Ecumenical Committee of the Church of Scotland where there was a lengthy agenda with hard working and congenial members! Great concerns were raised about the lack of clarity and arrangements by the global committee for the ecumenical conference 'Edinburgh 2010' despite all the work carried out by the organising team in Scotland. Work is ongoing but serious doubts remain as to whether the original plans will come to fruition.

5. Finally, after a period of discernment on whether to accept the invitation from the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference to attend a Celebration at St Mary's Metropolitan cathedral in Edinburgh, Margaret Peacock was persuaded to accompany me to the Mass and Reception to embody a Quaker presence! The celebration was to mark the 4th anniversary of Pope Benedict's election. Margaret and I decided to accept the invitation as a response

to the ecumenical hand of friendship, and we are glad to have been present. The music was splendid, the congregation friendly, the robes magnificent and the reception included many interesting people from political and public life who were warmly welcoming. As far away from Quaker worship and practice as you could imagine but the head of Scotland's Roman Catholic church Cardinal Keith O'Brian said to us, " I'm glad you could come". It was the right thing to do.



Photo: Paul McSherr

Just to prove we were there, we were photographed with the Cardinal and His Excellency Archbishop Faustino Sainz Munoz, Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain. The colours were just as exotic as the titles!

MP

General Meeting for Scotland - 7.3.09. Alyson Buchan

The March General Meeting was held in Central Edinburgh Meeting House. It is some time since I was last there and I always have to remind myself that it has only been a Quaker Meeting House for 22 years. It feels so old, established and right. I feel for those Edinburgh Friends who must decide on its future.

Our theme this time was sustainability and Advice 42 was read during the opening worship. But before I go on to attempt to summarise the inspiring talk given to us by Alastair McIntosh during the afternoon session, I should briefly mention some of the business

I was interested in Ruth Taylor's report of the Northern Young Friends' Summer Shindig (The participants chose this name to replace Summer School.) The 20 staff include the 70 young Friends in all the decision making – not just the name and choice of theme but the planning and running of the event. Philip Bryers introduced a paper entitled "Theology in the Public Square in post-devolution Scotland, written by Graham Blount, former Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer – this paper has been circulated widely amongst meetings. We wanted to ensure Quaker Representation at a Meeting to take it forward on Wednesday 25 March and 5 names were mentioned, all subject to consent.

There are to be changes to the Book of members to rationalise and cut costs – Bronwen Currie, Beryl Milner and Margaret Peacock were asked to bring some concrete suggestions to the next GM. The testimony to the life of Alison Douglas was read and we were struck by her continuing positive attitude to life after she lost her sight.

Our Representative Friend talked with great enthusiasm about her activities since the last GM. She brought a visitor with her, a Baptist minister who is doing research into how churches make decisions. He was impressed by our method, especially as there was an uncomfortable moment of conflict at this GM. As a Clerk myself, my sympathy always

lies with the Clerk at these moments, whatever the conflict is about. The feeling of mounting to the guillotine is enhanced by people doing needlework in the back row. However, the visitor found the situation fascinating and was very complimentary about the way it was handled. Our business method really works.

What is the connection between an elm table, a professor of contextual theology and a steam locomotive?

The afternoon session at GM can often be a time when Friends take the opportunity to doze off their lunch. However, speaking without notes and being deliberately provocative, Alastair McIntosh caused very little dozing during his presentation on Sustainability.

He encouraged us to look beyond scientific information about climate change, which we can find from other sources. We know that there will be a rise in temperature of between 4 and 6½ degrees by the end of the century if nothing substantial is done and that a 4 degree rise will cause the Amazon to begin to break down and that there will be a rise of up to 300% in fires like the recent ones in Australia. But what can we do?

Our own habits are deeply ingrained - e.g. rooms are too warm; we have hot instead of cold drinks. However, we live with ethical dilemmas and must remain in the mainstream because if we cut ourselves off we will be unable to witness to society. What can we bring to the needs of the world today? We have a spiritual imperative to feed the hungry. Other agencies attend to the physical hunger in the world; we must feed spiritual hunger.

Alastair came to General Meeting from a service of thanksgiving for Marcella Althaus-Reid, a Quaker who was a professor of contextual theology at New College, Edinburgh. As a feminist and liberation theologian with personal roots in Argentina, she wrote extensively on 'Indecent Theology'. She wrote that we must enter into what polite society considers indecent, to hear where God is trying to move us. Our task is to face the same embarrassment about God, spirituality and mysticism that our parents had when talking about sex. We must share a sense of ecstasy and engage with our ability to feel. We must overcome

consumerism by resorting to the heart and care for the things that we have. Alastair referred to the table in the meeting room, made by Tim Stead, a Borders wood artist as an example of valuing what we have here – in this case a Scottish elm tree (at the time Dutch elm disease was decimating elms) and of drawing beauty out of death and renewing life.

He quoted Raymond Panikkar, an Indian/Spanish Catholic/Hindu philosopher, who said that although a life of silence is important, it is not the same as the silence of life. When we concentrate on activity, we forget that life is an end in itself and thus we alienate ourselves from the source of our being (John 10:10). Our third eye opens us to a dimension of life not accessed by the eye of our senses or the eye of our intellect. Our third eye sees the dynamic of the soul. Under conditions of busyness the sense of latent life remains hidden and our lives are impoverished, sad and mediocre. If we drown ourselves in constant activity, we do not live this life, so have nostalgia for a different one. Jesus promised eternal life now (Luke Ch.17). The kingdom of heaven is within and in the present moment. The person who does not live eternal life here and now will not enjoy it later on.

Jesus started by feeding people, and then pointed out that we do not live by bread alone. We must attend to physical hunger, but also minister to the opening of spiritual depth if we are to overcome reticence and tackle the global crisis seriously. The global crisis is a spiritual crisis – we must help people to face up to the realisation that what they have always taken for granted has broken down. We must indecently lay open the spiritual nature of our current difficulties.

We need to remain level-headed and idealistic and 'walk with the discipline of disillusionment' (Chambers). Our suffering is caused by our refusal to be disillusioned and face the truth. Hell is life out of synchronicity with truth. When dealing with issues of sustainability, we can start with science then drop in a spiritual message – this is the meaning of being 'patterns and examples' (CF&P 19.32).

All life entails violence – our duty is to minimise it. But we must

acknowledge our own complicity and be careful not to take a holier-than-thou stance. We are in the world and must accept that we are part of it. We must develop the art of realising our divinity whilst remaining anchored in our humanity (II Peter1)

We need to re-examine Quakerism's Christocentric roots with the insights from the universalism of the '80s. Where can we find the language to do this? He referred again to Panikkar, who said that any given religious tradition is complete within itself. But it can gain from other traditions if it can hold them all together. How do we speak about Christianity in a pluralistic world, particularly to people who don't have a language of God?

We are being forced by the speed of the machine to run faster and faster. It is hard to see where the points of light are by which we can bring spirituality to the world, but we are not lone voices in the wilderness. We must be aware of others carrying the light of spiritual consciousness, gather them together and unite with them.

And the steam locomotive? Well, to the delight of steam enthusiasts, the Tornado was in Waverley station at lunch-time. This is the first A1 built in 50 years with loving care and voluntary subscription by people who value what they have.



A Queen's Park Quaker Community? - A real possibility?

Quaker Housing Association Scotland needs 15 households to commit.....

Arklet Housing Association (AHA) has taken the unusual step of offering QHAS a housing development, in its entirety, consisting of 15 apartments of varying sizes. They are both for sale and for rent. The QHAS considers the offer of this development is an opportunity not to be missed if possible and for this reason is extending its remit, (which up until now has been for developing housing for older Quakers (55+) only), to families, younger couples and singles.

The fully renovated former Queen's Park Synagogue is situated in a quiet road a few roads South of Queen's Park on the South side of Glasgow and is handy for shopping and healthcare facilities. A rail station is located 5 minutes' walk away with a frequent train service into the centre of the city (10 minutes journey time).

QHAS has recently been exploring a business relationship with AHA which, due to its larger size, has the resources required for future QHAS development processes. AHA was originally formed to provide good quality rented accommodation for those within the Jewish community who needed this, and thus they are, as a faith-based organisation themselves, an appropriate Housing Association from which to request such assistance.

It was certainly not anticipated that such an offer would be made but QHAS is delighted by it. The development, due for completion in July/August this year is considered by QHAS to be a very fine one, with the potential to be a uniquely interesting, convenient and comfortable place to live.

From Arklet Housing Association's point of view, Quaker residents would be a 'good fit' for a building that has been so much part of Jewish religious life and very well loved as a consequence. It certainly is a potential win-win situation!

The building is an imposing one, expressing solidity and authenticity, and stands the equivalent of four storeys high. It has been comprehensively renovated to a high standard, including a new roof and new windows in the existing window openings, some in arched surrounds. New openings for windows have been created as required for the interior plan, which is a marvel, retaining as it does many original features of the synagogue including plasterwork. The main entrance door is approached by wide gently sloped steps and there will be a ramped access too. The original storm doors will be renovated, the inner glazed doors behind them letting light into the original entrance hall, large enough for an informal communal sitting arrangement in a rather 'grand' space with a vaulted ceiling.

An active Church of Scotland, built within the last 10 years, is a neighbour on one side with four-storey recently constructed apartments on the other side and opposite, together with a telephone exchange. Mature lime trees line the boundary with the road on the entrance side. The rear of the building faces a terrace of traditional sandstone tenements.

The garden ground is limited and laid out with gravel for car parking. Nevertheless there are possibilities for the development, by future residents, of a small urban garden which could be extended if fewer car parking spaces were required.

If the former Queen's Park Synagogue comes into majority Quaker ownership, the suggestion is to rename it Isaac Penington House. A trust will be formed at a future date to ensure that apartments can be sold on but remain in Quaker hands in perpetuity.

The Valuation Report is due for presentation shortly. QHAS understands that rental levels will be those standard for Housing Associations and that the price for the apartments for sale will be set at market levels.

Quakers and Attenders in Scotland are to be offered the apartments in the first instance. Thereafter the invitation will be extended to the rest of the UK.

If you are interested in the potential that this development offers for living as neighbours with others of like mind, or know of others who might be, please write or send an email to the address below. Expressions of interest should be submitted by May 22nd and more information can be made available after that date.

Ann MacInnes: 2, Weaver Crescent, Airdrie, ML6 9HL

Email: AMacInnes96@googlemail.com



General Meeting on Saturday June 20 2009 will be held at Glasgow Quaker Meeting House, (opposite Charing Cross Station) 38 Elmbank Crescent, Charing Cross, Glasgow G2 4PS

It will start at 11am and end at about 4pm. Do please come and meet Friends from elsewhere. They would like to meet You! If you belong to a big Meeting, you already know lots of people, but Friends from small Meetings do not, and they specially value this opportunity to meet others. That means You! And of course you want to hear Gillian Ashmore - see back page. Attenders are most welcome, but please speak to Beryl Milner when you sign in, so that you may be properly introduced.

For directions to the Meeting House, or information about parking and so on, please contact Barbara Potter 0141 248 8493

Hot drinks will be served from 10.30, and also at lunch time. Please bring your own lunch. Hot drinks and refreshments will be provided at the end of the meeting.

If overnight accommodation would make it easier for you to attend GM, please contact the GM Assistant Clerk, Beryl Milner 01250 870 115.

General Meeting for Scotland Glasgow 20 June 2009

"The place of prayer is a precious habitation. I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world."

John Woolman 1770, from Quaker Faith & Practice 20.10

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

Our speaker for this GM will be Gillian Ashmore, the Recording Clerk for Britain Yearly Meeting. She is the most senior member of staff employed by Friends in Britain and will talk about her role within both Friends' House and the Society nationally, and how the new Framework for Action might make a difference. This will be a valuable opportunity - to learn more about how the concerns from Friends in our Meetings connect with the work carried out by our paid employees, and what the Recording Clerk does and might do. It's a lot more than keeping records!

We will also be considering ideas for modifying some of our internal ways of working within GM, and will be looking at how we used our financial resources in 2008.

Please join us in Glasgow, meet new Friends, and uphold our business method. Do please encourage anyone from your Meeting to come who may not have attended GM before.

Robin Waterston, Clerk