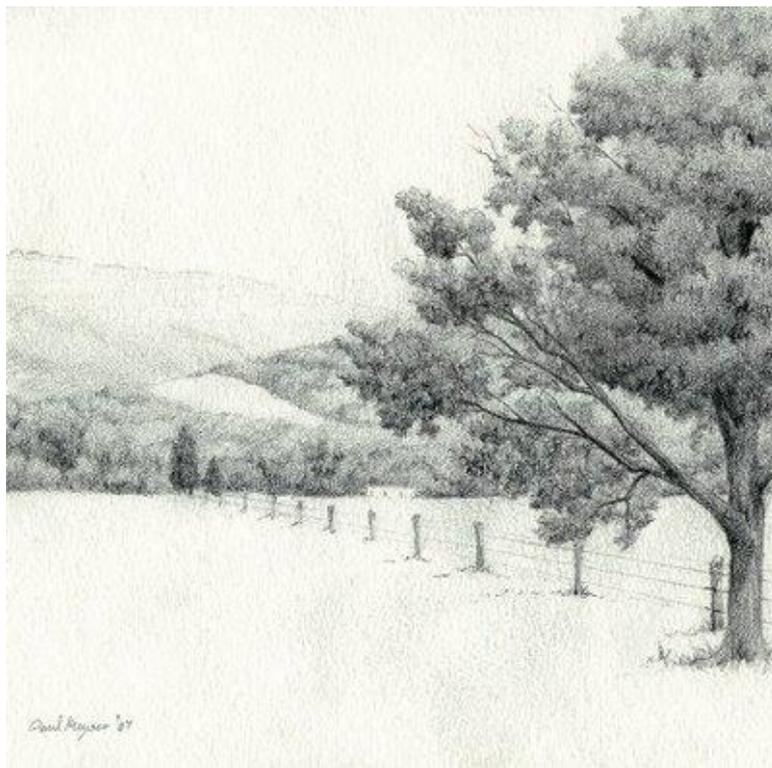


# The Northern Quaker

Autumn  
2012



North Scotland Area Meeting

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## Comments

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Northern Quaker.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend either the General Meeting in Nairn or the Area Meeting in Pluscarden. However, for others who also missed the meeting, there are two accounts from Pluscarden in this edition; a report from Phyllida Sayles, and a personal reflection from Diana Brockbank. These are followed by two short articles with some pointers to good protocol during Business Meetings and a statistical analysis of attendance at these meetings.

As well as a summary from Ruby Hicks on the QPSW conference she attended, and a report from Meeting for Suffering, as a complete break, there is a short reflection on the “naked rambler”.

In between are articles that Friends have kindly submitted. I hope you enjoy them, and contributions are always welcome in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ Tel. 01224 706989 [harry.horsley@uk.bp.com](mailto:harry.horsley@uk.bp.com) or [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com)

### **Announcement:**

Banchory Meeting is having a *Living Witness Project* Workshop on sustainability – Our Quaker response – Sat 27 Oct in Banchory. If you would be interested in joining the group please contact Jane Palmer, [ghlo@phonecoop.coop](mailto:ghlo@phonecoop.coop) You will be very welcome.

### **Faith**

Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark. (Rabindranath Tagore, *contributed by Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen Meeting*)

### **Report of North of Scotland Area Meeting August 25<sup>th</sup> 2012 at Pluscarden**

There were nearly 50 people in the room for the meeting for worship for business, so it was not easy for our clerking team. I believe that there were several attenders at their first business meeting which I am glad of, although sadly we did forget our discipline at times, – so not setting the best example for newcomers.

As ever the clerks hope to run quickly through the routine matters of reporters and representatives to give more time for other business. It is usual at the August AM to confirm the dates for the next years AM. I can remember 10 years ago discussing whether it was easier to travel to Aberdeen in February or November – so re assuring that nothing changes!! This time we decided to meet in Forres in November 2013 and Inverness in Feb 2014.

The next major item was matters of Finance, and our AM treasurer Derek McLean introduced a discussion about our contribution to Friends House. Apparently Friends House needs every member to give an average of £150 per annum, which some AMs achieve and some do not. At the moment central work is paid for by legacies and income from lettings and the Friends House café as well as our donations. John Melling spoke eloquently about the need to support our central work, as every meeting for worship is supported by the unseen work of Friends House. We talked about how some Friends give individually to central work as well as AM – and how do we track those amounts? Meeting for Sufferings is also considering using the quota system again, where each AM was asked to provide a certain sum depending on the number of members. Eventually the AM trustees agreed to look at how we support FH – and report back, they were hastened on their way by a plea to ‘keep it simple’! Nigel Dower explained the North of Scotland Quaker Trust which now has a new governing document, making life easier for the trustees. The income of the NSQT comes from letting the property in Aberdeen and investments. The trust gives money in two ways:- 1) by directly supporting

Quakers to travel to events and their children to attend various Quaker activities. 2) indirectly by reimbursing AM for those attending conferences on behalf of AM ('representatives'). The Trust can also give small grants for any Quakers in difficulty for any reason. Nigel made a plea to all Friends to apply to the trust as often as possible! When the few Caithness Friends travel to Orkney meeting – the Trust pays for our travel, and vice versa. Marion Strachan, the NSQT treasurer presented their accounts, which are very healthy.

Membership Matters came next. Our Elders and Oversees had met on Friday and two of their minutes were read out by David Sanders. These two minutes provoked much discussion, the first was a recommendation that applications for membership should be supported by one or more local Friends and the second was a change of name from 'report' of visitors to an applicant to: 'record of discussion between visiting Friends and applicant for membership'. Well I am still astounded! - what's the difference? And what happened to plain speaking? Es & Os had also decided to carry on with the policy of excluding attenders when membership matters were discussed – which I do not agree with anymore. This time two letters from applicants were read out by the clerk, and I think that the several attenders (now out of the room) would have been encouraged by these thoughtful, inspiring and carefully written letters. My own letter of application 20 years ago was much more direct – 'please can I join?'

The Nominations group (John Melling, Phyllida Sayles, Mary Dower) report was presented by John Melling, for those new to AM business, it is necessary to explain that the nominations group are appointed by AM to find and put forward names for the nominations committee – who then have the task of finding people to do the work of AM. So John described now we had gone about our work, we tried to find people who had a breadth, depth and foresight of Quaker work and who could in a broad sense represent a geographical area. John asked that those appointed to the nominations committee should be encouraged to attend the 'nominations' course at Woodbroke. We have approximately 48 jobs to fill for our AM out of about 120 members (I say approximately, as there are different ways of counting, and I might well have recorded a number wrongly). But I do remember hearing that if all roles throughout AM are counted (i.e. including local meeting roles), the number reaches 80! So we have a problem of too many jobs – and the nominations Committee were asked by AM to look closely at all the roles to see how some might be amalgamated/adapted etc.

Nigel Dower as the outgoing convenor of nominations committee then brought forward some new names for various posts, please see the minutes for details.

#### Framework for Action document

This was introduced by David Sanders who is our Meeting for Sufferings representative. This document was produced about 3 years ago in an attempt to engage Friends in the process of deciding what the priorities for central work should be. I remember looking at it – and having difficulty. Friends House have asked the AM representatives to find out whether this document should be reviewed. There were several passionate contributions on this item and my impression was that local meetings had not found it helpful. There seemed to be agreement that it was a good idea for FH to try to get local Friends involved in how our money is spent, but this document had failed in the attempt. The clerks had difficulty finding the minute at the end of the morning session and asked the meeting if a minute could be produced for the continuation of the MfW for business on Sunday morning. On Sunday morning, we continued the MfW for business and the clerks read out a minute for 'Framework for Action' which was duly accepted (please refer to minutes) after the word 'democracy' was removed. A Friend pointed out that we are a 'theocracy', we seek the will of God in our Meetings for Business, not the will of the people. I personally found this minute a very helpful and timely reminder of why we are Quakers.

On the agenda for our business meeting were 3 suggestions from the clerks, the first was about whether the starting time of AM should be adjusted according to the time of arrival of public transport, this seems very sensible, but unfortunately was not taken up and minuted.

The second suggestion was whether there might be an alternative to meeting in Aberdeen in February, this we felt had been dealt with on Saturday.

The last suggestion was whether we should we hold a second residential meeting, and there were many contributions about how and where we should hold our AM meetings, in particular how to engage young people. And of course the problem of having AM at times when young people have to be in school. As it is our custom to have the May AM in different parts of North of Scotland, it was suggested that this could also be a 'residential' meeting. I did not make a note of the final minute and think that no firm conclusion was reached. However Caithness Friends are looking at ways and means to provide a possible residential AM in May 2013.

Phyllida Sayles, (Orkney Meeting)

### **Pluscarden, "Experiment with Light", and beyond, august 2012**

I must tell you about the wonderful week end we had at Pluscarden this year. My word! It was full of vitality. It means a lot to me to belong to an Area Meeting where I have so many friends and "the Spirit" is so obviously moving. On Friday we had a get together of the elders/overseers and e/o reps. who could make it. Using worship sharing we explored what we think spirituality is, and what makes us Quaker. Hmmm! Then we had our yearly face to face business meeting, (we also meet by telephone), and even created a minute to take to the meeting for worship for business next day.

So to the main week end: I guess it was the afternoon session on "Experiment with Light" that brought so many wonderful people to the event. Huge thanks go to Diana and John Lampen for travelling so far to lead it for us. There were around 40 of us learning a little about Rex Ambler's creation, which led from his very intensive study of the writings of George Fox and other early Friends. As Rex writes in his excellent book, "Light to live by" "The first Quakers had obviously made a great discovery. It not only changed their lives, giving them peace of mind and great joy, but it also fired them up to share what they had found and to hold to it even when they were imprisoned and beaten for doing so. But what had they discovered? Their descriptions are simple and poetic, but still difficult to understand. They talked of "the light" within them that showed them the way, "the truth" that set them free, "the life" which sprang up within them, and "the power" which enabled them to do the seemingly impossible. What were they talking about? What meaning did these simple but elusive words have for them?" Diana led us through a deceptively simple meditation, and asked us to accept whatever came to us, even if at first sight it seemed there had been nothing. We then had 20 minutes to silently journal, walk, draw or just sit, before sharing in small groups in worship mode. My own experience was surprising, amazing and has given me something special.

The week-end was a wonderful mix as always. It included staying in the Abbey or guest house as well as local places, and camping (I got very wet); qi gong/yoga with Diana L before breakfast; walking the mile or so to and from the village hall, often in the rain; compline in the Abbey; meetings for worship and a beautiful Lampen led Epilogue; a slide talk by John L about his work in Uganda, and of course eating, and talking with new and old friends. It was a do-it ourselves week-end and I love how comfortably and sharingly all the work got done. I hope wonderful Anneke, feeding us, feels the same.

The next day was my birthday and I feel honoured that it was the day my 11 year old grandson chose to leave his now severely handicapped and dysfunctional body. He was born with a genetic dysfunction. Of course I am very sad; of course; and I am also so happy for him, and relieved that this part of our journey with him is over. He created happiness and love around him all his life. When he was little it beamed from him in huge smiles. As he became more handicapped it still happened. Somebody said he had a big influence in his local Quaker Meeting. So many people talked to, cared for and related lovingly with him and his family. This love was the keynote of his funeral, which around 200 people attended including his younger brother and sister, many other children, and relations from all over Britain. I know that death is not the end. We had 5 minutes of Quaker worship and I felt his presence, huge, and started to cry again. "Oh come on!" I heard, and started to chuckle. A friend had earlier "seen" him lovingly held; breaking free of a restraining harness, yelling "Yippee! Now I can play with my friends" and zooming off. Rachel, the minister who led the service so beautifully in the local C of E church, told me she had a brief picture of a lad in T shirt and shorts

running past her kicking a football and waving “good-bye”.

Our family journey continues. Newly back from the funeral, loads of family, and the 2 long journeys to and from their Yorkshire home, I am feeling battered. However life goes on; even happily!

Diana Brockbank

### **Quaker Meetings and their little ways!**

General chat around our residential at Pluscarden threw up some points along the lines that often new – and sometimes no-so-new – members and attenders didn’t always know routine Quaker protocol. Since we often are expected to learn sucking up all info by osmosis, and after all we are not plants, this is hardly surprising.

Do Friends know not to walk into a room when someone is speaking or giving ministry in either business or MfW but to wait quietly by the door until finished – and pausing a few seconds before entering? What about the time our meetings begin! If a meeting is timed to start at say 10.30 a.m. – actually that is not the time of arrival: it is the time that we are all settled. Traditionally, when the first person is seated in a state of quiet contemplation or prayer then the meeting has begun. Where the meeting has the use of only one room, of course, Friends will tend to gather first and then all sit down together. Where we are lucky enough to have a separate room for our MfW – even a meeting house (wow!!) Friends can sit down when they are ready. In some meetings there are a few Friends who will settle a quarter of an hour before the advertised start of the meeting to ‘warm up the meeting room’ – a sort of ministry in itself.

How many new to our Area Business Meetings realise that these should be conducted in the same vein as our MfW’s – prayerfully seeking God’s Guidance – somewhat challenging when we get lost on nitty, gritty stuff I admit!! This discernment depends on openness and hearing different points of view, all within a loving community.

Reflecting back for myself (Juli speaking) I reckon it was some 15 years of membership at a BYM when the penny dropped that when Friends said “I hope so” in a business meeting they were saying “Yes” rather than uttering from a position of sheer boredom. This time-honoured “I hope so” is a response to the clerk’s question, “Is this minute acceptable?” In other words, “It’s good enough for me – others may feel differently about it.”

It took even longer for me until I was serving on the Meeting for Sufferings (Juli again!) to realise that one should not stand to speak once the clerk was writing a minute but that one should be sitting and upholding the clerk prayerfully. Normally it is obvious when the clerk is either looking down at the table, writing, or talking to an assistant clerk, that they are busy. When he or she looks up from the table, then may be the time to stand again.

Do we understand that when with the agreement of the meeting the clerk begins to draft a minute, this means that we are no longer holding a discussion about the item of business in hand? Having got as far as we can for the time being, we are now recording the discussion already held. The task is now to make a good enough record of the meeting’s discernment rather than to continue that discernment.

Oh and here’s a nice quirky one – started very recently I think by younger Friends – when someone holds their hand/arm up high- this means “please will the rest of you be quiet” – usually because someone needs to say something and not try shrieking above the din – but also amazingly effective at BYM – like a wave going around about 1000 Friends – to draw them into the silence to begin the meeting – because of course in the delight and excitement of the moment at seeing old acquaintances – all the above advice has been totally forgotten – because of course Friends – we are only human – not plants.

What other bits would Friends like to offer – ask at your local meeting!!

Juli Salt & David Sanders Eldership and Oversight Committee Co Convenors

## **Attending Area Business Meeting-stray statistics and queries**

I was curious to know the number of people who attend our Area Business Meetings, so I looked at the minutes of meetings from 2005 to 2011. This exercise raised a number of questions in my mind which I thought I might share to stimulate discussion.

Any views expressed are my own and are not necessarily shared by other members of the clerking team.

**First the good news.** The number of people attending Area Meetings is gradually increasing. The average number attending in 2005 was 16 and in 2011 it was 22. Of course, the bad news is that this still represents a small proportion of the total membership of the Meeting.

The average figure hides some consistent trends.

**The best attended Meetings** are the residential Meetings held at Pluscarden. I have heard very positive reports from Friends who have found the Residential Meetings helpful, I both to get to know members of other Meetings in our scattered Area and as encouragement in their Quaker commitment.

**Question;** if residential Meetings are helpful, is there a case to for having two residential Meetings a year?

**The least well attended Meeting is** the February Meeting held, during this period at Aberdeen. Speaking personally, travelling from Oban to Aberdeen is a challenge, travelling from Oban to Aberdeen in February is doubly daunting.

Does meeting at Aberdeen encourage Aberdeen Friends to attend? This does not appear to be the case. The average number of Aberdeen members attending Area Meeting held at Aberdeen is virtually the same as the average number attending Area Meetings held elsewhere.

Aberdeen is also reasonably accessible to Orkney and Shetland but there has only been an occasional attendance from those islands at the February Meeting.

However, many Friends would wish to gather at Aberdeen as it is the founder Meeting with the only purpose built Meeting House in Scotland

**Question;** Given the Scottish weather and geography, could the Meeting at Aberdeen be at a later date, say March.? How about a second residential in Aberdeen? Would this encourage a greater attendance by Aberdeen Friends?

### **A final Question**

For good reasons, many Friends wish to use public transport to attend Area Meeting. Should we facilitate this by trying to coordinate the starting and finishing times of the Area Meeting with the arrival and departure of public transport?

David James, Lochaber and Lorn LM

## **QPSW Conference**

My initiation to the work of QPSW began on the bus full of delegates travelling to the centre in Swannick from Derby station. Three very exuberant young people boarded, obviously pleased to meet up again and exchange notes on their travels and work. Lynn sat next to me and told me about her work in Geneva with the Quaker United Nations Office, explaining that hers was a one-year placement after which she would return to do more studies.

It came as a pleasant surprise to me to discover that they along with several others were the people taking the workshops at the conference.

At the opening plenary session Helen Drewery General secretary for QPSW began by telling us about

the beginnings of peace meetings. From the campaign against slavery, where nine of the twelve of the Society for Abolishment of Slave Trade were Quakers; Elizabeth Fry's work on prison reform; The winning of the Nobel peace prize in 1947, up to the work going on today through QPSW. All nine of the workshops on offer gave detailed and instructive information on various works going on all over the world. Unfortunately I could only attend two.

Susan Seymour gave a very inspiring talk at the second plenary session on her peace building work in Macedonia. Previously, she had worked in trade and industry and had come to a crossroads in her life when she had retired from her job and had recently been bereaved. To fill the void in her life she decided to work with QPSW and headed for Macedonia to work in peace building – helping to develop small businesses. While she was there, the war in Kosova broke out and refugees poured into Macedonia, so she became involved with the refugee work too. It was in the thick of all this she said she found her joy and purpose in life. She realised the true meaning of the Quaker “simplicity” living and working with the people there. An amusing anecdote she related to us to prove the point was about cheese! In Macedonia you can get six choices of cheese, cows sheep or goats. All three come in two forms white and crumbly like Feta or hard and yellow like Cheddar. When she returned to the UK and went into Sainsbury's and looked along a whole aisle of cheeses – hundreds of them, she just stood and asked – WHY?

Back home in London, she is working with campaigners and activists - asking questions at high levels of business. She showed us slides of the climate camp she was involved with, campaigning against the E-on company for using unsustainable resources. Her most recent support was for the camp at St. Pauls. One of the placards a campaigner held read – *The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who do nothing – apathy is the greatest weapon of mass destruction.*

#### Workshop 1 Becoming a low carbon sustainable community

This was led by Sunniva, a very committed young lady who started by telling us if everyone in the world lived a UK lifestyle we would need 3.1 planets. The UK has the longest working hours of all major economies in Europe. The UK uses 90% fossil fuels. In 2010 greenhouse gasses rose 3.1% It is fossil fuels not cars that are causing greatest climate change. Climate workers are working with the big energy companies to become more sustainable and use more renewable materials.

At the Canterbury yearly meeting of 2011 at which over 1000 Quakers attended, a commitment was made to become a low carbon sustainable community. We were asked to be alive to the problems and all the possible actions we can take in our own lives/our meetings/our communities, to reduce our carbon footprint. We were reminded that there is a sustainability grant for meetings to help with this.

#### Workshop 2 Freedom from Torture.

Andrew led this workshop. A very impressive young man who was part of a training and capacity building team responsible for co-ordinating the self cure /compassion fatigue project for people working with survivors of torture.

Taking us through the long slow route the survivors of torture have as they struggle to build a new life in the UK, it was easy to understand how the workers can suffer from the stress, frustration and negativity of the job.

From the border guards to the officials at Immigration, it is a slow, arduous sometimes dangerous and terrifying experience. They have to go through an unfamiliar and complex system, answering questions, filling in forms, repeating their harrowing story over and over to different people thus causing further trauma. If they say they have been tortured on their arrival in the UK they should be referred to the FFT foundation instead of being put in a Detention Centre. This all depends on how they are interviewed and how well they are represented by an interpreter and their state of mind and health. Once they get to the foundation their rehabilitation begins.

They receive medical, legal, psychological and practical help. They have a variety of therapeutic work to help them through their rehabilitation such as gardening, art and cookery. Rehab can take up to five years. In 25 years – 50,000 individuals have been referred to them for help.

The FFT foundation is working to change the system and promote the rights of the survivors in the UK; to influence the way they are treated as asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and abroad. It was heartening to learn that the European border guards were the ones who came to FFT and asked for training in identifying victims of torture, so that they can be directed straight to the foundation. Andrew then concluded with a brief summary on the importance of caring for the workers who deal with the survivors of torture. The risk of secondary traumatisation is always present, from the people with direct contact to the ones in the office working on the documentation of the ordeals. I left this workshop with an overwhelming admiration for them all.

#### Tar sands and the UK

This talk was on the work of QPSW bringing to our attention the destruction being caused by the extraction of this crude oil in Alberta Canada.

The energy required to separate and refine this oil (bitumen) is 3 times more carbon intensive than any other fuel.

Forests and agricultural land all around the Athabasca river are being destroyed and polluted by this work. James Hanson – NASA climate scientist states that there is enough carbon released in this, the biggest industrial project in history, to cause irreversible climate change, yet the Canadian government supports this and the UK government supports Canada.

UK dependency on fossil fuels means the government give 10 times more subsidy to them than to renewable energies. Last year the Keystone pipeline, 2000 miles long, was proposed, bringing oil from Canada through America to the west coast. This would mean clear –cutting thousands of acres, diverting rivers, strip-mining, risking toxic spills, pollution and more. Congress attempted to skirt round the rules with fuzzy promises of jobs and security but it was stopped by the US.

In June this year at the European Parliament there will be a Fuel Quality Directive and EU legislation against tar sands fuel. We are urged to put pressure on our MPs to vote for this, also to find out if our banks/pension funds invest in tar sands fuel. Barclays, HSBC and Royal Bank of Scotland are known investors.

I started this report by saying how pleasantly surprised I was to discover how many of the QPSW movement are our young people. It was easy to become despondent with all the information given out at this conference, but also to be inspired and encouraged by the dedication of everyone who is trying to make a difference. In particular the younger generation - they are indeed our hope for a better world.

Ruby Hicks, Nairn meeting

#### **Some thoughts on reading about the “Naked Rambler”**

The interview with Stephen Gough, who since 2000 has chosen to be naked in public (Guardian Weekly 4 May 2012), raised many intriguing questions for me.

After 20 years in his native Eastleigh working as a lorry driver, he moved to Canada aged 40, where he had an “epiphany”. He realised that “he was good, that we are all good, and therefore his body was good.” He returned to Britain and in 2003 set off from Land’s End towards John O’Groats wearing only boots and a rucksack. The police in England doesn’t seem to have bothered him much, but in Scotland he was arrested and convicted of Breach of the Peace. He is now serving his 17<sup>th</sup> conviction, with probably more to come, in segregation so as not to upset the other prisoners. His aim is to walk out of Perth Prison on release and make his way to Eastleigh naked. Psychological tests show him to be of sound mind. His “crime” hinges on the definition of Breach of the Peace, which is “conduct

which does or *could* cause the public to be placed in a state of fear, alarm or annoyance.”

I was prompted by this story to consider why we find nudity “frightening, alarming, and annoying”? Before Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree which led to them knowing good and evil they had no feeling of shame about their nakedness. Does Stephen Gough wish to return to the Garden of Eden, where everything was good and nakedness was not shameful? The problem is that the rest of us *have* eaten the fruit and the knowledge that nakedness is “evil”, or at least shameful, cannot be retracted. It is embedded in most, if not all, cultures. His *intention* is not to frighten, alarm, or annoy; he argues that “we can either end up living a life that others expect of us, or a life based on our own truth, which in his case is that the body is good. A “flasher” who causes fear and alarm surely *intends* this reaction, so should not some weight be given to the intention?

The other question which arises for me is one of our legal system. Clearly in his case his punishment does not act as a deterrent. As he is acting on principle and this is not questioned by the system - there has been no attempt to persuade him to change his mind – (in this country we are tolerant of the strangest principles as long as they are harmless – and here we are back to the “fear and alarm”), restorative justice measures are not relevant. But surely some formula could be devised to send him back to Eastleigh, where once back he would cease being naked in public when “he doesn’t have to do it any more”.

Eva Deręowska

## **Peace**

If there is light in the mind, there is beauty in the person.  
If there is beauty in the person, there is harmony in the house.  
If there is harmony in the house, there is order in the nation.  
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

*Anonymous Chinese proverb (contributed by Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen meeting)*

## **Quakers & Business Group Conference**

The Quakers & Business Group wish to invite members and attenders of all your Local Meetings to this year’s Q&B Conference “**Quakers Working Together**”.at Friends House on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November.

Q&B Group’s vision is for Quakers to play a full role in enriching the business community for the benefit of the wider world; the people and environment on which business depends and has an impact.

It will gather Quaker organisations and Friends who are engaged with business; whether they view that as positive or negative. The conference will provide an opportunity to share experience and draw on each other, during and following the conference, to find ways to work towards our vision.

The price is £25 which includes refreshments and lunch. Food will be vegetarian unless there are specific individual dietary requirements which you inform us of by 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012. Bursaries will be available for contributions to costs of attending. You can sign up and pay for your attendance by visiting the Q&B Homepage at [www.qandb.org](http://www.qandb.org). Enquires to Paul Gibson & Nick Pyatt - Q&B Group Tel: 07808732020

## **Quaker Tapestry Exhibition held in Appin 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July**

Lochaber and Lorn Friends held a two day exhibition of twelve photographic representations from the original Quaker tapestry panels held in Kendal. There was also a DVD running explaining how the tapestry came about and detailing all the embroidery stitches used, and also the opportunity for people to see the materials and try the stitches for themselves. This attracted considerable interest.

The exhibition was well received and attracted interest from both local people and visitors to the area. Many of whom expressed a wish to visit the main exhibition in Kendal.

(The original is housed in a permanent exhibition in Kendal and comprises 77 panels created by over 4,000 contributors and completed in 1996. The tapestry celebrates the significant contribution that Quakers have made to the modern world, ranging from the forefront of the industrial revolution, developments in science and medicine, astronomy, the abolition of slavery, prison and social reform. (Ed.))

### **Peace**

Lord, open to us today the sea of your mercy

And water us with full streams

From the riches of your grace,

And the springs of your kindness. Make us children of quietness and heirs of peace...

Strengthen our weakness by your power, and bind us close to you and to each other.

*(a prayer from the Syrian church, contributed by Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen Meeting)*

### **Meeting for Sufferings 7 July 2012**

The new triennium of Meeting for Sufferings began at the close of Yearly Meeting 2012 and will end at the close of Yearly Meeting 2015. Each area meeting now has one representative and one alternate, of whom only one will attend each meeting. (Formerly at least two Friends from each area meeting were entitled to attend.) This means the meeting is smaller and less cumbersome, but also that the balance has changed between area meeting representatives and the other members of Sufferings, e.g. BYM Trustees and representatives of central committees and of centrally managed work.

North Scotland Friends appointed to Sufferings for this triennium are David Sanders (representative) and Jane Palmer (alternate). We expect that for the time being David will normally attend Meeting for Sufferings and report to Area Meeting. Jane is working to find ways to connect with the area meeting, sharing what needs to be communicated from Sufferings, and feeding back what needs to be heard. Both David and Jane receive all the papers, the agenda, minutes and anything else relevant to Meeting for Sufferings, and will be exchanging thoughts before and after each meeting. We hope also to find ways of sharing whatever is useful with any others in the area meeting who are interested. Please feel free to contact either of us.

The meeting at Friends House in July, first of the triennium, was largely given to induction.

Some members of Young Friends General Meeting presented their sketch of how not to hold a Quaker business meeting – ending with a throwaway question: How do we respond to such things?

The roles of Meeting for Sufferings and area meetings were explored. As Meeting for Sufferings shifts to a more visionary role, shared discernment between area meetings and the yearly meeting as a whole, through Meeting for Sufferings, is crucial. Area meetings are encouraged to test concerns brought to them and, if they are so led, to forward them to Meeting for Sufferings.

BYM Trustees gave an account of their relation to Meeting for Sufferings – sometimes informing, sometimes consulting, sometimes seeking guidance, and always listening (and see *QFP* 7.03). It was pointed out that the business before Trustees is often complex and sometimes uncertain – as for example when relevant facts are yet to be established – and at such a stage it might not be helpful to refer to Meeting for Sufferings. There is a lot of learning going on.

Apart from induction and routine business, a selection from other items:

- The meeting agreed on behalf of BYM to support QAAD and others in the setting up of Gambling Watch UK.
- British Quakers have agreed to join with Christian Aid in seeking an import ban on goods from illegal Israeli settlements.
- It had been suggested that BYM make a statement on the situation in Syria; however, the meeting felt that as a body Quakers in Britain are not qualified to do this, and recommended instead that we make links, especially with Syrian refugees, and build our understanding.
- The pension arrangements of BYM, in the hands of the Pensions Trust, are, like those of many other organizations, in need of reinforcement. The cost of this will be substantial but is achievable, and employees' pension entitlements are not at risk.

Among AM minutes received, two relate to subjects about which we hope to hear from Friends in the area meeting. The first of these suggests the reintroduction of a quota on area meetings to fund centrally managed work. The second raises the question of *A Framework for Action*, produced by Meeting for Sufferings as guidance for the five-year period 2009–2014; if the *Framework* is to be revised or replaced, this work will need to begin soon, and feedback is sought regarding its effectiveness.

David Sanders

(For papers, agenda and minutes, go to: [www.quaker.org.uk/sufferings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sufferings))

### **Aberdeen Meeting House**

The Aberdeen Meeting House is the only purpose-built Quaker Meeting House in Scotland that is still in use. Officially opened on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1903, it was designed by the renowned Aberdeen architect Dr William Kelly LLD, also known for the “Kelly’s cats” - the leopard statues decorating the balustrade of Union Street bridge.

It was designed specifically for Quaker meetings and the absence of ornateness reflects the simplicity, one of the Quaker testimonies.

The Aberdeen Meeting recently repeated our participation in the annual “Doors Open Day” event when historic or otherwise architecturally interesting buildings open their doors to the public.

This year the decision was to avoid presentations, and allow visitors to view the Meeting House set up as for a Meeting for Worship (although we did tidy up the Elders’ Gallery, temporarily moving the meditation cushions, Christmas tree holder, and ladders used for gutter cleaning!).

Another decision was to produce a small booklet with a summary of the Meeting House feature and history. Two extracts from the booklet might be of interest:

The plaque on the outside wall of the Meeting House commemorates Lilius Skene, a Quaker and contemporary of Robert Barclay (second half of 17<sup>th</sup> Century), who was Aberdeen’s first poetess. She is buried with her husband, Baillie Alexander Skene, in the Quaker burial ground at Kingswells, Aberdeenshire. One of her poems is entitled the “the darkest hour”:

*The darkest hour is ever nearest day;  
And tryallis deep for mercies great make way,  
When powers of darkness, hell and death assaille,  
When hope is gone, and human help doth faille,  
The Lord is neare, his present help appeares,  
Gives secret strength, our doore of error cleares.*

A brief history of Quakerism in the North-East, compiled by Nigel Dower, was also included in the

booklet:

1652: origins of Quakerism in the North of England.

1662: Quakerism began to make its mark on Aberdeen and surrounding districts. (Ironically given the emergence of the Quaker peace testimony very early on (officially stated in 1666), many Quakers first came to Aberdeen as part of Cromwell's army!)

Persecution followed in the next twenty years, with many Quakers suffering (and some dying) in the Tollbooth. Two prominent Quakers imprisoned were Alexander Jaffrey ex Lord Provost of Aberdeen and the eminent Quaker theologian Robert Barclay of Ury, near Stonehaven.

1663: a Quaker Meeting was started in Kinmuck, near Inverurie and the meeting house still stands. It was for a time a very important Quaker meeting and there remains a large Quaker Burial Ground opposite. Other early meetings were at Lethenty, Aquorthies, Ellon, Tarves and Inverurie

1694: although Quaker meetings were held from 1662, the earliest Quaker meeting House was in Quaker Court, Guestrow, behind Provost Skene's house, and this was in use until 1827.

1827: a simple meeting house built in Gallowgate (no longer in existence).

1867: move to premises in Diamond Street.

1903: move to current purpose built meeting house at 98 Crown Street.

Although the number of visitors was lower than in previous years, this was largely attributable, paradoxically, to the good weather which people were enjoying elsewhere after the poor Summer.

Door Open Day is a national annual architectural event and is coordinated nationally by the Scottish Civic Trust. Details can be found at [www.doorsopendays.org.uk](http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk).

*News*

**Area Meetings for 2012**

**10 November: Inverness**

**Area Meetings for 2013**

**16 February: Aberdeen**

**11 May: Caithness**

**23-25 August: Pluscarden (residential)**

**9 November: Inverness**

**Next General Meetings for Scotland in 2012**

**November 17th/18th (residential) in St Andrews**

**Online newsletters**

*Tayside Quaker*

*West of Scotland Quaker News*

*Northern Quaker*

*Scottish Friend*

available on the GM website:

**<http://www.quakerscotland.org>**

**Courses and conferences**

*Remember North of Scotland Quaker Trust has funds for attendance at these events!*

**Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at**

**[www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk) or**

*tel. 0121 472 5171*

**Contributions will be most welcome to future issues of *The Northern Quaker***

***The deadline is two weeks after Area Meeting***

**Please send contributions to:**

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