

# The Northern Quaker

Spring  
2014



## North Scotland Area Meeting

Contents (click on the link below)

Comments

Announcements

Meeting for Sufferings July 2013

North Scotland Area Meeting February 2014

Faith – what’s God got to do with it?

Quaker Faith & Practice Questions

Europe and economic justice

Northern Friends Peace Board, February 2014

Meeting of NFPB, March 2014

“The Last Runaway”

And finally....

### Area Meetings for 2014

- 17<sup>th</sup> May Lochaber and Lorn
- Residential AM at Pluscarden 29-31 August.
- 8<sup>th</sup> November Aberdeen

### General Meetings for Scotland in 2014

- June 14<sup>th</sup>: Edinburgh
- September 13<sup>th</sup>: North Scotland. Venue tbc
- November 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>: West Scotland. Venue tbc

GM website: <http://www.quakerscotland.org>

If you wish to receive  
*The Northern Quaker* in paper form  
or would like to be removed from the email list, please contact the editor

## Comments [back to contents](#)

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Northern Quaker. As well as the usual reports, we also have a comprehensive report on a QCEA/QPSW conference on Economic Justice in Brussels last November attended by Derek McLean. Juli Salt has kindly contributed two reports from the Northern Friends' Peace Board, and a short book review. Thanks are also due to Eva for her very readable summary of the complex issues expounded in the Christian and Interfaith Relations Conference she attended. And don't miss "And finally.....".

Many of you will prefer the Northern Quaker in its printed edition. However, the email version now contains coloured photographs as well as a "clickable" contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. Previous editions are available on the North Scotland website [www.quakerscotland.org/north](http://www.quakerscotland.org/north). If you wish your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com).

As usual, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com).

## Announcements [back to contents](#)

### Offer of service forms

Only six people in the North of Scotland area have so far returned offer of service forms, and that includes Ruth and myself (Carel)! If you have not sent one in the nominations committee may not know that you are interested in some particular area of Quaker work; you may be inadvertently passed over when you would have been able and willing to contribute. All local meeting clerks should have copies of the form, or go to [www.quakerscotland.org/north](http://www.quakerscotland.org/north), scroll down and click on 'Offer of Service form 20.3.13.doc'. The forms give the postal address for return to me by ordinary mail and they can also be returned by email, to [carelgoodheir@gmail.com](mailto:carelgoodheir@gmail.com).

### Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig

Summer Shindig will take place once again this year at Ackworth School in Yorkshire, from Saturday 26 July to Saturday 2 August (so just about time to skedaddle down to Bath too, if they really have the stamina!).

The theme this year is "Journeys", and Shindig is open to all youngsters between the ages of 11 and 16 on 30th June. Priority is given to youngsters from Scotland and the north of England, but there is always space for some from further afield, so don't be put off if you have a grandchild or relative from elsewhere (or even abroad) who you think would be interested. The fees are £300 for the first child and £280 for each sibling and bursary help is available. Information and applications forms have been sent to all eligible youngsters on our GM database, and to LMs, but if you know of someone who hasn't received anything and would like more information, please contact the Co-ordinator, Helen Robbie, at [summershindig@gmail.com](mailto:summershindig@gmail.com) or 07818 614 626

### Friends School in Ramallah and Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig Appeal for funds 2014

We are looking to run another link-up between the Friends School in Ramallah and our Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig and are appealing to Meetings for funds to do this once more.

Summer Shindig has hosted six Palestinian 16 year-old students from the Friends School since 2010 and within this update are the words of the students, their families, the school and our Young People themselves...

We hope that once more you can support this venture.

Tim Crump, on behalf of Hexham Meeting

Message from the Friends School, Ramallah: Students from the Ramallah Friends School have benefited tremendously from taking part in the Summer Shindig. It has challenged them to expand their horizons socially and to bond with other likeminded Quakers from around the world who share their views on equality, tolerance, and leading a socially responsible life. As a result, our students return to Ramallah as more outgoing, open-minded, and cultured individuals. Thank you,

Mahmoud Amra, Principal, Friends School, Ramallah



How you can help: Travelling from Ramallah is very expensive as Friends School students do not have easy access to airports and have to travel via Amman in Jordan. It costs around £1,500 per Friends School student for their travel costs and attendance at Shindig. If you can help with a contribution please send a cheque payable to Hexham Friends Meeting to Ros Blaylock, Treasurer - Hexham Meeting, 10 Quatre Bras, Hexham, NE46 3JY

*Faiq, Dalia from Ramallah and friends: 2011*

### **Meeting for Sufferings 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013** [back to contents](#)

Topics at December's Meeting for Sufferings included a concern regarding education, decisions about the future of Swarthmoor Hall, a report from BYM trustees about ongoing work at Friends' House, sustainability and an update from QPSW about welfare cuts.

The main item on the agenda was 'Quaker values in Education', prompted by a concern from West Cumbria AM that government education policy and proposals conflict with our testimonies. This was wide-ranging and includes the impact of testing (especially of younger children) and ranking children into deciles ("we want every child to be valued, not graded"), targets, league tables, rote learning, an examination system which does not encourage independent thinking, militarisation in schools, the downgrading of religious education and a disregard for the experience and judgement of teachers by the DfE. A background paper from West Cumbria included a summary of responses from Friends, largely in support of the concern. David Day, a retired teacher spoke to the concern and described how funding cuts and policy changes had produced damaging pressure on teachers, children and families. We also heard from Rose Oliver, a primary school teacher who agreed that it was hard to keep up with the changes. Was she able to keep true to her Quaker values? Generally yes, and Quakerism informs

her teaching. There are difficulties but also opportunities to be found, for example talking about the Friends' Ambulance Unit and white poppies around Remembrance Day.

Quakers have a long history of involvement in education, but recent initiatives seem to have fizzled out, perhaps through lack of focus and because teachers are already over-worked and stressed with trying to keep up with all the changes. Most committed teachers would agree with the list of Quaker values in Education drawn up in 2000. Meeting for Sufferings was trying to clarify the spiritual basis of the concern and what, if anything, is distinctively Quaker about it. Quakers can offer Peace education and restorative practice as a way of discipline and conflict resolution. Resources, including the 'Teach Peace' pack for primary schools, are available from QPSW and the Quaker bookshop. We are encouraged to work in collaboration with teachers with these or consider volunteering as school governors.

However West Cumbria's concern relates to education in England. Scotland has a different education system, and this is about to change with the introduction of the new Curriculum for Excellence. This (from a quick look at the Education Scotland website) seems to address some of the concerns expressed above. Or am I being naïve? If there are any teachers, governors, or knowledgeable parents out there who would like to comment I would be interested to hear from you.

The BYM trustees' report dealt mainly with property issues. The refurbishment of the Large Meeting House at Friends' House continues (I take a peek in through the windows every time I am there but progress is obscured by a forest of scaffolding). The upgrade will make the room more accessible, sustainable and attractive as a venue both for Quakers and outside organisations (although I will be very sorry to see the galleries go). Trustees have agreed that renaming the LMH would offer a good opportunity for outreach, although its new name, 'The Light' was not greeted with universal approval. I have to admit I winced, although I'm not quite sure why.... 'Disneyfication!' said one representative, and another was concerned that the Light comes from within rather than through a skylight. It was pointed out that the name

was for non-Quakers and we can carry on calling it the Large Meeting House. Perhaps the new name will bed down eventually!

We also heard about the deliberations of the Swarthmoor Hall Project Group regarding the future of the building. In brief, the hall is underused and is costing BYM about £100k a year to support. The project group has considered a number of options, including management and marketing partnerships with the National Trust, against what sounds like a very difficult background of local sensitivities. The recommendation is to go ahead with the 'status quo plus' option (i.e. no NT involvement), with Quaker courses running in spring and autumn, and providing holiday accommodation in the summer. We are encouraged to support the hall by attending courses or booking summer breaks there.

Since my last report, QPSW has held a 'Gathering for Action' on welfare cuts and inequality at Woodbrooke. This was a significant event, as evidenced by much anger, energy and ideas. Resources and talks from the gathering, along with a report and the results of the survey of Quaker Meeting actions, are available on the website <http://www.quaker.org.uk/cuts-oct-2013>. Although QPSW is still concentrating on the causes and economic structures behind inequality it is doing what it can, and is working on a statement on behalf of Quakers that may be issued early in 2014. In the meantime, QPSW would be interested to hear of any local action and initiatives.

Many of us who are concerned about climate change and sustainability have been doing what we can to cut our own carbon emissions, but have been discouraged by the lack of change in wider society. The Canterbury Commitment group is organising a gathering on 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> March at Swanwick with the theme 'Transforming Ourselves: Transforming the System'. The focus of this goes beyond individual and Meeting actions to reduce carbon emissions towards joining with others to promote change in the system. It is hoped that this will be the first stage of setting up a national network of representatives. Area Meeting hopes to send a representative who will report back on this initiative.

Finally, an update about the Meeting for Sufferings Regional Gathering for Scotland, which will explore how AMs and MfS work together to enable meetings to make the most of MfS. This event will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2014 in Aberdeen and is open to all. Although aimed primarily at MfS representatives/alternates, AM clerks and assistant clerks, it may also be of particular interest to elders, overseers, trustees – and indeed anyone with an interest in Quaker work done in our name in Britain.

Jane Booth, Aberdeen and Banchory Meetings

### **North Scotland Area Business Meeting held at Findhorn Village Centre, Forres on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014** [back to contents](#)

During our worship we heard from section 24:16 Quaker Faith and Practice.

**Treasurers Report** As our treasurer is prevented from attending he will present a budget at the next Meeting.

**Donation to the Ramallah Project** We agree to make a donation similar to that made in 2013.

**Proposed purchase of a Meeting House in Nairn.** We acknowledge the energy of the Nairn Local Meeting in wishing to purchase a Meeting House to further Quaker presence and outreach in the town. However at this time we consider renting premises is a preferable option and that the purchase of a building could be increasingly burdensome for Friends in North Scotland. We encourage Friends in Nairn to explore ways of using Rosebank Hall with other groups. We have welcomed the opportunity of considering the appropriateness of owning property at the present time and in the future.

**Proposed donation from the Ernle Beyts Fund for Connel Meeting.** Our treasurer informs us that the remaining balance in the fund has been designated for a residential family conference to be held this year. Funding may be available from the North of Scotland Quaker Trust.

**Telephone conferencing** We support the idea of having Area Meetings using telephone conferencing, in addition to face to face Meetings. We ask the clerking team to consider what agenda items might be dealt with in this way and to arrange a trial Area Meeting using telephone

conferencing between now and the next Area Meeting.

**Membership** We have received a letter from Clare Woolgrove who has lived in Seattle USA some years. She offers her resignation as a member of the Religious Society of Friends. We agree to accept this resignation and to ask the clerk to write to Clare thanking her for her contribution to the life of Friends. We join together to wish her well for the future.

**Tabular Statement** We accept the Tabular Statement prepared by the membership secretary and we thank him for his work on this. It will be posted to Friends House next week.

**Offer of Service Forms** We encourage all members and attenders to complete and return Offer of Service forms to Carel Goodheir. Forms are available at all Local Meetings.

**Appointments** We make the following appointments; **Trustee of the North of Scotland Quaker Trust**, Colin Sterling from February 2014 to the end of December 2018, Marion Strachan, **Treasurer North of Scotland Quaker Trust**, from February 2014 to the end of December 2018 (not as a trustee) **Registering Officer** Penny Selbie, from February 2014 to the end of December 2016, **Representatives for Quaker Life**, Pamela Affleck and Diana Brockbank, from February 2014 to the end of December 2016. We appoint the following to attend conferences, **Canterbury Commitment Conference** 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Swanwick, Jane Booth, **Annual Treasurer's Conference** Woodbrooke 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Derek McLean, **Clerking Course**, 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Swarthmore Hall, Ian Johnstone.

**Friend wishing to be released from service;** We release the **Assistant Treasurer**, Gerry Robson.

**Proposals for the Clerking Team** We agree on a trial basis, to appoint two co-clerks each for a two year period, a 'senior' clerk and a 'junior' clerk. The 'junior' clerk would assist in setting the agenda, taking the minutes and clerking the Meeting. The 'junior' clerk would be expected to attend a clerking course. In the second year, the 'junior' clerk would become the 'senior' clerk and a further 'junior' clerk would be appointed. The 'senior' clerk would be the contact person for the Area Meeting, be responsible for seeing that the agenda and minutes are drawn up and for the good ordering of the Meeting. In addition to the

two co-clerks, the post of assistant clerk would continue as a three year appointment. The assistant clerk is an ex-officio Trustee of AM. The assistant clerk would be the membership clerk and give administrative support to the clerking team but would not usually be involved with the clerking of the Meetings.

**Trusteeship** We consider that the appointment of 11 trustees from the relatively small membership of the Area Meeting is probably unsustainable. We ask the Trustees of Area Meeting and the North of Scotland Quaker Trust to meet together to consider ways of rationalizing and simplifying the responsibilities of Area Meeting Trustees and the North of Scotland Quaker Trust, to reduce the burden of trusteeship and to make best use of human and financial resources. We ask them to report to the next Area Meeting in May.

**Date and content of the Residential Meeting at Pluscarden.** The Residential Meeting at Pluscarden is on 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> August 2014. We agree that the subject of Economic Justice will be considered and we ask the Residential Meeting Arrangements Committee to liaise with Derek McLean and Simon Bond of the QCEA.

**Proposed General Meeting for Scotland Advocacy Post** We support the establishment of an advocacy post to help present a Quaker perspective to our elected representatives in the Scottish Parliament. We think that it is important that the aims and objectives of the post are clearly identified. This will enable us to judge whether the work of the post-holder is appropriate and effective. We suggest that the post-holder should assist Friends in Scotland to participate in advocacy work. This would help Scottish Friends to be an effective voice when they take part in other groups promoting peace, justice, equality etc. We think that responsibility for the post should rest with the General Meeting for Scotland with a close working relationship with BYM and its advocacy team. We suggest that the financial implications of this proposed post for Area Meetings, General Meeting for Scotland and BYM are clearly identified before a final decision is made on how to proceed.

**Reports from the Meeting for Sufferings** We thank our representative, Jane Booth, for her reports of the Meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> February which will be published in the Northern Quaker. Phyllida

Sayles will contact Lizzie Rosewood re Vibrancy of Meetings

**Report from the Northern Peace Board** Our representative Juli Salt drew our attention to ‘Wool Against Weapons’, a 7 mile scarf that will stretch between the Atomic Weapons establishments at Alder Marston and Burghfield on 16<sup>th</sup> August. We encourage Friends to engage with the work of the NFPB and attend their Meetings on our behalf. We ask Phyllida Sayles to write about the Alternatives to Violence Project in the Northern Quaker.

**Report from the QCEA/QPSW Conference in Brussels** . Derek McLean will publish his report in the Northern Quaker.

**Report from the Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relationships Conference.** We thank our representative Eva Deręgowska for her report which will be published in the Northern Quaker.

**Affiliation with Eco-congregation Scotland** This will be considered further at a further Meeting.

**Our response to the possible revision of Quaker faith and Practice.** The clerking team has passed on the comments of individual Friends to Paul Parker, recording clerk BYM who has thanked us for them. We will consider this matter again.

**Ackworth School General Meeting** The school invites representatives from each Area Meeting to its General Meeting on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014. We ask Mary Dower whether she knows of a North Scotland Friend who would be willing and able to attend.

**Elders/Overseers** We ask Local Meeting clerks to inform Area Meeting of any proposed changes of E+Os and E+O reps.

**Date of the next Meeting** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May at the Village hall, Port Appin Argyll.

## **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations Conference held 25 Jan. 2014 at Friends House, London** [back to contents](#)

### **Faith – what’s God got to do with it?**

I was very pleased to have the work of our Friend Peter McCaffery acknowledged in the introduction, and also by several speakers, at this day conference. I did not know that he was a member of the Non-Theist Friends Network. The range of his interests and involvement was truly astounding.

On first sight the names of the speakers might suggest a debate between opposing views – non-theist (David Boulton, a well-known advocate of this approach), and “Theist” (Rex Ambler, equally well known for his Experiment with Light), with a “neutral” view perhaps expressed by the poet Philip Gross, but this is fortunately not how it turned out. As far as the title of the conference was concerned, the talks were more about defining “faith”, and “God”, in such terms that it was hard to disagree. (Surely no one needs still to argue against the image of the old man with a white beard in the sky?)

It is hard to give a useful summary of the talks, but here are some key points for me.

David Boulton calls himself a “Quaker humanist”. He was at great pains to show that the Non-Theist Network was not a campaign to rid Quakerism of Christianity, and was not a secular humanist movement, but a forum for open discussion, a network of Friends upholding Quaker values. He argued that Quakers sometimes retreat into silence to avoid examining what the words Worship, God, The Divine, Light, etc. mean. Faith for him is based on trust, a reasoned faith tested and enacted based on experience. He quoted George Fox: “This I knew experimentally”, and Socrates: “The unexamined faith or life is not worth living.”

David came to his non-theism via John Robinson’s “Honest to God” (God as Ground of our Being) and Don Cupitt (Sea of Faith) and then to

Quakers. He defines God with Blake as imagined embodiment of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love, and God language as poetry.

This led neatly to the next speaker, Philip Gross. As a poet (awarded the T.S. Eliot prize in 2009) he feels that the word God is fruitful as it enables us to express experience. We need these metaphors. Worship is a way of listening and being, the space between and around words is a living thing. We find meaning through metaphors. He illustrated this with many examples from his own poems.

The final speaker, Rex Ambler, hardly needed introduction either as he is by now well known as the interpreter of Fox's original message. He accepted that non-theists and theists do not present hard intellectual positions or different camps, but the way the differences are perceived can leave us uncomfortable. His paper, included in our pack, "A Meeting for Learning, a proposal for dealing with different ways of speaking about God or the ultimate reality", gives guidelines for a way forward. If we wait in the silence we can become more aware of our self, and make sense of life, but there are no ready answers. There is basic uncertainty and we must find the answer for ourselves.

He outlined three ways of answering this basic existential question.

1. The various -isms, whether religions, ideologies, even humanism and atheism, and, yes, non-theism, construct an overall story which adherents accept and find meaning in.
2. At the opposite end it is argued that no grand answer is possible, there is no meaning we can grasp, the universe is bleakly indifferent. He quoted Sartre as saying that "there is no meaning, but I will create it."
3. The third way is the Quaker way, not an ism, but a mystical way of knowing and getting to reality by getting a better understanding of self. He then explored concepts of this Quaker way, such as Silence, The Personal, Experience, and Together. In silence we let go of the external and look inside. This can point to metaphors of God. It is personal, seeing oneself for what one is. When one sees oneself, one sees God

and speak truth based on experience. We do this together in worship. The Quaker way is not a doctrine that there is a personal Being, as God is incomprehensible. And therefore it is not "theist".

My overall impression of this "meaty" conference was that there is no vast gulf between the views, all used metaphors and distanced themselves from doctrine. Perhaps the "non-theists" being still uncertain about their *raison d'être* within the Religious Society of Friends try too hard to convince of their legitimacy?

*Thanks to Area Meeting for enabling me to attend this event,*

Eva Deręgowska, Aberdeen Meeting.

### **Quaker Faith and Practice Questions for Meetings and Groups** [back to contents](#)

North Scotland Area Meeting comes together but four times a year, so we have not had an opportunity as a Meeting to consider in depth these important questions. However the Area Meeting has sought the views of individual Members. Fourteen responses were received and a summary of these follows, quotations from them are given in italics.

Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP) is read regularly at Meetings and privately by Friends. *'The primary purpose of QFP is to deepen our understanding of Quakerism'* Meetings also use the books of discipline of the Ireland and Australia YMs.

The view was expressed that it would be advantageous for Church Government to be published as a separate book. *'In a denomination which asserts the priesthood of all believers, the whys and wherefores of our governance and the readiness to share it needs encouragement'*.

### **Question 6. In light of your responses to queries 1-5, do you consider it time to begin the lengthy process of revision of our book of discipline?**

Nine Friends were not in favour of a major revision at this time. They felt that although changes of detail are necessary, the present QFP remains 'good enough', that a revision would be a distraction, take up too much time, energy and resources, *'what a lot of time and money it*

would involve’.

The view was expressed that the time is not yet ripe, because *‘a lot of work has gone into revisions over the past few years and the marriage aspect is not yet settled. Yearly Meeting is in the middle of an agenda cycle, considering what it means to be a Quaker today. Sufferings is working on a new five year framework, so there is reason to wait at least until the discernment of these processes is worked through’.*

Two people were however in favour of a major revision, despite it being a *‘huge undertaking’*. Although Christian, one person felt that we should listen to non-theist Friends because there has been significant changes of view amongst Quakers, so for example one section, 26:35, was regarded as controversial during the 1994 time of revision, but now, in the Friend’s opinion, this section was no longer controversial. Three Friends felt that they did not have sufficient information at present or were undecided.

### **7. Are there issues which might require us to engage in some exploration or threshing as a yearly meeting, before embarking on a revision process?**

Friends felt that a major revision should be preceded by open and generous engagement as a Society with our core areas of belief. *‘Before a full revision were to be undertaken, it would be useful for BYM to have a theist/non-theist discussion at some depth’.*

Nearly all responses expressed a desire to retain ‘God language’. *‘NO,NO, NO, we must not delete the word God. For me there is something other and the word God is a useful starting point.’* Another Friend said, *‘In general I think that the book should be kept within Christian morals and beliefs but recognizing and welcoming other beliefs.’*

Whilst some feared that a process of discernment could give rise to divisions within the Society, such a process can also be seen in a positive light, that the sharing of a diversity of viewpoints can encourage mutual

understanding and spiritual growth. I quote one Friend at length. *‘Quakers tend to pursue a liberal, esoteric, mystical, experience-based version of Christianity in which personal spirituality is explored. Non-Christian members fit in because they, too, are exploring their personal spirituality. This is something which can be described in Christian language or otherwise, but something which those present in a meeting, Christian or not, can experience together in silence. Choosing words to describe spiritual experience has always been a challenge, as these experiences are often beyond and outside of any defined reality...One of the special characteristics of Quaker Meeting for Worship is the way in which ministry emerges spontaneously from such a wide variety of different language. This allows consideration from new angles, which can lead to reconciliation of apparent paradox. The result is spiritual growth helped by the sheer variety of flavours of ministry. It is as if we are all artists working to express something in different media. Each is unique, but taken altogether as an ever changing kaleidoscope of different viewpoints, a greater picture, and a greater depth of understanding emerges. The diversity of membership is something to be celebrated and provides a special opportunity for Christians and non-Christians to grow in mutual spiritual understanding ... Christian spirituality is a true and trusted path, one involving language that is often misunderstood but which can be extremely enlightening to explore. As Quakers, I hope all of us Christian and non-Christian alike can listen with open mindedness and in the process learn to understand and embrace the many diverse forms which spiritual language may take.’*

There were reservations expressed about the process of revision. Some Friends were not clear who would decide on the way a possible revision was to be tackled. One friend felt that *‘these lengthy and deep questions will only be answered by those who have something strong to say’*. Another said that *‘the present tendency to seek consensus rather than the ‘feeling of the Meeting’* was not faithful to Quaker practice.

### **Revision and Scotland**

One person felt that QFP ‘hasn’t always been good on making clear that Scottish AMs come under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

rather than the Charity Commission.’. One person would welcome the possibility of creating a separate Scottish Yearly Meeting with its own book of discipline.

David James, Assistant Clerk, North Scotland Area Meeting 27.11.13

### **Europe and Economic Justice - Guaranteeing Fair Share? QCEA - QPSW Conference 15 - 17 November 2013** [back to contents](#)

Economic Justice is one of five key focus areas of the Quaker Council for European affairs programme, and Quakers have long held a concern about economic justice, reconciliation, and the right sharing of world resources. Economic justice was the topic of the joint QCEA/QPSW conference in 2004, but with the global and European financial crisis and the awareness of limited environmental resources, it was felt timely to again offer Friends the opportunity to improve their understanding of economic issues.

QPSW has been active on a number of areas relating to economic justice e.g. working with the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility to develop a new website ‘Your Faith; Your Finance’ to help Quakers and meetings with decisions about their use of money. QPSW have also recently run the very popular online course on *mythbusting in economics*.

The three main questions addressed by the conference were:

- What are the causes and consequences of the European economic crisis?
- What alternatives are there to austerity?
- How can we as Quakers contribute to the building of a just and sustainable economy which meets human needs without destroying the planet?

There were over a hundred delegates, mostly from the UK, but with Friends from Belgium, The Netherlands and Norway. There were five Friends from Scotland.

The format of the weekend was two keynote speeches to set the scene,

then three workshops, welcome light relief on Saturday evening with an excellent folk trio, and on Sunday a drawing the threads together session followed by meeting for worship. I found the conference a very stimulating experience - I didn’t know there were so many Quaker economists - but with an overwhelming amount of information to absorb, including some very scary charts e.g. showing the extent of youth unemployment and the extent of national debt. I imagine that like me, many Friends have become much more interested in economics since the crisis because we have all been affected in some way and can see the impact on others. I will describe the main themes and report on the issues that surprised, shocked and encouraged me.

The first keynote talk, *The causes and consequences of the European economic crisis*, was given by Trevor Evans, professor of economics at the Berlin School of Economics and a member of the coordinating committee of the European Economists for an Alternative Economic Policy in Europe (EuroMemo Group). As Friends will be familiar with most of the issues here, I will highlight some of the facts which interested me:

#### Current economic policy

- Since the Reagan-Thatcher era neo-liberal economics have dominated fiscal policy in US, UK and increasingly in the rest of the Europe
- Belief that GDP growth is essential for increased well being, reducing poverty, and full employment
- The free market – deregulation, privatisation of public services and goods – is the most efficient way to economic growth
- Based on an economic theory where – only traded items have value – Higher consumption is primary goal

#### Economics of the crisis

- Post war to mid 1970s – rising living standards and full (male) employment. Most workers got a bigger share of economic gains as wages grew. In 1976 the top 1% share of wealth hit a low point of 8.9%. By 2006 this had risen to 23.5% and since 2009, 95% of all income gains have gone to the top 1%

- The UK financial sector debt is the highest in the world

#### Impacts of the crisis

- Decline in public sector spending and loss of public services: holes in the road, reduced social welfare
- Massive youth unemployment – 20% in UK, 25% in France, 55% in Spain, 59% in Greece
- Real wages down since 2009 (-3% in UK)
- Reduced lending to businesses and households

#### Myths about the crisis

- Myth: Government deficits are due to excessive welfare spending
- Reality: deficit is due to bank bailouts
- Myth: Austerity (i.e. public spending cuts) is the only way to bring down the deficit
- Reality: There are other options for fiscal policy, including central bank increasing money supply for job creation and investment

#### There are alternatives

- Downsize the financial sector
- Separate retail and investment banks; limit size
- Control borrowing of investment banks – increase reserve/debt ratio
- Strictly regulate financial markets
- Fiscal policy to focus on employment – decent work, contracted hours, reduce working week to 30 hours
- Within Euro area effective transfers between richer and poorer regions to counter polarising impact of euro (Germany through its trade surplus is drawing money out of poorer countries)
- Increase welfare spending
- Progressive taxation
- Public investment in renewable energy infrastructure to transform economy
- Tax corporate profits where they arise
- End tax havens
- Tax on financial transactions
- Measure well-being, not GDP

#### Openings for action

- EC proposals for controls on financial sector, including Financial Transaction Tax, but UK opposes
- Trade talks EU-US, EU-Canada
- Promote disinvestment from fossil fuels – to force companies to diversify
- Build alliances – ‘small circles’ to find common ground for action

#### What do we feel called to do?

- Mervyn King, former Governor of Bank of England: “Of all the many ways of organising banking, the worst is the one we have today.”
- *What might we do to change the system?* – ‘Hope is an imperative’ (title of a book of essays by David Orr)
- *Quakers have a history of working for change in apparently hopeless situations*
- Engage with QCEA through the British Committee of QCEA

The second keynote talk *How can we (Quakers) contribute to the building of a just and sustainable economy which meets human needs without destroying the planet?* was given by Judith Kirton-Darling. Judith is a former QCEA Programme Assistant, where she worked on human rights and social policy. Over the past 10 years she has worked inside the trade union movement. In May 2011 she was elected Confederal Secretary to the European Trade Union Confederation. She is currently responsible for developing trade union positions on sustainable development. Judith is a member of Brussels Quaker meeting.

Judith told us that after the conference she was travelling to Warsaw to take part in the 19th Conference of Parties to the UN’s Framework convention on climate change. Poland is a country in which 90% of electricity is produced through coal burning power stations, the costs of transforming the energy sector are considerable and people are increasingly concerned about energy poverty and the cost of living as wages do not keep pace with prices. Her view is that if we are to guarantee a just transition towards a more sustainable economy – then

it is in places like Katowice in Poland or her home town of Middlesbrough, with their employment dependence on large chemical and heavy industrial bases, that a just transition must deliver sustainable jobs, a fairer economy and hope for people. It's this vision and how to get there that she wished to address in her talk. She explained that her work with mining workers and government representatives in Warsaw to negotiate solutions, tackling the roots of conflict and building alliances, is the way she puts the peace and social justice testimonies into action.

Judith highlighted the following issues:

- while climate negotiations are stalling Trade negotiations between the EU and US and Canada are advancing which demonstrate a substantial increase in the power of multinational companies over our economies, democratic systems and natural resources. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership allows multinationals to sue governments for policies or decisions which cause them to lose profits.
- climate change increase 3/4 degrees by 2100 with international capacity to address this threat stalling as a result of economic recession
- 26 million unemployed over EU (including very high rate of youth unemployment) as workers pay for the banking crisis. Economic insecurity is widening the gap between rich and poor leading to inequality and scapegoating of migrants. Because of economic uncertainty people are less concerned about climate change at a time when we are consuming energy and natural resources at a totally unsustainable rate.
- austerity has led to *black* austerity policies where incentives into the green economy are cut in the name of fiscal consolidation

She continued, *'this is short-termism in the extreme: economically, environmentally and socially. Two contradictory ideas currently shape our mainstream political debate. First, the argument for austerity that states cannot and should not live beyond their financial means. Second, the notion that we can and must, in effect, live beyond our*

*environmental means. This internal contradiction has enormous and long term implications for our social cohesion within and between countries.*

*We're currently borrowing more than we can pay back, and it's not only about our carbon emissions. 'Earth Overshoot Day' is the point in the year when we've used up as much of the Earth's total resources as the Earth itself can regenerate in a year.' Since the late 1980s, we've been going into eco-deficit each year progressively degrading the whole environment, with the overshoot day arriving a little earlier each year. This year we 'celebrated' on the 22 August. We are now back in a debt cycle, with interest rising. Obliviousness to ecological debt is characteristic of an economic system in which the interests of finance come first and which fails to recognise the environmental and social foundations of prosperity. So money flows into things that maximise short-term financial returns, rather than optimising overall value for the economy and society.*

*A sustainable economy and future for our species is only possible if we address this short-termism in our economies and financial markets'.*

Judith went on to highlight alternatives to recession and austerity, quoting Rufus Jones' words "I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place":

- EU Youth guarantee -the right to a decent job, proper training or a quality apprenticeship within 4 months of unemployment for anyone under 25.
- changing the way we produce and consume goods and services, conserve resources, work smarter and avoid destroying vital ecosystems provided by our seas and forests.
- finding alternatives to fossil fuels – oil, gas, coal – and channel investment into new technologies and the jobs and skills that go with them - solar and wind power, electric vehicles and trains, capturing and storing carbon emissions, saving energy at home and at work.
- transition towns and local community initiatives that get different

interests around a table have taken place in many countries, how has your Meeting been involved?

TUC's Green Workplaces project – in which over 1,300 workers' representatives have been trained and supported to engage in projects to 'green' their workplaces – these local projects range from the micro (recycling, mobility schemes) to the large scale, multinational wide changes in behaviour and consumption patterns.

- the pension fund industry could play a key role in raising climate change related private financing. How are Quaker finances invested and are our monies being used to support sustainability locally and internationally?
- in Birmingham, a local group are working through an alliance of the City Council, environmentalists, companies and unions. They used the Council's assets to guarantee a long term loan from the European Investment Bank worth £1.3million to help the council equip 60,000 city homes with energy-saving measures such as new boilers, improved insulation and solar panels. Energy is a major question for our economies and societies – what could Quakers do to support the energy transition?

She concluded *'we face many challenges, but the loss of a whole generation of young people in Europe – economically and socially will undermine our capacity to build a sustainable economy in the long term.*

*Our peace and social justice testimonies compel us to act however we can, at whatever level or scale, to use our 'gifts' to ensure the right sharing of the world's resources'.*

**Some action points emerging from the worship sharing:**

Fair penny campaign launched by Wanstead Quakers. Pledge to say I pay an extra penny in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from ...To pledge support for most vulnerable, but also to show solidarity for greater equality.

The EU initiative for a Youth Employment Guarantee needs wider sharing, and Quaker support

Pressure for public spending on green infrastructure, insulation etc, to reduce fuel poverty and unemployment.

Contact our MPs, and ask if they understand what is being negotiated in the trade agreements regarding loss of government sovereignty and decision making, through corporations having the power to sue governments for loss of revenue due to policies or regulations.

Contact business people and seek to hear their point of view on issues such as investor-state dispute settlement – reach out to the human in those we see as the opposition.

Websites to look at and join in e-actions:

<http://thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/draft-statement/>

<http://thefairpenny.org.uk> Information about the conference, main-speakers and workshops is now available on the QCEA website:

<http://www.qcea.org/home/events/conferences/>

I would urge you to read Judith Kirton-Darling's talk in full as I have not had space to highlight all of her themes. The scale of the task is overwhelming and Western Governments are only tinkering at the edges. But we can as Quakers do whatever we can, at whatever level to live out our testimonies to social and economic justice, inspired by the work being done in our name by Judith and her colleagues in Europe.

Finally I would like to emphasise the importance and value of QCEA's work in making representations to the EU and Council of Europe, on behalf of all Quakers in Europe (including Britain), with a very modest staff. They work in the areas of peace, human rights, economic justice, sustainable energy, security, and democratic governance. QCEA's current specific work areas are: criminal justice at the European level; the role of EU funding and trade in building a world reflecting the values of human rights and peace; sustainability and decoupling resource use from growth; the EU's role in the Israel/Palestine conflict; and the EU's role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Derek McLean Orkney Meeting

## Northern Friend's Peace Board (NFPB) Feb 2014 [back to contents](#)

I'm beginning to get my head around NFPB. Maybe coming in on the centenary last year with so much backward reflecting wasn't the most helpful – for me. Like being a rep on QLRC, QPSW, MfS, other bodies or conferences – this is all about gaining information and connections, sharing and doing, and it is an on-going flow of communication, rather than a report of one meeting. Unlike the bodies mentioned above, you don't have to be a Quaker to attend – you have to want to work for Peace, although of course the large majority of us are from Quakers. You don't have to be the nominated rep to attend. My 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting last year was in November, in Kendall. There was a large attendance outwith the NFPB reps.

I have 4 specific meetings to go to this year in:- Huddersfield, Chester, somewhere in "Scotland" and Newcastle. We get a lot of information and invitations to attend even more than these so I have/ will not take advantage of:-

- Feb 1 TTT workshop in Stockport
- Feb 25 informal meeting in Manchester with a group of people concerned that there may be overly patriotic and nationalistic commemoration of WW1- so they want to float ideas of an alternative to this.
- "Peacing it Together" a workshop on 15<sup>th</sup> March for young people, peace and community – in Manchester.

So maybe you are noticing how much the venues are down South. Another meeting I didn't make was Feb 5<sup>th</sup> – in Edinburgh. BUT David James did – and this is something he has worked very hard for.

David James reports *Scottish representatives met with NFPB executive members in Edinburgh on 5th February 2014 to consider the implications of the Scottish Referendum for Independence in September for peace. The NFPB will publish a report to inform discussion prior to the referendum.*

*We also thought about ways of helping Scottish Friends promote our Peace Testimony and actively participate with other peace organisations*

*in Scotland.*

Sooo NFPB is looking at actively coming much further North.

I have said how much info we get from NFPB – e.g. an email about a radio programme by Jeremy Paxman on WW1 with a Friend taking part. Far from not supporting NFPB I am now coming around to the idea of more than one rep. Failing that an email pool or group of us sharing our activities and info – because NFPB covers a very wide range of concerns- sustainability, eco issues, which many of you are already involved in and if there is something out there you may want to take advantage of – why not – and if you are going to be in Newcastle or Chester you could come along too J.

Information e.g.

- Jane Booth is hoping to join Scottish CND's week long spring walk from Edinburgh to Faslane in April <http://springwalk.org/>
- Eleanor Fairclough has for 10 years stood in Inverness once a month on Saturday mornings for Women in Black and knows far more about Peace issues than I will ever manage.
- Peace-Link North. (NFPB) an email forum for Friends to share news, information and ideas on peace concerns and activities in the North.

If you would like to join, just send an email to [nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org) Keep in touch with NFPB via the web: [www.nfpb.org.uk](http://www.nfpb.org.uk) [Facebook.com/nfpb1](https://www.facebook.com/nfpb1) [Twitter.com/nfpb1](https://twitter.com/nfpb1)

Mary Dower (as well as NFPB) let me know about this and has already started on *Wool against weapons – a 7 mile peace scarf to stretch between Atomic Weapons Establishment sites at Aldermaston, and Burghfield, Berkshire where nuclear weapons are made.* Contact Jaine Rose 01453 751604 / [jaine@woolagainstaweapons.co.uk](mailto:jaine@woolagainstaweapons.co.uk). This project is part of Action Awe, a UK grassroots peace campaign dedicated to banning nuclear weapons [www.actionawe.org](http://www.actionawe.org) Knitted / crocheted pieces to measure 60cm x 100cm in any shade of PINK.

Juli Salt NFPB rep

Forres LM

## Meeting of Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) at Huddersfield Quaker Meeting House on Saturday 1st March 2014 [back to contents](#)

I so didn't want to go to Huddersfield – perhaps that is why I inadvertently messed up my train ticket resulting in a 5.15 am start and a longer journey with many changes- but who wants to go to Huddersfield anyway? 11 hours and one novel later, I arrived, after a delightful final train change from Manchester to Huddersfield on the Trans Pennine route travelling along a valley with stepped terraced houses and historic wool mills.

On leaving the station one descends into a vast square with a bigger than life-size bronze statue of .. Harold Wilson – son of Huddersfield and socialist prime minister. Looking back at the station it looks like a palace! My hosts, both political activists and steeped in NFPB, live in a village just outside the town and during the journey in and out gave me much fascinating history about the local area, luddites etc.

This really helped ease me in to the main speaker of the day, historian, retired senior lecturer at Leeds University, Cyril Pearce, with the rather dry subject title:- 'Communities of Resistance: new thoughts on first World War Conscientious Objectors'.

His enquiries had begun years ago with a conversation with an old man, a WW1 CO who had worked in a wool mill, who had told him that Huddersfield was a good place to be if you were a CO – you would get lots of support. Some years later another man said the same thing. The seed was sown and even more years on he began his research in to “CO hot spots”, and Huddersfield with its strong socialist roots, even communism, working men's clubs and various societies, including Quakers, turned out to be a proper hot spot.

Cyril Pearce got the 2 o'clock spot, he was funny and interesting and held our attention, I could have listened all day. He is working on a national database of First World War Conscientious Objectors, and is the author of *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War* (2001). He cited two CO's who had gone to great lengths – like going to Canada to avoid WW1 yet signed up for WW2 – this is a complex subject.

We were asked to pair off and share our family experiences. My partner said her grandfather had been a CO working in a Leicester slipper factory and she asked if Leicester was a hot spot for CO's too? “yes” - very different to my background where my maternal grandfathers and my father had been in both world wars and all my family talk and books in our house were WW1&2.

So inspired I googled “Scottish WW1 CO's” – and did you know there was a camp at Dyce? Author Joyce Walker has written a book called 'Dyce Work Camp, Conscientious Objectors and Public Opinion in North-East Scotland, 1916: A Documentary History'. The quarry hard labour camp was set up by the Home Office for the men who refused to fight on grounds of conscience or religion, while the prisons were becoming crowded.

Well back to Huddersfield – gosh I felt I learnt a lot – fascinating place – well worth a visit anytime!! On my journey back I read another book – so inspiring that I have offered it as a book review.

Juli Salt NFPB rep. Forres LM

### “The Last Runaway” by Tracy Chevalier [back to contents](#)

I so enjoyed this book that I wanted to tell you about it. Fiction beginning in the 1850's when a young Quaker, Honour Bright, from a very sheltered background in Dorset accompanies her sister to Ohio USA. We follow her journey which is fraught with difficulties, tragedy and passions, her principles challenged. She meets her first black people and is drawn into the underground world of helping runaway slaves against the orders of her new Quaker family, particularly mother-in-law.

But why? Interesting bits about quilting too, and she is befriended and supported by a milliner disapproved of by the Quaker fraternity for her fun and bright hats which Honour helps her make. An easy read packed with information, (Ideal for a train journey). I started at Huddersfield and finished at Aviemore – enjoy.

Juli salt Forres LM

“And finally” [back to contents](#)



A photo of biscuits made for after Meeting coffee by the Trevelyan family; thanks to Oriole Hall for sending this in.