

The Northern Quaker

Spring 2015

North Scotland Area Meeting



“The Light”, Friends House

Contents

[Comments](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Meeting for Sufferings December 2014](#)

[North Scotland Area Meeting February 2015](#)

[QPSW conference March 2015](#)

[ForcesWatch news](#)

[AM fund and North of Scotland Quaker trust fund](#)

[Northern Friends Peace Board February 2015](#)

[Inverness Meeting – quite growth in 2014](#)

[On being a Quaker Registering Officer](#)

[Coincidence](#)

[General Meeting for Scotland March 2015](#)

Area Meetings for 2015 & 2016

- 21st-23rd August 2015 at Pluscarden
- 31st October 2015 Aberdeen
- 20th February 2016 Inverness.

General Meetings for Scotland in 2015

- June 6th 2015: Aberdeen
- September 12th 2015: Glasgow
- November 14th/15th 2015: Edinburgh (Residential)

This and other Scottish Quaker Online newsletters *are* 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 or tel. 0121 472 5171

Comments [^contents](#)

Welcome to the (rather late) Spring edition of the Northern Quaker. My apologies that it is appearing slightly later than normal, and some of the references to the General Election have been overtaken by events. As well as the usual reports, we also have an update of the state of the Inverness Meeting which seems to be thriving. Also thanks to Michael Otter for his contribution on the theme of Coincidence.

If you are receiving this in the printed edition, please consider if you might wish to switch to the email version which contains coloured photographs as well as a “clickable” contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to 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.

Announcements [^contents](#)

JOHN WIGHAM (ENJOYMENT) TRUST

For many years Trustees have been in the happy situation of having a modest legacy to disburse. John Wigham directed that grants should be made “to 'deserving persons resident in Scotland who owing to straitened circumstances are unable to enjoy the usual pleasures of life, the purpose of such grants being to provide the recipients with some additional comfort or pleasure of an exceptional nature over and above the usual necessities of life”. Funds have been distributed over the past ten years.

Trustees are pleased to let F/friends know that, due to some very generous, unexpected donations to the Trust in 2014, it is likely that it will be able to award grants for three more years. Further donations would also be very welcome.

Trustees invite applications from Quakers and non-Quakers resident anywhere in Scotland, for grants large or small. £500 will normally be the maximum. Applicants may obtain an application form and further information from Audrey Sinton, 66/4 Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh, EH8 7HA.

Tel: 0131 661 6051 Email: audrey_sinton@hotmail.co.uk

The completed form should be passed to a Quaker of long standing who is well known to their meeting, who will countersign it and forward it to the address above, to arrive by March 31st or September 30th. Applicants will normally hear the results of their application within 8 weeks of these deadlines.

Hilary Davies Trustee, JW(E)T

Meeting for Sufferings, 6th December 2014 - A time for reflection [^contents](#)

Light, space and clearness. This was the first Meeting for Worship for Business to be held in the newly refurbished Large Meeting House (aka 'The Light'). The space came in the form of openings in the agenda to allow time for quiet worship, and clearness was requested by the trustees in their considerations of whether or not to register for the Transparency of Lobbying Act. We tackled a lot of other diverse business too, including end-of-life issues, tax justice, refugees in the Mediterranean, Islamophobia, YM budgeting, the nature of Quaker concerns and reports from the Retreat and Quaker Life Central Committee. As usual, I am unable to cover everything, but briefing notes and minutes are available on the BYM website if you wish to follow anything up.



End-of-Life issues arose both in the AM minutes received and the Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) report. With an ageing population in the UK and the sense that more material about death and dying is needed in the next

version of QF&P (whenever that happens), I imagine that Quakers will be increasingly giving thought to the subject. It covers a vast range of issues. Leeds AM has a tested concern about end-of-life care, including medically assisted dying, and had previously asked MfS to adopt it with a view to developing a Quaker view on assisted dying. This had been passed on to QLCC for consideration, and we received minutes from the resulting meeting organised by QLCC with representatives from the Quaker Group on Dying and Death, the Churches Funeral Group and Leeds AM. There was universal agreement about some matters, but unsurprisingly the sticking point is assisted dying. "I am glad I was here" said George Fox shortly before his death. Will all of us be glad to be here shortly before ours? And if we think we know the answer to that, how can we be sure (and is our gladness the point anyway)?

While acknowledging that Leeds AM had followed a Quakerly process in adopting its concern about AD, QLCC was unable to unite with it, and was not sure that it was actually a Quaker concern-with-capital-c. (QLCC often receives minutes from AMs via Sufferings regarding concerns, but has a growing unease about whether we are losing our sense of what a Quaker concern is and how to test it, suggesting that not many area and local meetings have had experience of testing a concern. I have used the lower case for 'concern' throughout in this report in order to sit on the fence, but refuse to entertain such constructions as cConcern or C/concern!. Participants were agreed that end-of-life care issues should be explored more widely; whatever our age, we should be able to share our thoughts, experiences and worries about death and dying. Expect to be asked by your Sufferings and Quaker Life Council reps about which end-of-life issues should be taken forward by BYM.

Sufferings was asked for a Meeting for Clearness to help the trustees explore the background principles behind the arguments for and against registering with the Electoral Commission as a non-party campaigner under the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning Groups and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. In short, this act requires organisations to register if they are likely, in the run-up to a significant election, to spend more than a threshold amount on activities which a) could influence the way someone votes, and b) can be seen by the general public. There is also a cap on the total amount that can be spent. BYM will spend more than the lower threshold of about £25,000 before the general election in May, but is unlikely to exceed the upper threshold (unless we enter into a major joint campaign, in which case each organisation involved has to account for the whole amount spent). The new law is flawed and untested, but by registering, we demonstrate that we are open and transparent and respect the laws of the state. But is it for the government to place a limit (albeit just monetary) on political campaigning if it is a matter of faith? The sense of the meeting was that we should register, and if we are called to break the law, it should be over the issues we are lobbying about (I do not think Quakers would modify their campaigns to remain below the upper limit if that situation were to arise) and not the Lobbying Act itself. The trustees met at lunchtime, when they made the decision to register. A press release is available at www.quaker.org.uk/news/quakers-raise-concerns-over-lobbying-act

The Salter Lecture on Tax Justice by Richard Murphy last year (transcript at <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Salter.pdf>, audio at <https://soundcloud.com/quakers-in-britain/salter-lecture-2014>) has stimulated much debate, and we received a minute of concern about it from Cambridgeshire AM. We heard that this issue is already under consideration by BYM with respect to Quaker investments, but the difference between

good and bad practice is not always clear cut and one company's tax dodge is another's incentive to create jobs. QPSW's Economics, Sustainability and Peace programme is also working on tax justice and is considering whether to sign up to a pre-general election campaign co-ordinated by Christian Aid. We are encouraged to consider how we could get involved in our meetings. We should also consider our own personal practices. The maxim 'it may be legal, but is it right?' should apply to ourselves as well as multinational corporations. Is it right, for example, to reduce inheritance tax by setting up a trust? What about ISAs?

In brief:

We received a report from The Retreat psychiatric hospital and were shown a video (which can be seen at <http://youtube/hTDT0Z1ATrw>). The report highlights the value of “real and meaningful relationships....” being”at the centre of all that is done”, but The Retreat faces challenges due in part to changes in NHS commissioning, increasing privatisation and regulation and downward pressure on fees.

Brighouse West Yorkshire AM sent a minute of concern about the growing prevalence of Islamophobia, and MfS joined with them to urge Friends locally, regionally and nationally to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Muslim community through the values we share.

Jane Booth, Aberdeen & Banchory LBMs

North Scotland Area Meeting 14th February 2015 [^][contents](#)

We have come to know and believe the love which God has for us. God is love; he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. (Reading from 1 John, 4: 16)

There were twenty seven Friends present at this area meeting held in Inverness at our usual meeting place at the banks of the river Ness. We had a good mixture of routine, but necessary, items of business, but also some interesting discussion on various topics which I shall consider briefly below.

We even had time for a specially invited speaker, Philip Austin, of Northern Friends Peace Board. I hope this may start a trend! Unless we *make* time for a speaker we will never *find* the time.

Much of David Sanders's report on Meeting for Sufferings was about our response to a World Council of Churches document entitled '*The Church, Towards a Common Vision*', which was drafted by Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) called 'A Spirit Led Church'.

We were especially keen to discuss the three questions posed by QCCIR in their briefing paper, and it was suggested we could do that at more leisure in Pluscarden:

1. Do Quakers in Britain still regard themselves as members of a church?
2. If we are a church, do we behave differently from how we would behave if we considered ourselves to be a charity, an international NGO or a campaign for peace and justice?
3. If we are a church, what is our role within the wider church? Is it just asking awkward questions, or have we something to learn as well?

Some Friends are worried about the language used by WCC, which is thought too technical, and theological, but it is felt that there is nevertheless a commonality with other churches around the work of the Spirit and its fruits and that we can share the spiritual basis even if we do not share a creed.

Derek McLean, our Treasurer, presented the budget for 2015. It shows a forecast deficit of £57, and takes into account our increased contribution to General Meeting for the new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, and less money for grants and donations, unless of course contributions from Friends

go up – please note! We also agreed to spend the remaining £2000 from Ernle Beyts on the Shindig and other conferences. That of course is a one off only. We asked the Pluscarden committee to look at the fees we charge for attending this event, which have not been increased for many years.

The Membership Clerk, quoting from the Tabular Statement for 2014, noted that we have 126 members, 75 women and 51 men, thus confirming the common perception that women “dominate” the Society!

We have now definitely decided to go to Shetland for Area Meeting on 9 May and Friends were urged to book travel and accommodation immediately to secure places at this time of year.

Elgin Meeting has now been laid down and their members attend Forres Meeting.

Various appointments were made, but no assistant clerk for AM could be found. One of the difficulties is the fact that this person also has to be AM Trustee. The Nominations Committee was therefore asked to appoint a group to discern the purpose and process of clerking and consider other ways of carrying out the clerking process and bring their findings back to AM as soon as possible.

The Meeting ended with the usual generous tea provided by Inverness Friends.

Eva Deręowska, Aberdeen LBM

QPSW Annual Conference at Hayes CCT Swanwick, Derbyshire 13th-15th March 2015 Making Change Happen. Quaker Peace and Social Witness in Action. [^][contents](#)

This was my first conference and I was delighted to be nominated as QPSW correspondent for NSAM. The conference was spiritually based (included meeting for worship) also it was great opportunity to meet Friends from all the country and from overseas. The conference focused on making change happen and how change happens through the Turning the Tide project, a QPSW non-violent training programme that is part of our Quaker Peace Testimony.

There were a number of home group sessions throughout the weekend. It was all about getting to know each other. The aim of the programme was not just about the work of QPSW but on how Turning the Tide programme works.

Friday evening started with registration and everyone was given a name tag with a fruit symbol. There were a variety of fruits, my home group was orange! What a quirky idea! Information about workshops and home groups was on the reverse side.

We were all encouraged to sit and chat to other Friends during meal times and get to know each other. Something I really enjoy, meeting new Friends! This was followed by the opening plenary session by Nigel and David from QPSW Central Committee. Worship followed then welcomes, introductions, and practicalities given by the facilitators who in turn welcomed everyone from Friends near and far. Then to the bar! Yes, they had a bar...I had one small sherry...just a teeny one.

Saturday morning Agona Lisamadi from Kenya was to be our key speaker. Unfortunately he was prevented from attending the conference as he could not obtain a visa because he couldn't produce evidence that he owned property or land in Kenya. So he came via Skype! He talked about the work being done in Kenya with the help of a team of Quakers. Turning the Tide has been working along with CAPI (Change Agents for Peace International) in

Kenya since 2009 in an area that was affected by post-elections of 2008; One example of a successful campaign: Agona told the story of Mama Zepreta who had her home taken from her by illegal methods and how trained TTT resource workers working alongside CAPI of whom Agona is a key partner and through using non-violent methods and the through the legal process restored her home to her. (The story of mama Zepreta is too long to discuss here, but can be found at www.quaker.org/kenya, or in the Making Waves Journal.

There were a number of workshops but you could only choose two. I was fortunate to be given the ones I was most interested in. Working together for change -Turning the Tide- resource workers. The programme offers tools to enable you to challenge what is not right and not fair - people like me who want to make changes in our ever unequal society.

Meet the Peace Makers was another workshop. This is a one year peace making scheme and each year BYM recruits and employs people who want an opportunity to apply a commitment to working for peace in the UK and overseas. I spoke with young peace makers who were involved in Campaign Against the Arms Trade. The aim of this work is to mobilize supporters and to spread the anti-militarist message. This included the Renewables Project shifting jobs from the arms trade into the renewable energy sector.

I spoke with Elisa a young peace worker involved in Forces Watch and WRI, War Resisters International. She discussed the army recruitment drive and the presentation of careers, the sanitizing of war and the low entry level into the army. There is a two tier entry system one for officers and another for lower ranks. Most recruitment was usually in deprived areas where there was a lack of job opportunities. (see also next article – Ed)

There was a film on the work of Joanna Macy, “The Great Turning”. She is a spiritual activist and a leader in the movement to preserve life on earth. She spoke of the threats of our times and how they present opportunities that is essential for change. Our current way of living evolves around putting profit

before people. She spoke of the three necessary components; holding actions, creating alternative structures and shift in consciousness/values.

What a long way to travel for a conference but as we had family in Manchester and Yorkshire (I popped into Ilkley meeting) we decided to do it in one en-route to Swanwick!

Brian (husband) always accompanies me on these ventures as my chauffeur and supporter! He met Nigel who was one of the two clerks from Central Committee. I met up with a long lost friend Lindis a well known peace campaigner whom I hadn't seen for 35 years (campaigner for CAAB at Menwith!!) What a lot of catching up we had to do!

I found the conference instructive, informative and energetic. There was a lot of walking to do to get to workshops / home group. I came home fired up with enthusiasm, having brought back information and tools / skills which I hope to use for the benefit of local meeting.

Sila Collins-Walden QPSW Rep Inverness LM

ForcesWatch news [^][contents](#)

Owen Everett, Education and Campaign Worker has sent a few updates on the work of ForcesWatch which questions the UK military's presence and influence in schools;

Critical response to government's 'British Armed Forces: Learning Resource' in press yesterday: Yesterday we launched a critical response to the 'British Armed Forces: Learning Resource'. 'British Armed Forces' is a very one-sided, politicised, and poor 'learning resource' for 6-16 year-olds produced by the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister's office, and promoted to all schools in the UK in a Department for Education email. Our report is accompanied by an excellent animated critique by the Quakers. They note that the 'learning resource' is part of the military's wider youth engagement programme, which also includes armed forces visits to schools (see below).

You can read a summary of the report, download it in full, and watch the animation at <http://www.forceswatch.net/content/armed-forces-learning-resource> (We've had quite a bit of press coverage, including in the Independent (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/quakers-go-to-war-over-bellicose-school-pack-that-promotes-promilitary-values-10081151.html>) the Times Education Supplement (<https://news.tes.co.uk/b/news/2015/03/02/teaching-pack-on-armed-forces-criticised.aspx>), Schools/Academies Week (http://schoolsweek.co.uk/armed-forces-learning-resource-military-propaganda-forceswatch-quakers/?utm_content=buffer1c22b&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer), British Forces News (<http://web202.ssvc.com/news/articles/army/3705>), and RT (<http://rt.com/uk/237309-veterans-slam-military-resource/>)).

Armed forces visits to schools in Wales: here is a summary and Made in Cardiff TV footage from an event that I spoke at in Cardiff a few weeks ago to keep up the momentum as the Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee should shortly be submitting its report to the Welsh Assembly on its investigation into armed forces visits to schools in Wales: <http://www.forceswatch.net/news/cardiff-event-red-hand-day-2015-ban-schoolyard-recruitment>. If you would like to read a fuller summary of the key issues the Petitions Committee investigation has explored from ForcesWatch's perspective, I would be very happy to send you this.

Armed forces visits to schools in Scotland: in December 2014 we launched a report on armed forces visits to schools in Scotland, endorsed by Scotland's biggest teachers' union, the EIS (<http://www.forceswatch.net/news/new-report-raises-concerns-about-armed-forces-visits-scottish-schools>). We may follow this up with a petition to the Scottish Parliament, to hopefully initiate an investigation similar to the Welsh Assembly's one.

ForcesWatch workshops for your school/college/university, youth group, or campaign/faith group: We offer interactive, multimedia workshops for school/college/university, youth, and campaign/faith groups, getting

participants to think critically about the military's 'youth engagement', and drawing comparisons with the situation one hundred years ago during the First World War. We will shortly be producing resources to allow you to facilitate these yourself with your group, if you prefer. Email or call me for more details. A teacher at a state secondary school in Telford gave us this endorsement: *'The Forceswatch team encouraged students to explore various perspectives on the timely and relevant issue of the UK military's 'youth engagement' programme. The facilitators ensured that each session was engaging, challenging and interactive. They encouraged the students to take a critical look at society's attitudes to the military.'*

On 25 March at Friends House, London, there was a performance of the forum theatre piece 'Over The Top', written and performed by two Quakers, which looks at the issue of the military's influence in schools through a debate between a pro-military head teacher and a more critical parent.

Support our work financially: You can help us continue this and our other work by making a regular or one-off donation: we need another £3000 to carry out our work fully up until April. To read about our achievements over the past year, our projects for the coming months, and for details of how to make a donation, go to <http://us4.campaign-archive1.com/?u=caa0516262bac63130227747a&id=a1475a63ef>

What does the Area Meeting fund and what does the North of Scotland Quaker Trust fund? [^][contents](#)

The AM: If the AM appoints you to attend an event such as a course or conference, then the AM will pay. Simply apply to the AM treasurer for the funding. The AM pays for its office bearers (Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer etc.) to attend meetings. Similarly, the AM will pay the costs of Friends who travel to attend AM and General Meeting for Scotland. If travelling to your local meeting is expensive, please do not hesitate to ask for funding to make that journey. We know that many Quakers in North Scotland have long journeys to get to their nearest meeting.

Contact: Derek McLean

The Trust: If you would like to attend a Quaker event and you are doing it on your own initiative (i.e. you have not been 'appointed' (= asked) by AM if you would like to go), please apply to the Trust for funding. You might want to go to a Quaker course or conference, or your children might want to go to events such as a link weekend or Summer Shindig. There is now a standard application form that the Trust trustees encourage people to use. It is straightforward to complete and makes sure that the trustees get the information they need to review the application. An applicant is asked to supply the name of another Friend – an office-bearer like the local meeting Clerk or an elder/overseer for instance – who can write a letter/e-mail of support. Please send in your application in plenty of time. The Trust tries to give a reply within two weeks, but it may take longer than that. THE TRUST DOES NOT GET ENOUGH REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT! So Friends are encouraged to consider applying for funds to attend events of interest. Please remember as well that the Trust is willing to help Friends who are in financial difficulties. You can make that sort of application on the same form as is used for attending Quaker events and this will be treated in complete confidence.

Contact: Marion Strachan

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) 28th February in Leeds [^][contents](#)

Trident flash mob (i.e. short demonstration immediately posted on social media for quickest effect, also of course the NFPB website) So during the lunch break we witnessed for peace, carrying a 1/10th scale silhouette of a Trident submarine, across a busy road down (but responsibly, with proper escorts and by a crossing) to the steps of Leeds University (not far, not heavy, but a bit long for the crossing!!) This was made by Leeds Friends and held 'Quakers say no to Trident' banners.

women to be hidden, something which may take some time to change and that, following a time when many Asian girls and young women 'rebelled' by partying and getting married, now a very small number are 'rebellious' by wanting to join jihad by marrying ISIS fighters.

Mashuda said she had been Goth at uni, but now her faith had become a real personal spiritual journey, so she started wearing a hijab, (of course bright red with a pretty brooch in it J) . She said her personal jihad was getting up at 4 in the morning to say her prayers!!!

We were challenged to ask how can we change the world in our own communities? What are we doing to help build bridges, to make a difference however small? Hmmm ???

FWCC EMES Peace and Service consultation . NFPB member Ann Bettys attended this in November last year. A chief concern was about proposals for Sweden, Finland, and Ireland to join NATO.

Key question :- “if we are a ‘Peace Church’, what does it mean to us today?”
What say you Friends?

Juli Salt NFPB rep. Forres LM

Inverness Meeting – Quiet Growth in 2014 [^][contents](#)

Inverness Friends share the use of the Old Royal Northern Infirmary chapel on the riverside upstream from Eden Court. Sunday Meeting for Worship is at 11am other than on the first Sunday in the month when we meet at 3pm to accommodate the Greek Orthodox in the morning. 2014 has been a year of quiet growth in the spiritual life and activity of the Meeting. Average attendance inclusive of all ages was circa 18.

For the greater part of the years we had 22 members, 7 of whom resided more than 100 miles from Inverness, with others 25 miles away. There were more attenders than members present on a Sunday. “Inreach” has taken many forms. “Afterword” (10-15 minutes) at the close of Meeting for

Worship has offered space to voice reflections arising from the Ministry of the previous hour, and may in turn help build confidence in speaking in Meeting. We continue to hold monthly discussion groups, attended by 7-12 people, in the homes of Friends, and are currently studying Ben Pink Dandelion’s 2014 Swarthmore Lecture with its challenges. A small ‘Experiment with Light’ group meets at three weekly intervals. For the fourth successive year we hosted ‘Woodbrooke on the Road’. There were two very different worthwhile days. In July we welcomed back Tim Peat Ashworth to lead us through a one day course on ‘Jesus – the Quaker Approach’ at which some Friends from Elgin and Forres joined us. In November Mary Meeks and Andy Stoller led a Workshop on ‘Deepening the Spiritual Life of Meeting’ the participative aspects of which have been of particular benefit. In November too we welcomed an attender into membership.

Children’s Meeting normally takes place on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month, but is always available. Seven children up to the age of 8 take part, some regularly, others less frequently. Additionally two older children from Nairn Meeting come monthly. Inverness Meeting is fortunate in the qualities of those who guide the class – two retired teachers and a retired psychiatrist. Two All Age Meetings for Worship were held on 5th Sundays. Both were a great success. The first, which included 26 adults, was based on Advices 41 and 42 with a theme of ‘Simplicity in our World’. The second with 17 adults and 9 children had a peace theme based on the story of ‘Fierce Feathers’. It culminated in many of us floating rice paper doves down the River Ness carrying messages of peace and hope. Both meetings were followed by a Bring and Share lunch. On another occasion after Meeting we enjoyed a summer picnic at nearby Whin Park together with a number of Friends from Nairn.

Inreach can inform Outreach. Although Friends have been active in several directions responses have been variable, or of necessity unknown. An enthusiastic group organised a two day programme in the chapel in late

October which offered a ½ hour meeting for worship on each day together with a series of short videos on modern day Quakerism, but there was limited uptake. Inverness Friends have joined in the commemorations of the outbreak of world War 1 in three initiatives – an inter-church service at the Old High Church where the minister gave a remarkably thought provoking sermon – a Peace Day organised by the Cromarty Peace Group where publicity from the Northern Friends Peace Board was exhibited – and, as an activity of the whole meeting, the Laying of a wreath of red and white poppies at the Inverness War Memorial with permission from the British Legion. There is a Quaker presence at the monthly ‘Women in Black’ vigil on the High Street.

Inverness Muslims have occasionally invited worshippers from other faiths to ‘Tea at the Mosque’. This year some Friends were delighted to join them prior to their relocation to new premises. We were heartened by the friendship and welcome. There remains no overall ecumenical body among Inverness churches.

We have been able to provide support to the wider Quaker community, at the Quaker funeral of Audrey Hebborn who was a founder member of the Lochaber Meeting, by attending a ceremony on the death of Margette French who was an attender at Elgin Meeting, and in enabling a Quaker Funeral on the death of an elderly attender visited in a Care Home in Grantown. On a happier note we were pleased to arrange a Meeting for Worship to bless the marriage of Krissy Nichol, who had grown up in our Meeting, to Joss Green. In September we hosted General Meeting for Scotland where Friends across Scotland heard a presentation on the purpose and working of Meeting for Sufferings including its relationship with the Yearly Meeting Trustee body and its readiness to receive Minutes from Area Meetings.

The life of Inverness Meeting has been greatly strengthened by the contributions of newer attenders and the use of Afterword which has enhanced opportunities to get to know each other in the things which are eternal.

Oriole Hall and John Melling, Inverness LBM

On being a Quaker Registering Officer [^][contents](#)

At the beginning of March I spent a weekend at Woodbrooke, Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham participating in a course for newly appointed Registering Officers & deputies. Registering Officers are appointed by Area Meetings and, acting on behalf of the area meeting, are responsible for the acceptance of an application for marriage according to Friends’ usage. He or she is also responsible for giving the couple the necessary advice & assistance in relation to the procedure under these regulations, and for seeing that all the necessary steps preceding the marriage are completed.

The exchange of information and of experience by the 3 facilitators/tutors was amazing which encouraged most of us to ask questions and to share our experiences. Some of the new RO’s had already met with people who wanted to marry, a few with the assistance of Elders had organized Meetings for Clearness, 12.21 QF & P where it was felt there were issues to be discussed, before the marriage.

Since there a number of forms to be completed before a marriage can take place, it was useful to have experience of this. As there some differences in the legal requirements between England/Wales and Scotland, these were always addressed and the appropriate forms identified.

Throughout the weekend reference was made to Chapter 16 of Quaker Faith & Practice, Quaker Marriage procedure, parts of which have been revised & updated, this will be presented at Yearly Meeting in May for approval. A major addition is the changes in the laws of England/Wales and Scotland to permit religious ceremonies for same sex marriages, and the conversion of civil partnerships.

I am very glad that I was able to attend this course partly as I now feel I am not alone in this role. However I do hope it won’t be too long before I can put into practice what I learned. Friends speak of marriage in the care of the meeting and every meeting has a pastoral responsibility for the care of all marriages within it. Marriage has always been regarded as a religious

commitment rather than merely a civil contract. The role of RO is administrative, but with a large pastoral care element.

For the right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord.....for we marry none; it is the Lord's work, and we are witnesses. George Fox 1669.Quaker Faith & Practice 16.01

Penny Selbie, Aberdeen LBM

Coincidence ^{^contents}

We met at Sandra's kennels, quite by chance, or "par hazard", as they would say in France - 'though what the hazard was is not too clear: just you and we; the dogs were nowhere near.

In any case, what we ascribe to chance is not quite as suggested at first glance. Does "chance" exist at all? For nothing's random, or isolated: things occur in tandem.

Coincidence is not the same as chance. Earth, sun and moon, in their celestial dance, all coincide in making an eclipse; it doesn't happen just through chancy blips.

The wise men's star did not appear by chance, nor did they come to Bethlehem in a trance. They read the heavens, as Wisdom made them able. which led to our Redeemer in the stable.

(written for friends, after meeting them shortly before Christmas)

Michael Otter, Kinlochbervie and Stoer LM

(Michael explains that the "Wisdom" in the last line alludes to the spirituality in the ancient Near East which sought in various ways, to discover the essence and nature of God by experiential means – which is what motivated the Magi/ wise men and makes their visit to the child Jesus so significant. We can perhaps see them as the prototype Seekers and Quakers! – Ed)

General Meeting for Scotland 7 March 2015 St Andrews ^{^contents}

Min. 1 Worship; In our Meeting for Worship we have been conscious of a number of Friends who are no longer with us and give thankfulness for the richness of their lives.

Min. 2 Welcome: We welcome 2 attenders to this GM and also our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell- Jack. We will record the total numbers of all present and add them to these minutes.

East Scotland	8
South East Scotland	13
North Scotland	1
West Scotland	7
Total:	29

Min. 3 Reporter: We appoint Bronwen Currie from West Scotland AM to report this meeting to *The Friend* and the *Scottish Friend*. We ask East Scotland AM to report on the next GM.

Min. 4 New members and deaths
We record the following new members since our last meeting:
Maris Armfield (W);
Marianne Butler (SE);
Emma Griffiths (SE)

We record the following deaths: Alistair Milner (E); Bob Irving (W); Phyllis Goodheir (W); Christine Davis (W); Jeanne Walmesley (SE); Geoffrey Carnall (SE); Bill Forbes (SE)

Min. 5 Dates and Venues for 2016-17; We propose the following GM dates and venues for 2016-17

East - 5

March 16

(already agreed)

West - 11

June 16

North - 10 Sept 16

East - 12/13 Nov 16

South East - 11 March 2017

We ask AM Clerks to consider these dates and for GM to confirm them in June.

Min. 6 Tabular Statement 2014

We note the following numbers of members, attenders and children at 31st December 2014.

	2014			2013	2012	2011	2010
	Members	Attenders	Children	Members	Members	Members	Members
East	101	64	13	110	111	107	108
North	126	136	37	127	122	118	123
South East	236	267	83	232	247	254	265
West	231	196	58	223	227	228	224
TOTAL	694	663	191	692	707	707	720

Min. 7 Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

Elizabeth Allen has introduced our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack. Mairi's priorities, agreed between the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group and Friends House are:

- Militarisation, with particular emphasis on militarisation in schools
- Trident
- The forthcoming General Election
- Social and economic justice

Elizabeth has spoken to a recommendation from the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group that GM should affiliate to Scottish CND in view of our longstanding opposition to nuclear weapons on moral grounds. We agree to this.

She has also spoken of the changing role of the Function Group and of ways to improve communications with Friends about the activities of the Function group and to encourage action by Friends. They also hope to hear from Meetings of concerns they would like to see taken up. They are proposing a twice-yearly look in GM at a particular topic under discussion at parliamentary level.

The question of commemorating the introduction of conscription in 1916 was referred to the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group and various ideas are being explored.

Min. 8 Financial Report for 2014

We have received the annual report and examined accounts for 2014 from our Treasurer, John Phillips. Total income, mainly from area meeting quotas and grants from Britain Yearly Meeting and the Camfield Trust, was £20,176. Payments totalled £18,833, giving a General Fund surplus for the year of £1343. Our expenditure in 2015 will increase by £10,000 due to our contribution to the cost of employing the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. This will be met partly from reserves

and partly by an increase in area meeting quotas. We thank John for his clear explanation of the figures.

We authorise the Clerk to sign the Report, amended to include the priorities for the Parliamentary Engagement Officer as set out in minute 7.

The report and statement of accounts is attached to these minutes.

Min. 9 Future of the Outreach Function Group

We agreed at GM last November that we would review the future of the Outreach Function Group following Pete Stuart's request to be released as convenor and his suggestion that outreach was better handled at area meeting level. We see a need for Scotland-wide enquirers weekends and suggest that an approach be made to South East and West Area Meetings to see if they would be willing to organise such events occasionally that would be advertised on a Scotland-wide basis. If this is possible, we will lay down the GM Outreach Function Group.

We ask the Clerk to contact Britain Yearly Meeting who are currently revising the BYM website to explore possible co-operation on a web presence in Scotland. We will consider communications issues further at our next meeting.

Min. 10 Report on Meeting for Sufferings. In view of the shortage of time, Jane Pearn referred us to her report in the Scottish Friend.

Min. 11 Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network

The Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network is an informal grouping of Friends with an interest in this area. We note that they prepared a submission to the Scottish government opposing the proposal to replace Cornton Vale with a new women's prison. This submission was published on the Quakers in Scotland website. We are pleased also to note that the Government has now abandoned this proposal.

Min. 12 First same sex Quaker marriage in Scotland

We are pleased to record that the first same sex Quaker marriage in Scotland between Tony Gross and Mark Bitel took place in Central Edinburgh Meeting House on 14th February.

Min. 13 General Meeting Administrator

Bronwen Currie, our Administrator, has indicated her wish to retire as soon as a replacement has been found. Trustees have advertised the post and interviews are to be held shortly. We thank Bronwen for her exemplary service in this post and record our best wishes for her retirement.

Min. 14 Nominations matters

Nominations Function Group have brought forward the following names and we agree to appoint them:

1. Representative Friend (Other Churches)

Pamala McDougall with immediate effect until June 2016 (to the end of Christine Davis' triennium)

2. Convenor of Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

Elizabeth Allen (reappointment) January 2016 to December 2017 (two years so that we can introduce a rolling system at the request of the Group)

3. Parliamentary Liaison Function Group (member West)

Heather Burns (1st triennium) with immediate effect until December 2017 (Margaret Mortimer has asked to be released)

4. Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office Advisory Group (and ex-officio member of

Parliamentary Liaison Function Group)

Alastair Reid (2nd triennium) from Jan 2016 to Dec 2018

5. Children's and Young People's Convenor

Robert Thompson (1st triennium) January 2016 to December 2018

6. Assistant Treasurer

Duncan Wallace (2nd triennium) January 2016 to December 2018

7. Joint Faiths Advisory Board on Criminal Justice

Mike Nellis (2nd triennium) January 2016 to December 2018

8. Religious Leaders Forum (Interfaith Scotland)

Jim Pym (1st triennium) with immediate effect to December 2017 (to complete Christine Davis triennium)

9. Parliamentary Liaison Function Group (member North)

Jane Booth (1st triennium) January 2016 to December 2018

Min. 15 Children in our Changing World

Madeleine Harding has encouraged us to consider various issues facing today's children and young people. We were challenged and enabled to engage with the issues of changing family patterns, self esteem, self image, bullying, social media, internet access/dangers and sexual relationships. We considered how we might support children, young people, parents and grand parents in our local Quaker communities. We thank Madeleine for her wide ranging and full presentation. (A summary of the points raised in discussion groups is attached to these minutes)

Min. 16 Closing Minute. We record our thanks to East Scotland Friends for being our hosts at this GM, and look forward to meeting again in Aberdeen in June.

Martin Burnell, Clerk