

# **The Northern Quaker**

**Summer  
2013**



**North Scotland Area Meeting**

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### **Area Meetings for 2013**

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

**9 November: Inverness**

### **Area Meetings for 2014**

**15 February Forres**

**17 May Lochaber and Lorn**

Depending on availability of Pluscarden our residential AM will be held on one of the following weekends, 22-23 or 29-31 August or 5-7 September.

**8 November Aberdeen**

### **General Meetings for Scotland in 2013**

**June 15<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh**

**September 7<sup>th</sup> Perth**

**November 16/17<sup>th</sup> Aberdeen (residential)**

Online newsletters available on the GM website: <http://www.quakerscotland.org>

*Tayside Quaker*

*West of Scotland Quaker News*

*Northern Quaker*

*Scottish Friend*

Courses and conferences; *remember North of Scotland Quaker Trust has funds for attendance at these events!* Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk) or tel. 0121 472 5171

## **Comments**

Welcome to the 2013 Summer edition of the Northern Quaker.

As in the Spring edition, we begin with a memorial to a departed friend, this from Inverness Meeting to the late Jim Wikens.

As well as a report from Meeting for Sufferings, there are two reports/ reflections from the North Scotland Area Business Meeting held in Thurso in May. Jane Palmer's report on her attendance at an Outreach conference resonates with my own experience of exploring Quakerism. My suspicions that the absence of proselytization concealed something sinister led me to attend an Enquirers' Weekend far away from Aberdeen so as to avoid anyone whom I might know! Needless to say, my fears were allayed, but it a salutary reminder of the need for effective Outreach. Refreshingly, John Melling reports on the healthy state of attendance in Inverness Meeting.

Throughout the reports and articles that Friends have kindly submitted, which I hope you enjoy, it is worth re-emphasising that there are sources of funds available for attending courses or other purposes; see especially the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust is likely to come to an end before long.

Also enclosed is the application form for residential Meeting at Pluscarden. I hope you are able to attend.

An experiment to see if my copy tray will fill itself has not proven successful, so please don't be afraid to send contributions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ Tel. 01224 706989 [harry.horsley@uk.bp.com](mailto:harry.horsley@uk.bp.com) or [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com)

## **Announcements**

### **John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust**

We are 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'.

Money has been distributed over the past 8 years. This totals £43,000 up to the Spring 2012. The money now in hand is likely to run out during 2013 unless further donations are forthcoming.

We welcome 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 Sylvia Massey, John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, 22 Bruntsfield Gardens, Edinburgh, EH10 4EA . Phone number 0131 229 4238 Email: [sylviamassey293@btinternet.com](mailto:sylviamassey293@btinternet.com).

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.

### **Forthcoming Conferences**

#### **Visioning New Fire with the Kindlers**

The Nominations Committee is looking a name to forward to the Area Meeting Clerk for the appointment of a North Scotland Area Meeting representative to the Kindlers Conference *Visioning New Fire*. The weekend conference seeks to encourage Quaker renewal and deepen the spiritual life of our Meetings. The Conference takes place at Woodbrooke Study Centre, Birmingham October, 11-13<sup>th</sup> 2013

#### **Europe and Economic Justice; guaranteeing a fair share**

The Committee is also seeking to nominate up to two people to attend the conference *Europe and Economic Justice*. The Conference looks at the causes and consequences of the current European financial crisis and whether there are alternatives to austerity. The conference is organized by the Quaker Council for European Affairs with Quaker Peace and Social Witness. It takes place at Brussels November 15-17<sup>th</sup> 2013

Please contact the convener at david.james.855@btinternet.com, or by post at Glencruitten House, Glencruitten, Oban, PA34 4QB by 15<sup>th</sup> June indicating why you are interested in attending.

#### **“Forgiveness, The Great Undoing”**

Please see Juli Salt’s contribution on Forgiveness in this edition. This conference takes place from 28<sup>th</sup> September – 4 October 2013. If you are interested either check out at: [www.findhorn.org/forgiveness](http://www.findhorn.org/forgiveness) or phone 01309 691653

#### **“Practising Discernment – listening with our whole selves”.**

This has been organised by Inverness LM and is to be held in Inverness on 5<sup>th</sup> October, commencing at 10:45, at a cost of £28 to include a buffet lunch. The tutor is Helen Rowlands, Head of Education at Woodbrooke. Some places will be available for Friends/Attendees from other meetings. To express an interest, please contact John Melling on 01463 237686.

#### **An appreciation of James (Jim) Denys Wickens (1919 – 2013)**

With the passing of Jim on 25 February Inverness Meeting lost a father figure, and northern Quakerism a strong enabler. As a scholarship boy at Portsmouth Grammar School, Jim excelled in classics – a foundation for his logical thinking and clarity of language. He joined the Civil Service in London while completing Part 1 of a Law degree. Conscripted in 1941 Jim was a conscientious objector. He knew some Quakers, but wanted to stand alone. He reported to the Royal Artillery, refusing their uniform. Under military guard he worked in the Officers Mess Kitchen until sentenced to spend six months in Liverpool Prison. One day a boxer was sent into his cell to knock him about, but Jim remained calm, so that instead of a contest there was a handshake. On release a tribunal granted him unconditional exemption. He joined the Friends Relief Service.

At the end of the war, being barred from the Civil Service, Jim found Youth work on Tyneside. Now a Quaker, he met Jo in Newcastle Meeting and they married in April 1947. Theirs was to be a partnership of nearly 66 years characterised by reasoning straightforwardness.

After he had completed a Sociology Degree the couple moved to Hertfordshire in 1951 where Jim lectured in Social Sciences. He set up a Personnel Department for Marconi in Hatfield before becoming a Personnel Manager with English Electric, which took the family to Yorkshire. After the disruptive takeover of EE Jim joined Sun Alliance Insurance as Group Personnel Manager based in the City. A younger colleague writes "Jim was brought in to modernise....highly intelligent, ethical and enlightened, he wanted to make Sun Alliance an exemplary employer...to a large extent he succeeded....he gave us the space, the development opportunities, and sometimes the protection to flourish and innovate".

Retirement in 1982 gave him the opportunity to widen his interests and his reading. He and Jo travelled extensively. Two years later their move from Guildford to Fortrose brought them close to family. It opened up nearly three decades of committed Quaker Service in the north. In Inverness Meeting Jim is remembered as an elder for his wisdom in ministry, his guidance over business, and his understandings of the New Testament as revealed in both Teenagers Classes and Adult Study Groups. An attender recalls "The Children remember him very fondly... I remember some excellent evenings with him looking at the synoptic gospels....he was very special". Jim served successively as Clerk, Treasurer and Librarian.

Jim and Jo developed and maintained contact with many isolated Friends and enquirers across the Highlands and Islands. They assisted small groups sustain regular Meetings for Worship in Skye, Orkney, Shetland, Lochaber (now at Port Appin), the North West mainland and at times in both Caithness and Harris. A corner-stone to their activities was the week long Pastoral visitation across the region which they undertook joyfully each year into their late eighties. At the height of the Orkney crisis when the children had been removed from their homes, Jim and Jo set out each Monday from Fortrose to bring succour to the families. In the absence of understanding support from Friends House the sharing of their experience through Inverness Meeting led to wider comprehension among Friends of the upheavals the parents were experiencing.

Jim encouraged those he thought could offer more. His understanding of Christianity, his knowledge of Quakerism and his qualities of humility and integrity in life are a beacon to us all.

the elders – Inverness Meeting

### **Meeting for Sufferings, London, 13 April 2013**

‘what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?’ (Micah 6.8)

This report focuses on just one item of the Meeting for Sufferings agenda. I realize this means passing over other real concerns that were brought to the meeting – not least welfare reforms and cuts – but the subject is difficult and concerns an important area of Quaker work.

### Boycott, divestment and sanctions: Israel/Palestine

In April 2011, on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, Sufferings asked ‘Friends throughout Britain Yearly Meeting to boycott settlement goods, until such time as the occupation is ended’.

Settlement products, originating outside the internationally recognized border of Israel, may be labelled as originating in Israel, and this makes it extremely difficult for us to know, if we buy something from 'Israel', that we are not supporting illegal settlements. To help us with this, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) has prepared a briefing for Friends on *Trade with Israeli settlements*, which explains the situation and attempts to name some products and companies associated with the settlements. However, some area meetings have recently sent minutes to Meeting for Sufferings raising the possibility of a boycott of Israel as a whole, as being more effective than the current piecemeal approach.

MfS agenda for April 2013 proposed time for 'reflection and preparation' around this issue, with a view to consulting with area meetings and others before returning to make a decision in October. However, in light of a wealth of ministry heard in a gathered session, the discernment of the meeting was that the decision of April 2011 still feels right today.

Before the meeting I wondered whether to some extent Friends were being cowed by the possibility of retaliation against a boycott. My feeling now is that in the discernment of the meeting – greatly helped by briefings from staff – a confrontational stance would also be a kind of failure. Some of the key features of this discernment were:

- **a concern for truth:** the present limited boycott is based on the truth of things (according to internationally recognized definitions); it upholds a secure basis for Israel to coexist in the world
- **fresh memories:** for many in Israel, twentieth-century history feels very recent, even present; one Friend hoped that we might avoid using the term 'boycott'
- **no harm:** the alternative of a full boycott would be confrontational and alienating and would risk doing more harm than good – to Friends' 'principled impartiality' and witness, and to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), and to partner organizations
- **justice:** the present approach appeals constructively to a principle of 'trade justice'
- **'supporting Israel or supporting Palestine?':** sometimes it might seem that we are accommodating Israel – even out of fear – at the expense of Palestine; but as one Friend recounted, 'Do you want to be right or do you want to be effective?'
- **Israel and South Africa:** Israel has been compared to South Africa – 'boycott worked there, so it will work here' – and there are many, especially in Palestine, that do call for a boycott. However, the consensus within Israel-Palestine is less strong than it was in South Africa, and the situation is different.

Although the Sufferings minute on this item does not call for wider consultation, there may be some meetings that still wish to be heard. The minute encourages Friends to be active, but asks area meetings only for news of actions in which they are involved. There are a number of ways in which a limited boycott can be supported and developed:

- **individual choices:** my own feeling is that the onus is primarily on Israel for clear labelling; insofar as this does not happen, and if I am not sure about it, I will avoid produce from Israel
- **UK government:** the UK government is considering action to ban trade with illegal settlements
- **European level:** there is work being done to ensure that produce from 'Israel' is correctly labelled

- **United Nations:** as a member state, Israel has a duty to submit an annual human rights report; for the first time in the history of the UN, this state recently declined to submit a report

The door is open for area meetings to share their discernment with others in the yearly meeting.

David Sanders Skye Meeting

### **Area Meeting held at Thurso on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

About 20 Friends and Attenders were present for our Area Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs; this is a mouthful which reminds us it is not just a business meeting. Sometimes we are in need of this reminder. We were not always good at upholding our clerks on this occasion. Friends present represented 7 meetings. Just Kinlochbervie & Stoer, Elgin and Nairn were not represented, but remember two of these meetings are tiny.

During our opening worship we gave thanks for the life of Jim Wickens and heard the introduction to the chapter "Faithful Lives" from QFP. Later we heard a tribute from Michael Otter of Kinlochbervie and Stoer LM to Jim Wickens and the part he had played in the establishment of Ullapool Meeting.

We were delighted to receive two applications for membership. We asked nominations committee with help from Elders and Overseers to tell us more about the posts in NSAM, so as to encourage offers of service from members and attenders who are not currently involved. A revised offer of service form is being drawn up by the Nominations Committee alongside a document outlining the posts at NSAM. We appointed Peter McCaffery of Aberdeen Local Meeting as clerk until December 2014. For other appointments please see the minutes.

Diana Brockbank gave her usual lively report as our Representative on Quaker Life Rep Council. She emphasised that nomination should be the concern of all members. We need to identify our own gifts and those of others. When we find it difficult to fill a post we should examine the roles that we have in place. We also enjoyed a report on Meeting for Sufferings by David Sanders who departed from his usual format to devote the whole time to the consideration of the question of the boycott of Israeli settlement produce, and subsequent discussion with the Board of British Jews.

General Meeting has reminded us of the working group established several years ago because of Quaker interest in the Ury Estate which lies near Stonehaven. It was the family home of the Quaker Apologist, Robert Barclay. Pamela McDougall, convenor, reports that the estate has recently been purchased by a local landowner. When the economic situation is favourable, he plans to create a hotel from the ruined mansion house, along with other residential and leisure facilities. Pamela is maintaining contact with him, and he is interested in co-operating with us to create a walk to the mausoleum where Robert is buried along with other Barclays. Our representatives on the group, Eva Deregowska and Colin Millar, have indicated their willingness to continue to serve.

Under any other business Alex Page explained his dream of creating a Quaker History Search Engine on the web. He has already discussed this with Ben Pink Dandelion of Woodbrooke QSC

who is encouraging, and has suggested applying to the Joseph Rowntree Fellowship for financial support to undertake this project. Alex needs the support of Area Meeting to further his application. We had some difficulty in envisaging what this involves, so appointed a group to clarify the proposal by discussion with Alex. A short description of this proposal is to be available for circulation prior to the August AM.

Dates for North of Scotland AM in 2014

15 February 2014 Forres

17 May Lochaber and Lorn

Depending on availability of Pluscarden our residential AM will be held on one of the following weekends, 22-23 or 29-31 August or 5-7 September.

8 November 2014 Aberdeen

14 February 2015 Inverness

The venues of forthcoming GM in the AM minutes were incorrect . The correct ones are as follows;

8 March 2014 - West (already agreed)

14 June 2014 - South East

13 Sept 2014 – North *nb we are the hosts!*

15/16 Nov 2014 - West

7 Mar 2015 - East

Caithness and Orkney Friends looked after us superbly, organising our time together, with warm hospitality and delicious food. We all benefitted. If you did not come to Thurso because of the cost of travel and accommodation, we missed you, and to this end we discussed the fact that we are not using all the funds we have at our disposal in the North of Scotland Quaker Trust. As a charity the NSQT is meant to spend its income on charitable purposes rather than accumulate it, and it can reimburse the Area Meeting for travel claims made to Derek Mclean, the Area Meeting Treasurer. If we all claimed all travel and accommodation costs associated with our travelling to AM this would do away with the situation where so often those of us who have greatest need are most reluctant to claim. Those of us who really don't need to claim our expenses can then feel free to re-donate the money to another Quaker cause or our own meeting as needed. Please realise it is our responsibility to take part in business meeting. Our area meeting is enriched by your presence. It is also enriched by travel to attend Yearly Meeting, or courses for instance at Woodbrooke, Charney Manor, or Swarthmore. Consider if you could go, or who else in your meeting needs some encouragement to help use these funds so we all benefit!

Mary Dower, Aberdeen Meeting

**Travelling in the Ministry. Or: Oh what a wonderful week-end we had.**

Thurso here I come. I caught the train from Inverness by the skin of my teeth (some were not so lucky) and had time to relax, wandering the shore, looking in rock pools, dreaming, before going to Peggy and Mike's for reunion of North of Scotland Quakers, chat, supper ( yummy thanks), and ... " Diana; will you do an epilogue?" "Eh?" "I've picked out some passages for you to choose from". "OK then". I must be getting a name for . . . something ! How appropriate

that I would be reporting on Quaker Life Rep. Council where we had been talking about acknowledging our gifts and using them in service to the Society of Friends.

Saturday for me started with a quick run to the beach, a Quakerly breakfast at the B & B and a sociable walk near the river to our meeting place.

After lunch some of us discovered a little about AVP ... "er what?" ... "Alternatives to Violence Project", thanks to Phyllida and Mary, then I was off to the beach again. Others visited Phyllida's bee garden. Mal created a super supper for us and afterwards I did not offer a wee experience of "finding our gifts"! That was a pity, but I had lost my oomph. We happily sat around and blethered. If anybody is inspired to try the exercise I can send you a copy.

Sunday morning saw some of us at an Elders/Overseers meeting. For me this was a deep sharing, which I find harder to get in a telephone conf. Meeting for Worship seemed to follow on our theme of caring for each other.

After an early lunch and departures I was whisked off to visit with Phyllida and Tom, together with Sandy who was later to catch the ferry to Orkney. I had a walk ( and got a bit lost) we had a quick trip up Dunnet Head in the mist and wind, on to John O' Groats, a wonderful supper and back to my B & B.

My personal journey was topped by a one to one tour at Forsinard RSPB reserve, "The Flow Country". I heard about the work removing acres of non native trees to restore the internationally important blanket bog and saw at close up some of the wild nature that lives there. This visit was a dream come true for me.

I do so appreciate meeting in this way with Friends from our Area Meeting and thanks to all the hard work that went into making it possible.

Diana Brockbank. Forres Meeting

### **Outreach Conference January 2013: Reaching in, Reaching out.**

It was most definitely not a fix. When I brought the matter of a finding a name for the Outreach conference to the nominations committee it did not, even for the tiniest fraction of a nanosecond, occur to me that I was in any way at all suitable. Unfortunately I was prevented from attending the following telephone conference, and was rather taken aback to find that my name had been put forward. After some reflection, I decided that maybe Outreach was something I needed to feel more comfortable with. The nominations committee is not there just to consider the names of those who might already be suitable for a given job or event, but to offer us opportunities for spiritual growth in ways we might not have considered ourselves.

The conference was held at High Leigh Conference Centre during a very snowy weekend that prevented many Friends from attending. It was organised in response to Quaker Life Central Committee's request for an opportunity for Friends to share experiences of outreach as well as learning about new approaches.

The theme – Reaching in, Reaching out – recognises that unless our meetings are thriving and spiritually healthy we have nothing to offer in outreach, and as much of the time was devoted to how we can strengthen our meetings as to reaching outside.

The conference did not promise to provide all the answers. Head of Outreach Alistair Fuller sees his role as collecting all ideas about outreach rather than providing the answers. He likened his response to questions to that of the doctor in Reginald Perrin ('Yes, I get that too. What do you think it is?')

### **Reaching in – our meetings**

Many of us know how much our young people value Quaker youth events, from Link Weekends to Shindig to JYM, and the sense of excitement and celebration which accompany them but may be lacking at the adult events. What can young friends teach us? Siobhan Hare described her experiences of Young Friends General Meeting and how their openness to change has contributed to the spiritual life of the meeting. Examples include reducing the number of jobs (apart from appointing an events co-ordinator for fun events), reducing the amount of business (six business sessions of at least an hour one weekend were drastically distilled, saving much energy and frustration), and more spontaneity (doing things on the spur of the moment, such as to joining UK Uncut in occupying a branch of Barclays). She urged us to see everything as being part of the spiritual life of the meeting and not to put a barrier between its the spiritual and practical aspects. Although admitting she was not a gardener herself, Siobhan used a metaphor she thought would resonate with her audience and likened running a meeting to gardening – tinkering, pruning, grafting, getting your hands dirty, and also knowing when to let things happen.

Home groups afterwards considered what makes a healthy meeting and what being a healthy meeting enables us to do. Signs of a healthy meeting include: rooting all we do in worship; eldership, discipline and guidance in the life of the meeting; the ability to embrace/cope with change and deal with conflict, creating opportunities to share our stories and grow in faith and understanding; being outward facing, and enjoying food and fellowship. (Shared meals are popular with Quakers and often mentioned in the context of creating bonds and a sense of community. This puzzles me, as I have never been able to do the following three things at the same time: 1) eat, 2) talk, 3) enjoy the food!). A healthy meeting enables us to: be more visible; develop our gifts and ministry; grow in faith, understanding, fellowship and witness and to effect change locally, nationally and globally – but also to experiment and take risks, to 'get out of the house' and not be too bound to Sundays. Rosemary Harthill, another very lively and engaging speaker and our 'wandering and wondering reporter' went round the home groups and brought together our thoughts on healthy meetings. She drew our attention to the fact that we'd been concentrating on theoretical concepts rather than practical ideas, and compared our approach with early Quaker outreach. Early Quakers would go out to where the people were rather than waiting for enquirers to find their own way to meetings. They also had many more distinctive signs of their faith (eg regarding oaths, tithes, thee-ing and thou-ing, and later, dress). These can be considered a form of outreach but is this relevant to us today? I don't know (and we wouldn't all agree about it anyway) but sometimes (notwithstanding my success at playing 'spot the Quaker' when getting near a new meeting) I wonder if perhaps Quakers should be as distinct in society as the newly converted Thomas Elwood was ('What Tom, a Quaker?') when he refused to doff his cap or bow in 1659. Can anyone tell whether we really are 'simple, radical and contemporary', as the poster says? I have not been brave enough to wear an 'I'm a Quaker, ask me why' badge, but I will talk about being a Quaker when the opportunity arises.

There was a choice of activities on Saturday afternoon. I chose to sample the 'Becoming Friends' course. As most of you know, this is a paper or online course designed principally to help

enquirers understand Quakerism, but is also useful for more experienced friends to fill in gaps of knowledge left when learning by so-called osmosis. One of its benefits is that it encourages connections. Enquirers can be paired with a more experienced companion friend and join in the online forums. <http://www.quaker.org.uk/becoming-friends>.

### **Reaching out - welcoming the stranger**

Some friends had spent the Saturday afternoon session putting together a humorous sketch demonstrating how not to treat enquirers. The fictional Little Caring Meeting avoided actually engaging with new enquirers by burdening them with leaflets and obscure Quaker acronyms. This was followed by group discussions about how we welcome enquirers in their first week, month and year. Throughout, we need to be living examples of Quakerism, and to remember that welcome should be part of the meeting's culture and not just the responsibility of a few, although elders and overseers will take on a welcoming role. The first weeks require sensitivity, gentleness and warmth, avoiding asking too many questions but helping visitors to understand what is going on. During the first months we should maintain a continued and consistent welcome, involving new attenders in the wider life of the meeting, including social events and providing opportunities for learning. The question of membership could be raised in the first years, along with an introduction to wider Quaker groups and structures; and to consider the attender's gifts and insights.

### **Reaching inward to reach outward**

Recording clerk Paul Parker (aka 'the Whoosh man' after the Whoosh threshing meeting in July last year at Woodbrooke, which explored the energising and renewal of Quakers in Britain) spoke about vibrancy in our meetings. Visiting many meetings, he gets the sense that Quakers may be on the verge of going 'whoosh' because we can potentially offer something many people are looking for in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as our experience-based religion, values and a sense of community. We have distinctive things to say on matters such as sustainability, same sex marriage, peace and equality. He was encouraging about low numbers (at least the tabular statement shows we're not declining as are some other churches, although the ratio of members to attenders is falling) and pointed out that our meetings must already have some vibrancy, otherwise we would not go to them. Outreach is possibly not now such a dirty word as it was 20 years ago. Although we do not evangelise like our church planting Kenyan Friends, maybe we're not actually hiding, and that's a good start! He asked whether we were ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and yes, that includes social media. Quakers tend to feel we don't really like them (even though several parents confessed to having Facebook accounts in order to keep an eye on what their children were up to. Flashmob MfW anyone?) Another issue we cannot ignore is our restricted demographic (interestingly, Quakers used to be concerned that their message only appealed to the working classes). A radical welcome would include those who are not like us – but are we prepared for our meetings to be changed by different people? He encouraged us to be more experimental in our approach to outreach, for example meeting at different times, sharing meals (again), or bringing a friend to meeting. We have to accept that some things don't work, but the important things is to try. Outreach is not, however, about watering things down to make them more accessible. Being faithful is a hard discipline.

The conference did not completely remove my discomfort about the word 'Outreach' (French Quakers say 'rayonnement', which is much nicer) but I left feeling that there were things that we and our meetings can do to raise our profile. Attending to inreach and knowing each other

better in the things that are eternal, sharing activities and having fun, making sure that any visitors are looked after, and speaking out in our communities and to the world about current issues. If, as the 'Whoosh' conference suggests, Quakers are at a transitional moment where our message speaks to turbulent times, maybe all we need to do is light a few more sparks....

Jane Palmer Aberdeen & Banchoy Meetings

### **Forgiveness**

In 1999 I was able to attend (I worked for my tickets) most of a conference held by the Findhorn Foundation on Forgiveness. The conference opened with a quote "*He who seeks revenge digs 2 graves*".

This conference had a resounding effect on me. I noted that the best teachers on Forgiveness have had much to forgive, and it was not always easy.

The speakers whom I remember best from that time were Pastor James Wuye, and Imam Muhammed Ashafa, from Nigeria. I just Googled "Pastor James and the Imam" as I couldn't remember names and there is loads about them.

It was said of James Wuye that "*his hatred for Muslims was without limits. He hated seeing people being intimidated and abused, so when Muslims were blamed for inciting a violent conflict in Kaduna, he immediately volunteered to lead a reprisal attack. He lost his right arm during one of the battles against Imam Muhammad Ashafa's militant group, increasing his vengeance and deep hatred for Muslims in general and Ashafa in particular.*"

Briefly – leaders of the various parts of their community were brought together by UNICEF, to ask them to encourage child immunisation. They became friends and so a long lasting, worldwide programme on Forgiveness was born.

Another Conference entitled "Forgiveness, The Great Undoing" takes place from 28<sup>th</sup> September – 4 October this year. It's not cheap but if you are interested either check out at:- [www.findhorn.org/forgiveness](http://www.findhorn.org/forgiveness) or phone 01309 691653.

*"To Forgive is not to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest"*. Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Juli Salt Forres Meeting

### **Spiritual growth and How do the jobs get done?**

I have my Quaker Life Rep. Council hat on again. At our last meeting the theme was nominations; a (maybe) new look at how we can and want to do it. Actually the main theme was: Spirit given gifts. In an exercise we explored things from our lives that we enjoy, have enjoyed and or feel have been particularly meaningful in some way. Two that I chose were:

1. I was told that when I was very little I said, of the rough area at the bottom of our garden, "Isn't God kind giving us dock leaves with nettles".
2. Training I have had in acting over many years now, and especially my love of clowning.

In threes we each chose one to talk about while the other two wrote down qualities, skills, talents, abilities we perceived, then gave the paper to the speaker.

We all have gifts. Let's identify them in ourselves and in each other.

The contributions from our speakers and the work we did in small groups emphasised how Nominations could (and should) be a process of sharing and developing spiritual gifts rather than simply filling job vacancies. Understanding this can have a transformative effect on the spiritual lives of individual Friends and our meetings. It of necessity involves the whole meeting as it can only work if everybody has the same understanding of what we are aiming to do.

Also, might a job be organised around a gift which has been identified? We were given an example. To a fairly new attender: "We see you are a great organiser. Would you take on making a proper tea rota for us and see it works?" "But I don't know people" "Ah! What a wonderful way to get to know them. We will help if you need it". After thought she agreed and quickly became more integrated in the meeting.

"Gifts help us to bring work and love together – AND there is only love".  
Gifts are a way of carrying love into the world and of loving ourselves.

One idea I have is that at local meeting level we could identify gifts and pass them on to the nominations committees. For example we might tell Area Meeting noms: "D. is an excellent communicator and makes us laugh". "A. has great computer skills and is deeply into Quaker history". "S. is a super odd job man and has electrical skills and certificates so we can use him legally".

Of course it is not only jobs to be done but, for example, who might be interested in a tapestry week-end if we are invited to send somebody. I was fascinated by another way of getting clerks for a meeting:

Clerking: 2 year appointments in 4 lots of 6 months. So for Friend A:

1. A. is assistant clerk to B.
2. B. is assistant clerk to A.
3. C. is assistant clerk to A.
4. A. is assistant clerk to C.  
    A. has done 2 years; enter D.

One meeting that has used this system said that Friends who had been total "No thank-you"s have since accepted, enjoyed doing it, and most people in the meeting have taken a turn, to the huge benefit of the overall life of the meeting.

Now for our next QLRC rep. I have written a lovely description of what the job looks like to me! Here goes.

Diana Brockbank Forres Meeting

## Quaker Life Rep Council

“What’s that? Where? Oh crumbs it’s an awful long way “. (Woodbrooke Quaker College in Birmingham). I phoned my sister-in-law who had been a rep. from St. Albans. “Oh DO “she said; “you’ll meet so many lovely people and learn such a lot about what is going on in Quakers”.

The first time I travelled down on the Friday start of the meeting. I was exhausted. Now I spend a couple of nights with somebody down South beforehand and arrive rested. There are around 100 of us meet there including the staff, but no “strangers”. The first time I went, I knew literally nobody and still felt at home, though it was all rather confusing. The meeting is very much a 2 way process. We are asked to send in news from our Area meetings beforehand. This may be new happenings; responses to a questionnaire perhaps, or views on a particular subject. I have made myself a list of people in the AM who are, hopefully, interested and/or contact for their local meetings, so all meetings are covered. Personally I like to receive chatty letters or emails. It makes me more inclined to read and relate to the info, so that is what I tend to do. It means I enjoy it too and have email friends around the north of Scotland, most of whom I have met at least once.

The Q.L.Committee uses our responses to find out what is happening Quakerly around Britain and this information is used in and for the work they do, as well, of course, as what comes up in discussion. In turn, they offer us info. on what is going on centrally and how they would like us to relate to it. We are given suggestions of how we can feed back to our AMs. A really brilliant suggestion I picked up is to just pick out 2 or 3 things that really interest me to tell people about. Something I am excited by myself is more likely to inspire others. My own way of doing this is using my acting ability at AM. Maybe involving those present with a wee activity. I use as a base the report I am sending to “The Northern Quaker”. We also get a crib sheet after the event with ideas to help us bring back the good news.

In the meeting we belong to home groups of around 10 people including a member of staff, with whom we meet probably 3 times to discuss a particular topic; try out a new activity; give feedback. These are interspersed in the main sessions of info and theme subject; eg eldership; re-awakening spirituality; service with a smile. It is really valuable having people from “up here”. Some people think that travelling an hour to AM is a terrible long way!

I have got to know some lovely people and it is great to meet so many Quakers. I have been amazed at what is going on in our society and how we can all be a part nationally. It is the lives of our local Meetings that “Quaker Life” is about. It includes Pastoral care; Wardenship and Employment; Children and Young People; Quaker Life network; care of Swarthmore Hall; the Library in Friends’ House; Outreach; and the bi-monthly magazine “Quaker Voices”.

I have found that I want to read (much of) “The Friend”; also “Quaker Voices.” It is great that the rep. changes every 3 years so more and more of us get inspiration, information, knowledge and contacts.

Oh! And it is wonderful to be away with no household responsibilities, in a warm place in gorgeous grounds and excellent food which I do not prepare, cook or clean up after! Wow!

Diana Brockbank. Forres Meeting

## **News from Inverness**

A memorial meeting marking the life of Jim Wickens took place on 5<sup>th</sup> March. The RNI chapel where we meet for Sunday Worship had been arranged with two elongated circles of chairs to draw in all who came. Some 65 family and friends were present, including 28 members and attenders.

Following a eulogy, Friends from seven North Scotland Meetings reflected on the service which both Jim and Jo have given to Quakerism throughout the North. Jo herself recalled incidents in Jim's life. It was a quietly impressive occasion.

The number of children associated with Inverness Meeting continues to grow. There are now around 18, although the attendance of many is intermittent due to the distance and family commitments. The space in the small vestry room can be taxed to the full. Our teaching team is responding valiantly. The older children tend to come of the third Sunday of the month. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 9 children were present within an overall total of 30 Friends and Attenders at Meeting – the highest Sunday attendance that can be recalled at Inverness, other than on the Sunday of the residential General Meeting for Scotland in 2006. We may need to look at how we provide sufficient inclusiveness for larger numbers.

The Meeting has again teamed up with Woodbrooke to offer an “on the Road” Study Day in October. This year the theme is “Practising Discernment – listening with our whole selves”. The tutor is Helen Rowlands, Head of Education at Woodbrooke. Some places will be available for Friends/Attenders from other meetings. The date is 5<sup>th</sup> October, commencing at 10:45, at a cost of £28 to include a buffet lunch. To express an interest, please contact John Melling on 01463 237686.

John Melling. Inverness Meeting

## **In praise of Biblical and historical novels**

In her autobiography Elizabeth Goudge describes how she and her father could not read each other's books. The later having been principal of Well's, Ely and Oxford theological colleges was too academic to appreciate his daughter's skill as a novelist.

The world would be much poorer if it did not contain books which put flesh on biblical characters and add colour to historical events. True, the reader can be misled, especially by romantic authors. Indeed, one of the best loved books of this genre, Lorna Doone, is largely the result of the lively imagination of an apple grower to augment his income. It is of interest that the little known Mary Annerley, set in Yorkshire, is probably Blackmore's best work.

The good, well researched, novel can be a source of great inspiration to lesser mortals. Many of whom have neither time nor resources, inclination or mental ability to reach into the recesses of academia.

On the other hand, the academic can inspire the novelist to put the former's words into simple sentences. An example of this is to be found in the forward to Lloyd C Douglas' (of Big Fisherman fame) first book, Magnificent Obsession. Here Douglas describes listening to the

sermon with a text of a few lines in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, by a preacher with insufficient imagination to bring his subject alive.

My grandfather, a country vicar himself, told the story of a sermon in which the preacher referred to the fact that he could not agree with the commentators on a certain biblical matter. Well, the next day an elderly parishioner with a large basket of potatoes knocks on the vicarage door. Saying, "Parson says commentators don't agree with him. So I thought he might like to try some of my special taters".

Our Society is said to have the highest proportion of university graduates among its members of any church. Which is good as long as the graduate is able to come off his perch. I often wonder whether the Society of Friends lost something important when non conformists were allowed to attend university. Could George Fox have received the call to his mission from anywhere other than the Divine.

Unlike Mr Goudge<sup>(1)</sup>, the Master was able to communicate with all people. Although He "taught daily in the temple", the Bible does not say what He had to say to the doctors of Law<sup>(2)</sup>. Instead, the Gospels concentrate on what He had to say to us two thousand years later.

Roger H Quinn Inverness Meeting

Notes

<sup>(1)</sup> My mother who was a childhood friend of Elizabeth always referred to her father as "Mr."

<sup>(2)</sup> It would be interesting to know if there are any references to these teachings in contemporary Jewish writings.

### **Peace of the Earth**

I'd like to share with Friends an experience I had during the European and Middle Eastern Young Friends Spring Gathering. I found myself with a group of young European Quakers on a small unplanned caving expedition lead by a couple of local Friends. At one point we turned off our headlights and sang gospel harmonies in the pitch black, before sharing silence. The darkness was such that there was no discernible difference between having my eyes open or closed. We could hear the steading running of distant water but for all I could physically sense the cave and my companions may as well have not existed. Yet I was aware of the solid mass of earth of earth and rock surrounding and protecting us, and in particular of our small group upholding one another. I was conscious of the Spirit permeating even into this secure and secluded place. The experience was very powerful and one I intend to recollect when I need to find Peace.

Chris Stapenhurst Aberdeen Meeting