

The Northern Quaker Summer 2014

North Scotland Area Meeting



Pluscarden Abbey

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Area Meetings for 2014

- Residential AM at Pluscarden 29-31 August.
- 8th November Aberdeen

Provisional Area Meetings for 2015

- 14th February 2015 Inverness
- 16th May 2015 venue to be agreed but at a smaller meeting
- 29th & 30th August 2015 at Pluscarden (if available)
- 31st October 2015 Aberdeen

General Meetings for Scotland in 2014 & 2015

- September 13th 2014 Ness Bank Church Inverness
- November 15th/16th 2014 Glasgow (residential)
- March 7th 2015 St Andrews

Comments [📄contents](#)

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Northern Quaker. Please accept my apologies for the delay in producing this edition, due to work commitments. You should already have received a booking form for the Pluscarden residential AM in August, but I have also included a printed version.

As well as the usual reports, we also have contributions on the theme of the peace testimony, and an interesting commentary on a Friend's attendance at a "Playing, Praying, Being and Doing" course.

Many of you will welcome 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. 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](#)

Yearly Meeting Gathering – Bath 2014

The bookings are in, the draft timetable is in place, and almost two thousand of us will be descending on the University of Bath in early August. Is that all we need to do now - sit back and think about what to pack? Of course not, because we shall all be part of that gathering, whether we have been involved in planning, asked to speak, presenting a report, taking part in the groups fair, or equally importantly, a Friend on the bench. And those who can't join us have just as much part to play as we consider the wonderful act of 'Spiritual preparation'. This document, headed 'What it means to be a Quaker today' is already in our meetings, and the time is right to gather together in our local communities and do the real business of preparing our hearts and minds.

For two Yearly Meetings we have dwelt upon our spiritual journeys, and now we come to the final chapter – how does membership affect your journey? Quakers believe in sharing our deepest beliefs and promptings, since this is the way to true discernment. Membership may be one of the manifestations of our commitment, and it may involve deeper attachment or possibly a personal transformation. How does being a member enhance our spiritual journeys? The more we share our thoughts and reflections, the better we shall be prepared for Bath. It can be in whatever community you feel you belong, or online at our forum www.quaker.org.uk/ymforum. The important thing is to do it.

Bath will also provide the opportunity to look forward, at how we live out our faith in the world. What can you bring and share? What is happening in your life and the life of your community that shows witness to our testimonies? We may not always realise how much our lives do show our beliefs, and it often takes an open discussion with another to appreciate just how our faith shines through. And if your witness is for peace, what can we learn from the experience of 1914?

The planning committee have been quite clear in discerning that YMG will have time for you as well as corporate activity, and the programme has many slots when you will need to choose what to do. Not just the Wednesday get-away day, but also the Journeys sessions for which you may need to book a place, the Options that help build our joyous community, and much time to engage with the arts in a variety of forms. Do start thinking about your choices.

And finally, remember the governance of our Yearly Meeting. As usual, our governing bodies will be presenting their reports, with preparation sessions in advance. These documents will be in your meetings in June, and essential reading for all of us, to know what is being done in our name. Read in advance, and come prepared!

Colin Billett – Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

Isle of Lewis

Mark Lockwood, Co-Clerk - Quakers & Business Group (qandb.org) writes: "I have just moved to the Isle of Lewis, initially for 5 months while I look to move permanently. It is of a concern to me that there is no meeting here and I wish to start a worship group for those Friends, Attenders and/or interested people who want to worship but have no option on the island."

Mark has requested that anyone who knows of attenders and/or interested people who want to worship contact him so that he can add to the list of names. Mark can be contacted at quakermark1652@gmail.com

John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust

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'.

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

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.

Though JWET has received some generous donations in recent months, it is likely the Trust will reach the end of its life in the next year. So it is particularly important that those who might wish to apply, do so while the Trust still exists

Meeting for Sufferings April 5th 2014 [📄contents](#)

April's Meeting for Sufferings occurred near the end of Scottish CND's 85 mile anti-trident spring walk from Holyrood to Faslane. Liking the idea of being both a peace pilgrim and a Quaker jet-setter (or rather train-setter), I worked out that I could walk as far as Glasgow, get the sleeper to London and return late to rejoin the walk. It turned out that my experience of being part of a mobile community of some 30-40 souls of different faiths (or none) in pursuit of the same aim related to items on the agenda, but especially to the report from the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.

QCCIR exists to keep BYM informed about movements towards inter-church and inter-faith dialogue, and for responding on behalf of yearly meeting so that Friends' views are represented to other churches and communities of faith. We are all familiar with the problems that the use of 'Christian language' can cause when working with other churches, but relations with some other churches and faiths have been tested by some of BYM's recent activities, particularly the support of same-sex marriage and the boycott of goods from occupied Palestinian territories. This has in some cases led to our exclusion from 'Churches Together' groups. Such division occurs at a time when the spirit behind some recent church and faith movements is in union, and to which Quakers could make a contribution. My abiding memory of this peace march is that of unity in diversity - walking alongside other Quakers, Anglicans, Church of Scotland, Catholics, Buddhists, agnostics and atheists and discussing differences of opinion and faith. Even when these discussions got so heated they had to be walked away from (same-sex marriage again!) we remained united in our action and opposition to nuclear weapons.

MfS also considered and welcomed the World Council of Churches' 'Statement on the Way of Just Peace' (*printed later – Ed*), which has a broad definition of peace, encompassing peace in the community, with the earth, in

the market place and among nations. Its recommendations include the implementation of binding emissions targets, a nuclear and chemical weapons ban and the reallocation of military budgets to humanitarian needs. Again, the language got in the way for some, and one person wondered whether we could ask the WCC to be less 'fundamentalist'. We can't - not least because we are not a member of the WCC, and it would be a shame to allow quibbling over the wording get in the way of supporting the document.

The Canterbury Commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community is our response to the call for peace with the earth. Lis Burch, clerk of the Canterbury Commitment Group, spoke about progress on the strategy for action which the group will present at YMG in August. The document will also be a celebration of the progress YM has already made, listing achievements and identifying gaps under the themes of: strengthening community; lifestyle; Quaker property and activities, and political action and systemic change. Many of the easier options have already been achieved but the next steps are less obvious. Systemic change is particularly daunting, although we've made a start by disinvesting from fossil fuel companies.

In response to minutes from several AMs about the effects of government welfare changes, QPSW has produced a statement on economic inequality, which is printed below. It was clarified that this is a Yearly Meeting statement, i.e. intended for Friends but not the general public, and we are encouraged to use it as starting point as a basis for reflection and action. All good stuff, but it was pointed out that we already have a similar (public) statement (QF&P 23.21). Nevertheless I hope that an updated public one can be made soon.

Since minuting support at the meeting for further Young People's participation days to be run in parallel with MfS, we have received details of the next one which will be on 6th December 2014. Young people aged 14-18 are invited to consider a 'Quaker Faith and Practice' book for young people and the new Long Term Framework.

In brief: Following the introduction of the Same Sex Marriage Acts, Quakers will no longer offer civil partnership registration to same sex couples after

their Quaker wedding, except where same-sex marriage may not be reported (e.g. Isle of Man & Channel Islands). Civil partnerships were seen as a first step towards equal marriage, and are no longer necessary.

A minute from Southern Marches AM was received proposing a memorial to the 'innocent victims of war' at the National Memorial Arboretum. Meetings wishing to support this should get in touch with Southern Marches AM.

The controversy about calling the Large Meeting House 'The Light' rumbles on; some Trustees have been taken aback by the degree of discomfort over the name. Their clerk, Jennifer Barraclough, suggests we should reserve judgement until we have seen the skylight. A few wondered how easy it would be to clean off the inevitable pigeon poo.

Heads-up: The MfS Arrangements group is trying to plan the agenda further in advance where possible. This is primarily for the benefit of representatives and alternates, but would also enable Friends to consider items in meetings beforehand and get in touch with me or David Sanders about matters of interest. So here's the heads-up for September 2014:

Quaker Peace and Social Witness report
Yearly Meeting Gathering 2014 - receipt of minutes and reflections
YM 2015 agenda

Jane Booth, Banchory and Aberdeen meetings.



Peace camp Faslane



Walkers at peace camp

Quaker Statement on Inequality [📄contents](#)

Quakers in Britain commit ourselves to action to redress the growing inequality of wealth and income in our country.

Our vision of equality springs from our profound sense of the worth of every human being. Every person's life is sacred and in this we are all equal. Neither money nor status can serve as a true measure of the value of any individual or group. Nor can wealth be true riches if it is based on unlimited personal enrichment and not shared for the good of all.

The progressive movement towards greater economic equality of the mid 20th century has been in reverse since the 1980s. Britain has become one of the most unequal societies in the developed world, where wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a minority. The richest 20 per cent of our population have almost a hundred times the wealth of the poorest 20 per cent. It is estimated that around one in five of the population, or around 13 million people, live below the UK poverty line.

Government expenditure cuts have imposed unacceptable burdens on those least able to bear them. Many in Britain now go hungry or depend on food banks. Many face homelessness, or insecure housing in the private rented sector. People with disabilities and those affected by mental illness and chronic conditions are having their incomes squeezed. Poverty and hunger, and the anxiety and stress that go with them, are blighting the lives of vulnerable people, from children born into difficult circumstances to working age poor people and elderly people.

We recognise that these crises and injustices spring from forces at work within the global economic system. These forces infiltrate our hearts and minds, capture our politics and threaten our common basis for life on earth. This is nothing less than economic violence, which challenges our Quaker spiritual commitment to peace.

Many Quakers across Britain are helping to supply and staff food banks and lunch clubs, support housing provision, volunteer in advice bureaux and community projects in areas of deprivation and support claimants. We will continue this urgent work with others to mitigate the effects of cuts that diminish the quality of life for millions in our society. We want to hear and understand the true stories of those affected, so that our shared humanity can be at the heart of our responses to poverty.

However, action that aims merely to alleviate the worst effects of inequality is not enough. As we wrestle with the implications of our testimony to equality, Quakers feel called to act more radically to tackle the underlying causes. This calling requires spiritual struggle and real practical change. Our testimonies are moving us to work for very different ways of organising our common life. We are also moving towards spending and saving our own resources in ways that are more compatible with our values, and away from uses that diminish the lives of our fellow human beings and the rich variety of life forms with which we share our planet.

As we long for a society of deep compassion and loving kindness in which we 'help one another up with a tender hand', we must witness to a different way of living, and help build the world anew.

Statement on the Way of Just Peace [📄contents](#)

World Council of Churches 10th Assembly - 30 October to 8 November 2013
Busan, Republic of Korea: Document No. PIC 02.4

The Way of Just Peace

Just peace is a journey into God's purpose for humanity and all creation. It is rooted in the self- understanding of the churches, the hope of spiritual transformation and the call to seek justice and peace for all. It is a journey that invites us all to testify with our lives.

Those who seek a just peace seek the common good. On the way of just peace, different disciplines find common ground, contending worldviews see

complementary courses of action, and one faith stands in principled solidarity with another.

Social justice confronts privilege, economic justice confronts wealth, ecological justice confronts consumption, and political justice confronts power itself. Mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation become shared public experiences. The spirit, vocation and process of peace are transformed.

As the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace (ECJP) stated, to take the path of just peace is to enter a collective, dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.

Together we believe

Together we believe in God, the Creator of all life. Therefore we acknowledge that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and we seek to be good stewards of creation. In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in the fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity.

Together we believe in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Therefore we acknowledge that humankind is reconciled with God, by grace, and we strive to live reconciled with one another. The life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, point toward the peaceable kingdom of God. Despite persecution and suffering, Jesus remains steadfast in his way of humility and active non-violence, even unto death. His life of commitment to justice leads to the cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. By God's grace we too are enabled to take the way of the cross, be disciples and bear the costs.

Together, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Giver and Sustainer of all life. Therefore we acknowledge the sanctifying presence of God in all of life, strive to protect life and to heal broken lives.

Based on the teaching of St Paul (Romans 8:22) “For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with pain together until now”, as explained by St Peter (2 Peter 3:13) “nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells”, we can state that: the Holy Spirit assures us that the Triune God will perfect and consummate all of creation at the end of time. In this we recognize justice and peace as both promise and present – a hope for the future and a gift here and now.

Together, we believe that the Church is called to unity. Therefore we acknowledge that churches are to be just and peaceful communities reconciled with other churches. Grounded in the peace of God and empowered through the reconciling work of Christ, we can be “agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in political, social and economic structures at the global level” (8th WCC Assembly, Harare, 1998).

Together we call
The way of just peace provides a basic frame of reference for coherent ecumenical reflection, spirituality, engagement and active peacemaking.

For just peace in the community – so that all may live free from fear
Many communities are divided by economic class, race, colour, caste, gender and religion. Violence, intimidation, abuse and exploitation thrive in the shadows of division and inequality. Domestic violence is a hidden tragedy in societies everywhere.

To build peace in our communities, we must break the culture of silence about violence in the home, parish and society. Where religious groups are divided along with society, we must join with other faiths to teach and advocate for tolerance, non-violence and mutual respect, as Christian and Muslim leaders are doing in Nigeria with ecumenical support.

Local churches working for peace reinforce international church advocacy for peace, and vice versa. Ecumenical advocacy at the International Criminal Court is one reason why at least some war criminals today face justice in a court of law, a historic advance in the rule of law.

Churches can help build cultures of peace by learning to prevent and transform conflicts. In this way they may empower people on the margins of society, enable both women and men to be peacemakers, support non-violent movements for justice and human rights, support those who are persecuted for their refusal to bear arms for reasons of conscience, as well as offer support to those who have suffered in armed conflicts, and give peace education its rightful place in churches and schools.

For just peace with the earth – so that life is sustained
Human beings are to respect, protect and care for nature. Yet our excessive consumption of fossil fuels and other resources is doing great violence to people and the planet. Climate change, only one consequence of human lifestyles and national policies, poses a global threat to justice and peace.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was among the first to warn about the dangers of climate change. Now, after 20 years of advocacy, churches have helped bring ecological justice into the international debate on climate change. Concern for eco-justice is evident in the attention given to victims of climate change in international negotiations and at the United Nations Human Rights Council. The 10th WCC Assembly meeting in Busan strongly reiterated the ecumenical commitment to climate justice.

“Eco-congregations” and “green churches” are signs of hope. The churches and parishes of many countries around the world are linking faith and ecology – studying environmental issues, monitoring carbon output, and joining in WCC-led advocacy for governments to cut emissions of green-house gases. Some governments, such as the Seoul city government, are collaborating with local churches to help Korea’s sprawling capital conserve energy and recycle waste. In the wake of the Fukushima disaster, Christians and Buddhists already united against nuclear weapons are now united against nuclear

power plants as well. They are raising a prophetic call for a nuclear-free world.

To care for God's precious gift of creation, the reform of lifestyles and the pursuit of ecological justice are key elements of just peace. Concerted ecumenical advocacy is needed so that governments, businesses and consumers protect the environment and preserve it for future generations.

For just peace in the marketplace – so that all may live with dignity There is something profoundly wrong when the wealth of the world's three richest individuals is greater than the gross domestic product of the world's 48 poorest countries. Such deep socio-economic injustice raises serious questions about economic growth which ignores social and environmental responsibility. Such disparities pose fundamental challenges to justice, social cohesion and the public good within what has become a global human community.

Churches should be strongly committed to economic justice. The WCC and its member churches join with peoples' movements and partners in civil society to challenge poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. The churches' analysis of wealth and poverty has led to an ecumenical emphasis on sufficiency and to a strong critique of greed. Some churches have now developed indicators to test how well individuals, corporations and nations are sharing God's abundant gifts.

Establishing "economies of life" is one key to building peace in the marketplace. Economies of life promote careful use of resources, sustainable production and consumption, redistributive growth, workers' rights, fair taxes, fair trade, and the universal provision of clean water, clean air and other common goods. Regulatory structures must reconnect finance not only to economic production but also to human need and ecological sustainability. Responding equitably to the different dimensions of fair labour is increasingly important in our times.

Just peace among the nations – so that human lives are protected

History has seen great advances in the rule of law and other protections for humanity. Yet the present situation of the human race is in at least two ways quite unprecedented. Now as never before humanity is in a position to destroy much of the planet environmentally. A small number of decision makers are in a position to annihilate whole populations with nuclear weapons. Radical - threats of ecocide and genocide demand of us an equally radical commitment to peace.

There is great potential for peacemaking in the nature of who we are. Churches together in the WCC are well-placed for collective action in a world where the major threats to peace can only be resolved transnationally.

On that basis, a diverse network of member churches and related ministries advocated with success for the first global Arms Trade Treaty. The witness of churches in war-torn communities was heard in high places. Churches from different regions pressed governments from those regions to agree on a treaty to regulate the international arms trade for the first time. A similar approach is now building inter- regional support to make nuclear weapons illegal, a goal consistent with the Vancouver Assembly's indictment of the production, deployment and use of nuclear weapons as "a crime against humanity", and its challenge that "the nuclear weapons issue is, in its import and threat to humanity, a question of Christian discipline and of a faithfulness to the Gospel".

For peace among the nations, churches must work together to strengthen international human rights and humanitarian law, promote multilateral negotiations to resolve conflicts, hold governments responsible for ensuring treaty protections, help eliminate all weapons of mass destruction and press for reallocation of unnecessary military budgets to civilian needs. We must join other communities of faith and people of good will to reduce national military capacities and delegitimize the institution of war.

Together we commit

Peace constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love for all creation.

Together we commit to share God's love for the world by seeking peace and protecting life. We commit to transforming how we think about peace, how we pray for peace, how we teach peace to young and old and deepen our theological reflections on the promise and practice of peace.

Together we commit to building cultures of peace in families, the church and society. We commit to mobilize the gifts within our fellowship to raise our collective voice for peace across many countries.

Together we commit to protect human dignity, practice justice in our families and communities, transform conflicts without violence and ban all weapons of mass destruction.

We understand that the protection of life is a collective human obligation today as never before in history. We commit to turn away from planet-changing patterns of consumption as the engine of economic growth, and refuse to accept that any nation's security requires the capacity to annihilate other nations or to strike alleged enemies at will anywhere on earth.

We reaffirm the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace which states "While life in God's hands is irrepressible, peace does not yet reign. The principalities and powers, though not sovereign, still enjoy their victories, and we will be restless and broken until peace prevails. Peacemakers will speak against and speak for, tear down and build up, lament and celebrate, grieve and rejoice. Until our longing joins our belonging in the consummation of all things in God, the work of peace will continue as the flickering of sure grace."

Together we recommend that the World Council of Churches

- Undertake, in cooperation with member churches and specialized ministries, critical analysis of the "Responsibility to Prevent, React and Rebuild" and its relationship to just peace, and its misuse to justify armed interventions;
- Lead and accompany ecumenical just peace ministries and networks in the practice of violence prevention, non-violence as a way of life, collective advocacy and the advancement of international norms, treaties and law;

- Encourage its member churches to engage in cooperative interfaith programmes in order to address conflicts in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies;
- Request its member churches and partners to develop communication strategies that advocate for justice and peace proclaim the hope of transformation and speak truth to power;
- Facilitate a programme of reflection and environmental action in member churches and related networks to build sustainable communities and bring about collective reductions in carbon emissions and energy use; promote the use of alternate, renewable, and clean energy;
- Develop guidelines within the concept of "economies of life" for the right sharing of resources and the prevention of structural violence, establishing useable indicators and benchmarks; and
- Convene churches and related organizations to work for human rights protections through international treaty bodies and the United Nations Human Rights Council; to work for the elimination of nuclear and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction, cooperating with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; and to seek ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty by their respective governments and monitor its implementation.
- Reiterate its existing policy (2009 study) and reaffirm its support for the human right of conscientious objection to military service for religious, moral or ethical reasons, as churches have an obligation to support those who are in prison because they object to military service.

We recommend that Governments

- Adopt by 2015 and begin implementing binding regulations with targets for lowering greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the recommendations in the 2013 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;
- Negotiate and establish a ban on the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law;

- Ensure that all remaining stocks of chemical weapons are destroyed under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention and cluster munitions are destroyed under the Convention of Cluster Munitions at the earliest possible date;
- Declare their support for a pre-emptive ban on drones and other robotic weapons systems that will select and strike targets without human intervention when operating in fully autonomous mode;
- Reallocate national military budgets to humanitarian and developmental needs, conflict prevention and civilian peace-building initiatives amongst others; and
- Ratify and implement the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by 2014 and on a voluntary basis include weapon types not covered by the ATT.

God of life, guide our feet into the way of just peace!

North Scotland Area Business Meeting held at Port Appin 17th May 2014

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18 of us were welcomed by 7 local Friends for AM in the village hall at Port Appin. They fed us so well, saying it was a Highland welcome! Friends came from Orkney, Aberdeen, Inverness, Skye, Banchory and Forres. If I've omitted or not named your meeting correctly please forgive me.

During our worship a passage from *The Luminous Trail* by Rufus Jones was read. We discussed having an AM by means of telephone conferencing. This has the advantage of allowing participation by scattered Friends without the cost and disruption of long distance travel. We plan two tele-conferences a year in addition to meeting physically four times a year, but we have not yet thought through how this will fit with our pattern of AMs. The clerking team is to confirm the dates of future telephone Meetings. We thought the phone conference will have to be for more routine decisions to avoid a long delay whilst minutes are drafted, and it is more difficult to discern the feeling of the Meeting for complex issues.

On the other hand we'd like to include more Friends in the decisions of our AM, and possibly encourage them to travel to the next face to face meeting. Surely that means that we should be discussing the more interesting matters rather than routine decisions? Perhaps those of us who have Friends living in the West Scotland AM could ask them how they find AM on the phone as they have been holding them successfully for a while. I think they hold a total of seven AM's a year in contrast to our four. Three of theirs are by phone.

Local Meetings are asked to discuss the practical arrangements that might be made to participate in telephone conferencing locally including meeting together and using a conference phone. We are also asked to endeavour to discuss business prior to AM.

Eva Deregowska will be our Representative at GM in Edinburgh on 14th June. We asked Juli Salt, our Representative on the Northern Friends Peace Board to convene a meeting of Friends to review our Peace Testimony and involvement with NFPB and report back to our next AM at Pluscarden 29th-31st August.

Derek presented the budget for 2014 which allows for expenditure at the same level as 2013, but with a significant reduction in donations compared with last year so as to leave a smaller and more manageable deficit.

Nigel Dower introduced the Report from North of Scotland Trustees. This included the memorandums of understanding which have been collected from most LM's, as recommended by Q Stewardship Committee. It is not just a tedious chore but a chance to think about what LBM does and what is done by AM. The accounts come via the Trustees but were introduced by our new treasurer, Derek Maclean. Consideration of our accounts usually slips to August or even later in the year, but Derek has worked towards bringing it earlier in the year. He has also changed over to Internet banking. This means that among other changes that postage costs are lower now. It also means that when we submit our expenses we should PLEASE SEND BANK ACCOUNTS & SORT CODES.

The accounts are done on a receipts and payments basis which means that

any late receipts or payments will be reflected in the accounts for the following year. Now that payments can be made more promptly by internet banking and Gift Aid payment reclaims can be done on line, Derek hopes that the 2014 accounts will give a more accurate picture. Last year Area Meeting made substantially higher donations than 2012. This was partly because Trustees decided to reduce the level of reserves by making further donations to BYM and Ramallah Quaker School, and because late payments of £2,000 for 2012 were included.

This was a very full report by our new treasurer and I took copious notes but I'm afraid I can't really do justice to all we were told. However I did note that BYM general funds show a fall of 10% in donations, made good by a legacy. I.e. we are not contributing enough. YM has decided that the budget of our donations will now exclude legacies. They will be for special projects. BYM is anticipating a lower level of legacies in the future.

We always gain a lot from the reports of our representatives on Quaker Life Representative Council. Diana Brockbank reported, and once again encouraged us to participate in a repeat of the exercises they did at their last meeting. We collected our ideas about prayer and spiritual practice, by calling out words and ideas as they occurred to us. These have been circulated with the minutes but I'm including them here in case like me you tend to put off reading the minutes for a day when you are less busy.

Prayer: Giving of self, openness, asking forgiveness, quiet,
practising gratefulness, upholding, seeking guidance, wrestling,
listening to God, focus, talking with God, waiting
humbly with God, sense of awe, spiritual harmony,
seeking an awareness of the divine, spiritual nourishment,

Spiritual Practice: Silence, listening, meditation,
mindfulness, presence, love of one another, being,
leaving the babble

*It has been shown to you what is good, and what the lord requires of you,
to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God* Micah 6:8.

And Diana encouraged us to try the Quaker stretch as follows which gives us a break in any meeting where we have been sitting too long.

The Quaker Stretch:

Reach up for high ideals - reach up to the sky, remember to smile

Reach down for groundedness - reach down to the ground, as far as it is comfortable

Reach out for outreach - reach to the side, to your neighbours, smile to them

Reach in to your heart - fold your hands over your heart

Stand in the stillness - wait, breathing gently

We welcomed the establishment of the Scottish Quaker Advocacy post for consideration of political and legal issues specific to Scotland, initially for three years, and agree to support it financially for this period. This means our AM will contribute an average of approximately £15 per extra per Member to GM Scotland.

We noted that dates for General Meetings in 2015. These will be on 7 March in East, 6 June North, 12 September West, and a residential 14/15 Sept in SE Scotland. The first GM in 2016 will be on 5 March in E Scotland. Possible AM dates will be 14/2/15 in Inverness; 16/5/15 venue to be agreed but at a smaller meeting; 29&30/8/15 at Pluscarden (if available); 31/10/15 in Aberdeen and 19/2/16 in Inverness.

Jane Booth reported on the Meeting for Sufferings. You can read her report elsewhere in the Northern Quaker.

The marriage extract for 2013 has been completed and sent to BYM. We thank Penny Selbie for her work. The marriage of Jane Palmer and Paul Booth was the one celebrated that year.

We made several appointments: as representatives for the JYM, Rosie Mason and Gillean Palmer, representative for the Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs conference 11-13th July 2014, Robert Wilson Orkney Meeting, Elders and Overseers for Aberdeen LM, Mavis Jones, Colin Edwards and Jane Booth, Representative on the E/O Committee for Kinlochbervie and Stoer Michael

Otter, and for Lochaber and Lorn, Geoff and Janet Fairbairn. All E/O appointments are until the end of 2016. Sandy McEwan of Westray and Papa Westray Meeting is appointed as member of the Nominating Group replacing Phyllida Sayles who is released. The Nominating Group brought the name of Robert Wilson, Orkney Meeting to serve on the Nominations Committee to replace Peggy Lunan who is released. He is appointed subject to consent.

The Nominations Committee are to seek names for Clerk of Area Meeting and Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees.

Many of us are unclear about the distinction between the work done by Trustees of the North Scotland Area Meeting and that done by the North of Scotland Quaker Trust. The two bodies have held a first joint meeting both to consider whether they should merge and to clarify the responsibilities of the two bodies. A second joint meeting will be held and we will hear a report at AM in Pluscarden.

We know the mental health of those worshipping with us can be very demanding on meetings, so I'm including a report from the meeting of the North Scotland Committee for Eldership and Oversight in Glencruitten House, to reflect on mental health issues in our Meetings:

Several Meetings have experienced difficulties with members and attenders but were reassured by one of the group who, speaking from her own experience said that although our support and advice may seem to have been rejected at the time, and although we may never know the outcome, our walking beside them may just have made a difference to that person in later life.

David offered three pieces of advice in such situations: to record everything, to have no great expectations and to be there alongside any of us suffering this way.

It is important that we recognise that when we come across those whose needs go beyond our competence, we may have to ask for specialist help

from outside the Meeting and to accept that in so doing we have not failed in any way.

We were reminded that although some of us may feel we are on our own as E/Os in our Meetings we always have the wider group to call upon at the end of a telephone.

Mary Dower, Aberdeen Meeting

Peace Matters [📄contents](#)

At our AM in May we tried having a peace forum rather than just a report back from NFPB, and will continue to do so. I hadn't got the reports from Skye and Shetland at that point (see Ruth Goodheir's article) - but I was able to share these at NFPB and I felt good to be able to say Skye and Shetland (where peace poppies are being sold alongside red poppies by cadets in a local high school), but Jane Booth told us of her walk,

Some Friends at AM again asked if we should still support NFPB and to this end it was agreed that I should arrange a meeting between our AM and NFPB to discuss our relationship with each other (as minuted). Trying to find a date is now underway – the delay because the co-ordinator, Philip Austin was on a well-earned 2 month sabbatical, after 22 years of service.

I have just returned from the June NFPB meeting in Chester on the 21st. There was a certain congruity with the above as instead of the afternoon speaker we were divided into groups and asked to discuss NFPB, it's been going for 101 years so what did we want from it next, what did we like and what didn't we like. The QPSW rep (Quaker Peace and Social Witness) was also present (Tim Milne Wallis – Teddy Milne's son for those long in the tooth like me!!) looking at the interaction between QPSW and NFPB both giving assurances that they worked together to ensure there was no duplication of work.

Of the likes there was much appreciation for the local support and the many opportunities often not reported enough to encourage local endeavours. The

forum when we hear what other meetings are doing gives other Friends ideas and energises them. They don't feel so alone.

Several of the big town / city meetings have created much interest and outreach with "knit ins" – "or rather knit outs" – with groups sitting outside their meeting houses knitting the bright pink squares for the "Wool Against Weapons".

But what got my interest was a Kendal Friend who at Oxenholme station was asked for ideas for the station garden. She told them about Peace Poles and by next time she asked – they had got one!! Loads of tourists, especially Americans and Japanese, pass through this station en route to Windermere.

If you Google this there is a company that sells them and describes :- "A Peace Pole is a hand – crafted monument that displays the message and prayer *May Peace Prevail on Earth*, on each of its 4 or 6 sides, usually in different languages. There are tens of thousands of Peace Poles in 180 countries all over the world dedicated as monuments to Peace." This company has the trade mark of "May Peace Prevail on Earth" ...

!!! Oxenholme's pole was made by local scouts with the help of a friendly carpenter; another meeting had made a peace pole from a yacht mast they happened to have spare. Isn't this concept a great idea and we could involve other churches and faiths and communities etc.

Juli Salt rep for Northern Friends Peace Board

Playing, Praying, Being and Doing [📄contents](#)

In the last few months I've spent 2 weekends at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham. I wouldn't have chosen to make that long journey twice in such a short period, it just turned out that way, but I am very glad that I did. Both opportunities were enriching and I am grateful to The North of Scotland Quaker Trust for assistance in attending the first of these weekends which was a course entitled "Playing and Praying".

I remember saying to Friends that I was going to the "Playing and Praying" course because these were 2 things I wasn't very good at. Do you really need to be good at either? Looking at that question now I would say, no, but I do

think it's good to practise both. We were a group of 9 including 2 leaders and yes, we did genuinely play together. On Saturday morning, for example, we played in the wonderful Woodbrooke garden. If you haven't been to Woodbrooke then imagine lawns and a walled kitchen garden, but also uncultivated woodland areas with a big pond, a burn, a foot bridge, earth paths leading to hidden spaces and lots of undergrowth, really the kind of garden that, as a child, it would be so tempting to explore. It is harder than you would think to lose adult inhibitions and self-consciousness but we all gave it a go. I revelled in throwing sticks in the pond (without danger of our black Labrador plunging in after them) and bouncing on a fallen tree which still had some resistance in the roots. Others explored the undergrowth, or clambered over various felled trees, or took advantage of their wellies to paddle in the burn. I tried to keep at bay the little voice that told me not to be so silly. I had after all been told to play. I was following the instructions I'd been given as was everyone else. We were all in this together.

Later on we had a session with a choice of 5 different crafts. I chose papier mache along with another friend. It was so gloriously tactile and messy, unwordy and unintellectual. We did the craft in silence and there was such a sense of sharing and peace.

In each activity we were encouraged to be aware of what was "God" for us and to speak to that. After each session of play (and there were 5 or 6 other play-times) we had a time of sharing and the whole of Saturday evening was spent in gentle sharing, sitting in a circle with nine candles in the middle.

I can say that in playing and praying together we all got to know each other better, and there seemed to develop a mutual respect and consideration amongst those in the group. Plato said: "You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." And I know what he means, but combining the two is even better. In our weekend of play and conversation we shed at least some of our adult layers; felt free to be; learned to trust our playmates. We were, after all, adults at play not children. I wonder when and why do we stop playing?

Woodbrooke 5 weeks later for Quaker Life Rep Council was a different scenario. Nearly 90 Quakers coming together certainly created a buzz of enthusiasm which was wonderfully welcoming and inclusive. I had the opportunity to meet and chat with many reps including Diana Brockbank our other North of Scotland rep. There was also a full programme of talks and workshops. The talks I found instructive and helpful. The 2 workshops I attended were, on the other hand, extremely disappointing. There was very little structured input and in fact one was virtually inaccessible when the more experienced Quakers (all except 2 of us) started to use Quaker speak which they didn't explain; referred to practices which aren't written down anywhere and which they didn't explain; and ended by being scornful of those not in the know. This came as a bit of a shock as the rest of the weekend was positive and engaging.

An example of this was Alistair Fuller introducing a new publication which, I think, has now been distributed to meetings, "Being Friends Together – Sharing our meetings' stories". By visiting and speaking with a broad selection of meetings Quaker Life was seeking "a sense of the life of meetings today and to try to discern what common themes or experiences might emerge;" When Alistair was introducing the nine main practices which emerged as helpful and enriching in the life of meetings, I thought of how playing together on my course had enriched us as a group, so in the question session I screwed my courage to the sticking point, and asked whether meetings had mentioned having fun and laughing together as helpful. He suggested that this was often seen as part of the fourth main practice "Food and Fellowship" and recalled one Friend who said to him at one of his meeting visits that he thought it was important to get to know Friends not only "in the things which are eternal" (Advices and Queries 18) but also in the things which are trivial. This is a phrase which spoke to me and also I think to others. Would this include playing together?

Another expression which was adopted by Friends over the weekend was recalled by the clerks in their "Drawing the threads together" at the end: "If we have oats and we keep on stirring, we will always get porridge. If we want something other than porridge, then we need to change either our ingredients or our techniques – our ways of being and doing things together."

I eat porridge regularly. I would miss porridge terribly if I couldn't have it but then sometimes I have oat porridge, sometimes millet, and sometimes rice. Sometimes I add raisins, sometimes banana, and sometimes honey. The base is still porridge but the variety is good. Do we always serve the same porridge at our meetings or do we want to try something different?

A further image which has stayed with me was the one which Zelig Gross used in her talk which has been reproduced in Quaker Voices May 2014 (Vol5 No.3). She is writing a new book on eldership and oversight and when she turned to Quaker faith and practice she found "two rather daunting lists of responsibilities...29 in all" for elders and overseers. She says "I had an image in my mind of the 29 responsibilities in the elders' and overseers' lists floating like corks on the surface of the sea – not easy to focus on or remember. On the ocean floor beneath the corks I imagined a solid group of boulders – the foundations of eldership and oversight." As the clerks said in the summing up at the end:

"Over the weekend we were given the image of 'corks'. Corks that were well anchored to great boulders. If these 'corks' are we, if our meetings and each one of us is deeply grounded, deeply rooted and anchored to strong boulders, then we can properly move forward as a deeply grounded, spirit led community that we are."

Our home group took it even further. We were wondering how to convey to Friends what Quaker Life is/does. Is Quaker Life the being of Quakers, in comparison to Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) as the doing? One Friend suggested that if we take the idea of us as the corks firmly rooted in the boulders then Quaker Life is the water and QPSW the waves. This seemed to fit. We played with it a bit but it seemed to stand up to it so I pass it to you to play with and think about.

Pamela Affleck, Aberdeen Meeting

The Quaker Peace Testimony [📄contents](#)

In February, Skye Quaker Meeting held two discussion groups based on the Quaker Peace Testimony using material we received from Friends' House.

We began by reading out the 1660 declaration to Charles II. We found the historical context helpful.

The declaration had an immediate political purpose, to try to head off persecution of Quakers on the grounds that they might join an insurrection such as that planned by Fifth Monarchists (a religious group that like the Quakers had arisen during the time the Stuarts had been driven out). It was addressed not just to the king but to the “whole world” and confronted everyone who read or heard about it with this new group’s belief that the Spirit of Christ told them not to take part in armed conflict under any circumstances. The declaration did not tell Charles’ government that it should also cease to rely on arms.

We mostly spoke from our own life experiences, some concentrating on personal peace, some looking at the political context. We thought about the two young Quaker Peace workers who had spoken at Pluscarden, who we as a local group could support and pray for. One person who had been at Greenham Common at the women’s peace camp said how important it was to feel that you are working on behalf of a body of people who support you.

One member stressed that statements set in concrete are always liable to cause problems. We have not experienced everything and we don’t know how we would react in all circumstances. We considered people who we respected who had not been able to stick to Gandhian or Quaker non-violence such as Kenneth Kaunda and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

We discussed how that as we change as individuals and as societies, our understanding of God changes. This led on to thinking about our primary motivations as human beings. We act out of fear, sex and the desire for power as well as love.

We discussed fear, how it brings out fear in others and causes violence, and how the best in us brings out the best in others. George Fox’s injunction to “walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone” is about this. Many people are lonely and lost. Speaking to everyone and anyone, getting to know people is quite possible.

One person said it was possible to act not out of our own egos but out of something bigger. Our hurts can be transcended. We had a creative discussion about this. Does any part of us ever disappear?

We talked a lot about the relations between the inner life and outward action. Being – doing, Doing – being. When these are at one there is harmony and this lets good fruit grow. In the short time we had, we came up with the following as our declaration on the Quaker Peace Testimony to the world, now:

“We will not let the suppression of truth, propaganda, prejudice, fear or greed trick us into supporting armed conflict which we are sure is never the way to resolve conflict.

Fear is often a cause of war and ignorance feeds fear. We will, therefore, not only resist going to war but will actively work towards better communication and understanding. Inner peace and peace between people are inseparable. We will try to engage with everyone in a spirit of love and to grow in ourselves to make us fit to do so.”

We followed up these discussions by arranging two public meetings. The first was a talk by Kathy Galloway, the Scottish Director of Christian Aid. We held it in Breakish Hall in the south end of the island and Christian Aid reps from some of the local churches attended. It rained as only Skye can rain and she began her talk by saying, “Don’t complain about the rain, there are parts of the world where people are dying for the want of it”. She then focused on another thing people often complain about – taxes. She described tax law and how big companies manage to avoid taxes by shifting their profits to subsidiary companies in different countries.

She spoke about climate change and how it is the poorest people who are affected most by this. Christian Aid is developing strains of rice that can grow in salt water in places that are frequently flooded, such as Bangladesh.

We also arranged a meeting in Portree with Peter Baille, Director of the U.D.R. and R. Irish Aftercare Service. We made contact with him because one

of our attenders comes from Belfast and Peter is his son. His talk was called "The Other Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Reflections on Warfare and Welfare". His talk was wide-ranging but concentrated on the Northern Ireland "Troubles" as that is where he comes from.

By a quirk of fate he originally attended Friends' School Lisburn before transferring to the Methodist College Belfast, so knew something about Quakers and was interested to learn more. I discovered that at one point in his career he had been on a nuclear submarine. As someone who has protested regularly at the nuclear base at Faslane, it was my first opportunity to meet a nuclear submariner.

He gave a slide show presentation and you could sense how deeply he cared about the people he worked with. One man who had lost his legs and who had taken up weight lifting joked that he was broader than he was tall.

There was plenty of time for discussion afterwards, and although we were disappointed by the small turnout the meeting was very worthwhile.

Ruth Goodheir, Skye Meeting

Book Review: Wojtek the Bear, Polish War Hero by Aileen Orr. Epilogue by Neal Ascherson [📄contents](#)

Why am I recommending a WW2 story for goodness sake

Well another long train journey under my belt to NFPB in Chester and I picked this up at Inverness station. I'd seen the documentary on Wojtek (pronounced *Voy-check*) but this gave me so much more. The title does not convey the underlying story remotely.

Simply and not necessarily 100% accurate or I will go mental trying to reread in a hurry, once Russia became our Ally in WW2 thousands of Poles who had been imprisoned in Siberia and elsewhere by the Russians, were released (they were imprisoned just for being Poles – at least 10,000 of the elite were shot to try and desecrate and undermine Poland). They made their way out to

try and regroup elsewhere and many to join different countries armed forces to fight against the Nazis. So this particular group had got to Iran and in the desert came across a young boy with a tiny bear cub whose mother had been shot. The boy could have traded him for good money to become a dancing bear – for some reason the Poles decided to buy him – a tin of corned beef being the persuading factor. Crazy huh – they are starving and in a desperate state and add a bear cub to their ranks. This group were army and saw very active service alongside the British especially in Italy. Wojtek became a private in his own right and ended up a corporal. He was with them all the time – a great big brown bear who thought he was a bloke!!

After the war with thousands of other Poles came to a camp in the Scottish Borders (at the bottom of the author's garden.)

For me, from the comfort of a train seat, me who discusses how awful it is for anyone to go to war yet has never known war – this book conveys the hopelessness and despair – balanced with lots of laughter. Wojtek's antics as a bear, and comradeship as a soldier gave the men in Polish 11 corps a distraction, humour and love which was a bonus in keeping them going. Not to mention helping to be an attraction at the local ceilidhs!! Those men who didn't marry locally went home after the war, often all their families had been killed, and many returned only to be shot or imprisoned as traitors or deserters by Stalin's government. Wojtek became a prisoner (my wording) albeit with lots of love and care but in a zoo – Edinburgh. He became a hero and folklore to the Poles. He got lots of visitors from the Polish community and some of his old Corps would climb over the boundary to enjoy a wrestling match or give him a Polish cigarette – lit – he would only EAT them – but they had to be lit, and speak to him in his own tongue.

The epilogue is about a third of the book, and gives an easy read of the history of Poland, really necessary I think for understanding the story – maybe even read the epilogue first. The Poles for several hundreds of years have been actually fighting for the survival of Poland and their identity (at one point Poland ceased to exist). I thought the author gave a balanced appraisal of what had happened in WW2 and after when we the British really betrayed the Poles. To criticise war we must first understand as best we can.

Given we have huge Polish communities here now, and Polish is the second most spoken language in Scotland – for me this was really good to read- really seemed a certain congruity with me en route to my Northern Friends Peace Board meeting.

The first word I learnt in Polish (my daughter in law) was “skomlikovana” - “it’s complicated”, this book is not.

Juli Salt Forres LM