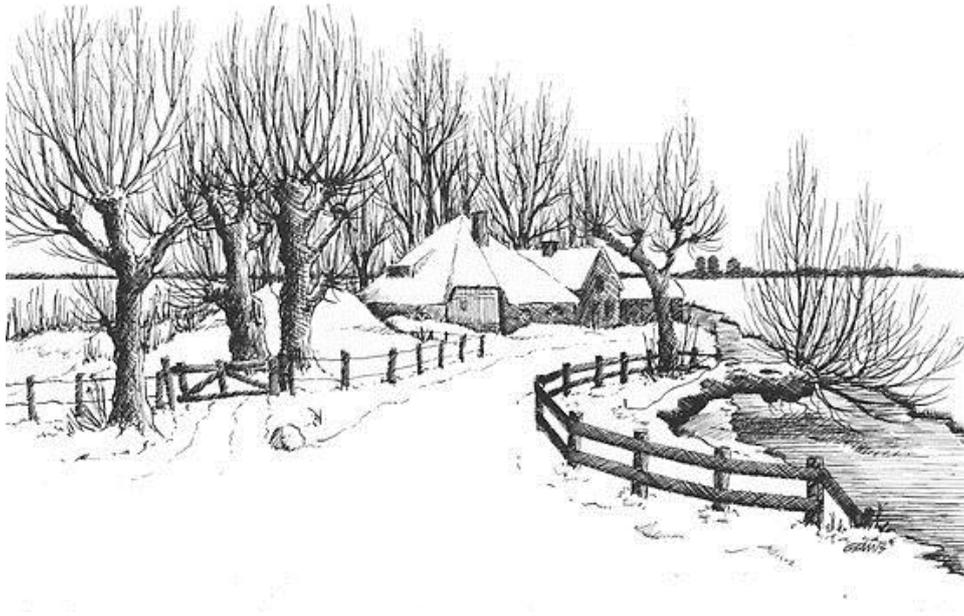


The Northern Quaker

Winter
2012



North Scotland Area Meeting

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Area Meetings for 2013

16 February: Aberdeen
11 May: Caithness
23-25 August: Pluscarden (residential)
9 November: Inverness

General Meetings for Scotland in 2013

March 2nd Glasgow
June 15th Edinburgh
September 7th Perth
November 16/17th Aberdeen (residential)

Online newsletters

Tayside Quaker
West of Scotland Quaker News
Northern Quaker
Scottish Friend

available on the GM website:

<http://www.quakerscotland.org>

Courses and conferences

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

Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at
www.woodbrooke.org.uk or tel. 0121 472 5171

Comments

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Northern Quaker.

We begin this edition with a moving tribute from Shetland Friends to the late Charlotte Stevens.

For those like myself who were unable to attend the North Scotland Area Business Meeting in Inverness in November, we have a report from Peggy Lunan who has also helpfully included a list of accommodation for those wishing to attend the next AM in Thurso in May.

As well as reports from Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life Representative Council, we have several articles, including on early Christianity, contributions that Friends can make to environmental sustainability, and a report from a Young Friend about her attendance at Junior Yearly Meeting.

The recent dispersal of prisoners from HMP Peterhead has meant our visits to the small group of attenders have come to a temporary halt. However, a short piece from PrisonerActionNet reminds us of the importance of spirituality for prisoners and ex-offenders.

In between are articles that Friends have kindly submitted. I hope you enjoy them. My copy tray is not exactly bursting at the seams, so contributions are always welcome in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ Tel. 01224 706989
harry.horsley@uk.bp.com or harrydhorsley@gmail.com

Scotland and Chile connection

Louise Salinas from Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is working on the next edition of the "Map of Friends Around the World". She has been trying to find out about the "Ovalle Worship Group" in Santiago, Chile, and has been informed that there was a connection with Friends in Scotland.

Louise is keen to find out whether the worship group still exists, and if so, how many members it has. If you know anything about this connection, please contact louises@fwccamericas.org

Shetland Friends Memorial for a much loved attender. July 2012

When Charlotte Stevens retired she moved to Shetland with her husband. The islands had always had a special attraction for her, not least because it was here that her Jewish grandfather had been converted to Christianity. She was a delightful, highly cultured and very forthright character with great passion for environmental and peace campaigning and the Shetland peace activist community welcomed her energetic, creative input.

She was drawn to Shetland "Friends" and became an attender, sometimes hosting meetings for worship when our schedule included end-of-month meetings in people's homes. However, in discussions, it was clear that her own individual faith didn't include a belief in the afterlife and when her time came, she wanted no funereal fuss and bother and hoped if possible for her body to be of use for medical research.

Charlotte became a much-loved member of her local community and after her husband died, remained in their Hillswick cottage for many years, involving herself in local issues and being particularly

supportive to families in difficulties. As she became gradually frailer, she in turn needed more support and her carers adored her, enjoying her wonderful sense of humour and her endless stories.

Eventually increasing illness and frailty required a last move to the Walter and Joan, Church of Scotland Care home in 2010. Here she stayed and enjoyed many visitors and outings, until her death this summer. We visited regularly and over the months, grew to know members of her family whenever they travelled to Shetland to see her. During Charlotte's last days, we were able to offer the family our holiday cottage, and enjoyed a growing friendship, sharing stories of Charlotte's life and helping with her final care needs.

It was decided that she should be buried in Shetland, in the same graveyard as the one where her grandfather lay. But a simple burial didn't feel sufficient. It was thus natural that the family asked us if we might be able to organise some kind of memorial event for her after her death, before the family left Shetland. They had attempted to carry out her wishes, but the hospital had rejected the offer of the body. Time was very short, but Shetlanders can move amazing mountains in emergencies.

We called a number of Friends in Aberdeen for advice and information. Within hours, we had been offered an evening the following day in the community centre where we met as Quakers. A score of telephone calls to Shetland Quakers and attenders, secured promises of support, of help with preparing food, and inviting as many of her friends and carers as possible to attend. We bought a blank book for people to write comments and memories of Charlotte in, produced a typed sheet, based on existing texts and offered material from Friends in Scotland and hoped for the best.

Over twenty people arrived for the gathering, many bearing food gifts and a regular banquet built up in the dining area. Our memorial notes were laid out on a large circle of chairs and those who knew each other chatted and settled down. One of our group welcomed everyone, introduced them to the family members present and explained the basics and silence fell. There were a lot of contributions and after a shaking of hands, people moved about, enjoying food and conversation, meeting colleagues and strangers alike and a warm, relaxed atmosphere built up. Charlotte's daughter invited everyone who could to join the family on the following morning to be present at the interment in Waas. The local undertaker would be bringing Charlotte's coffin and the simplest of burials was planned.

The following day dawned fair and a good dozen folk witnessed Charlotte's last journey. We held a silent meeting at the graveside, with contributions from whoever felt moved to speak. All scattered a handful of earth over the coffin, and we were touched when the senior undertaker expressed his deep appreciation for the event. He told Charlotte's family in a lifetime of service at funerals, he had never witnessed one so simple, sincere and moving. They were very touched.

We were then invited by a local lady to gather for an impromptu "cuppa" in the village hall. A warm, friendly half hour ensued, with many shared recollections of Charlotte's life and talents. Some spontaneous music, refreshments and final goodbyes were rounded off by a joint wash-up. Finally a small group returned to the grave and bulbs were planted on the site and everyone went their separate ways.

Jill Slee Blackadder, Shetland Meeting

Report of north Scotland area business meeting held 10 November 10 2012 in Inverness

After a long and beautiful bus ride down the east coast it was good to be welcomed with smiles and hugs on arrival at the Old High Church Hall in Inverness. Then followed Meeting for Worship which drew us in in preparation for our Business Meeting for Worship.

The Meeting started with practical details before moving on to the main agenda. The first item was on Finance following on from the last AM. Phyllida Sayles reported fully on contributions sent to British Yearly Meeting at Friends' House in The Northern Quaker of Autumn 2012. AM returned to this subject, considering our response to Min 12.16 of the August AM regarding donations to British Yearly Meeting. The theme of this was the division of moneys sent to BYM and the proportion of the allocation returned to the area for its own expenditure. The item also concerned Corporate Donations. Several well-versed Friends spoke to this and the Minute may clarify the detail. Here is an excerpt from Minute 12.24(b):

“We believe that the information sent by Katie Frost (Interim Fundraising Manager Quaker Communications) is useful but that in future our treasurer should modify the information sent out to local meetings, for instance the amounts from smaller meetings with only one or two members giving directly, not be included separately but aggregated at the end; and a breakdown to be given of what is given from AM and LMs into what is corporate and what is passed on, on behalf of individual Friends.”

“We recommend that AM tells Friends that, although we are doing reasonably well compared with other AMs, there is a shortfall of c.£4000 on what BYM would like, which would be £17,850 based on £150 per member, as opposed to £13,893 at the moment (based on 2011 figures). We encourage Friends to consider these figures. We also recommend that AM should consider using some of its reserves to make up future shortfalls, but, in order to encourage Friends to strengthen their financial commitment to BYM, not to make up the full shortfall automatically.”

“Minute 12.24 (c) Corporate Donations: Min. from AM Trustees.

“We have considered the organisations to which the AM might make regular corporate donations and recommend that we should give corporate annual donations to four Quaker bodies, BYM, Northern Friends Peace Board, Woodbrooke and Summer Shindig. In the current year we recommend that the amounts given to be as follows – BYM £1500, NFPB £500, Woodbrooke £500, and Summer Shindig £500. These we regard as minimum amounts which could be increased if the AM discerns this. At AM today we accept the ratios for giving as a useful guide to corporate donations from AM. We agree not to take this matter forward until the AM Treasurer and Clerk to AM Trustees are present.”

Minute of record: Money from Ernle Beyts bequest for Westray and Papa Westray. The Treasurer and clerking team agreed that £200 should be made available for books for the local Meeting.

Membership matters: The death of Gillian Masserene-James of Inverness Meeting was recorded.

Applications for membership: Two positive reports from visitors to two applicants for membership were read: as a result John Hitchin (Inverness) and Robert Wilson (Lochaber and Lorn) were welcomed into membership. Robert Wilson was present and was able to be welcomed in person. Eleanor Fairchild was asked to welcome John Hitchin.

Junior Yearly Meeting: We had an interesting report read of Emma Mason's experience of Junior Yearly Meeting. (Theme: 'Bearing witness') One of the things Emma gained was an appreciation of Quaker Business methods. She met many new people "from everywhere". She would recommend the experience to all Junior Young Friends. JYM is to be held in Kidderminster in 2013 – the nominations for this were Emma Mason (Aberdeen), Murray Mackay (Nairn), Ellie Palmer (Banchory) and Rosie Mason (Aberdeen). AM agreed to support these 4 young Friends to attend.

PLUSCARDEN 2013

There was a discussion about a theme for this meeting. Various ideas were brought forward: more time for worship and fellowship; sketching; "different kinds of Worship"; relevance of the Bible today; singing and dancing; creative writing.

It was suggested The Kindlers might have some ideas. The Peace Testimony was felt to be relevant in the current climate and that The Kindlers and Northern Friends Peace Board might have some input

concerning peace initiatives. It was also suggested that we could consult Phyllida Sayles, as a local AM member and a member of Alternative to Violence Project. AM should also consult Helen Steven and Ellen Moxley. At the last Pluscarden Meeting William McEwen retired from Elders and Overseers. Amanda Manouvier was appointed in his place.

AM Safeguarding co-ordinator: Penny Selbie has been appointed to this post, with David James as her deputy. In the present climate of abuse complaints it was pointed out that legal requirements may alter. We hope Pennie Selbie and/or David James will attend a Woodbrooke course concerning this service. It was stressed that objectivity in this role was important at all times.

Quaker Life Representative Council: Diana Brockbank reported on her experience of the Meeting with her usual welcome enthusiasm. The main message I gathered from Diana's report was how we look at the 'service' we give: as an arduous chore or a given pleasure. Richard Summers had said that we need to re-frame our 'jobs' in order not to see them as arduous. This linked with something the Clerk told us at the beginning of the meeting concerning Friends thoughts in Nairn saying that there should be more 'job sharing'. They further said that AM should be 'a party'. I am not sure that is the appropriate word but certainly we might get more done if we approach our work with a lighter touch. Diana presented us with a bagful of material that she had brought back with her including the magazine 'Quaker Voices' which is informative and nicely presented.

We had a discussion concerning starting times for AM relating to public transport timetables and their convenience. It was decided to start for the next year at 11.15am and to see how it works. Here in the North of Scotland we have our own special difficulties. We know them, but seem to find them hard to accept. I grew up in Birmingham where we had a choice of half a dozen or more Meetings within walking distance. Our challenge here is how to find a way of being contented with our lot and making the best of it. I do not know the answer.

It was agreed that the May Area meeting would take place in Thurso on 11 May 2013. Phyllida Sayles has booked the venue for the Meeting in the town. Friends will need however to book accommodation in good time.

Peggy Lunan, Inverness / Caithness

Accommodation in Thurso

HOTELS

Pentland Hotel, Princes Street. 01847 893202. www.pentlandhotel.co.uk

The Weigh Inn, Burnside (at junction on A9 to Scrabster). 01847 892722. www.weighinn.co.uk

Station Hotel, 54 Princes Street. 01847 892003. www.northhotels.co.uk/station

Park Hotel, (opposite Tesco on A9). 01847 893251. www.parkhotelthurso.co.uk

Holborn Hotel, 16 Princes Street. 01847 892771.

B&B

1 Janet Street B&B. 01847 895906. www.1janetstreet.co.uk

Bed and Breakfast @ 4, 4 Princes Street. 07717 470833. www.bnbat4.co.uk

Murray House, 1 Campbell Street. 01847 895759. www.murrayhousebb.com

Pentland Lodge House, Granville Street, 01847 895103. www.pentlandlodgehouse.co.uk

OTHER

Thurso Bay Holidays (static caravans), 36 Upper Burnside Drive. 01847 895960.

www.thursobayholidays.co.uk

PLACES TO EAT IN THURSO (a small selection; there are also Indian and Chinese take-aways)

Pentland Hotel (see above)
The Weigh Inn (see above)
The Bistro
The Pavilion

Meeting for Sufferings 6 October 2012

Not recorded in the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings itself, though noted in *the Friend*, was one precious moment in the day given to upholding quietly all affected by conflict. This came in response to a Friend's request just after a minute had been accepted following discussion of the centenary of the First World War. It seems that from 2014 to 2018 there will be many public events marking centenaries, and three main occasions for remembering: first the outbreak of the war in 1914; second the beginning of conscription and conscientious objection in 1916; and third the armistice in 1918. We are encouraged to prepare for this time, as an opportunity for reflection and witness. 'We can strengthen our own spiritual understanding, work with other organizations locally, and gather local personal stories in our communities. We can look for connections with others who promote peace' (from MfS minute 5). Resources are available from Quaker Peace and Social Witness and from Friends House Library.

Another moment that stays in my mind came during discussion of a minute received from Swarthmoor (South West Cumbria) Area Meeting, about disposal of high level nuclear waste. That area meeting has a concern that our national government is not facing up to the reality of dealing with nuclear waste according to best practice as agreed by international standards and European law. Criteria for suitable storage of this material are primarily geological, and the geology of Cumbria is known to be unsuitable. Quakers, together with other churches in Cumbria, are concerned that for political reasons the decision-making on this important question is being delegated to the local council. This resort to 'voluntarism' is 'a travesty of democracy. It substitutes persuasion and incentives backed by lavish public relations "spin" in place of wisdom and integrity in the governmental process' (Swarthmoor, SW Cumbria, AM).

After one Friend's ministry, pointing out that Cumbrian Friends had done all they could and were now asking for help, the clerk asked whether the meeting wanted her to write to the relevant minister about this concern. The response was a clear 'yes', and a letter was duly written to Ed Davey, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. The meeting might also have encouraged Friends widely to write to their constituency MPs, asking for assurances that best practice and democratic process will be upheld.

In discussion of the *Framework for Action*, a clear sense emerged that some form of ongoing written framework for prioritizing Quaker work will be useful. Discernment of priorities will involve Friends widely and will depend on good communication between Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings as well as the yearly meeting as a whole.

In February 2013, Meeting for Sufferings will be held at Woodbrooke from Friday to Sunday, where the extended setting will allow more time for worship and for useful work in groups and informally as well as in plenary sessions. A number of items of business brought to the October meeting will be treated more fully then, including the role and work of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the role and work of Meeting for Sufferings and possibly how to follow on from the *Framework for Action*. This will not be the first residential Meeting for Sufferings, but it will be the first for the new, smaller meeting, and in future it is likely to feature at least once in each triennium.

There was some discussion of the roles of registering officers and whether it is necessary for each area meeting to appoint or whether a number of area meetings could share appointments – we shall be hearing more about this.

A small group of five Friends is to be appointed to respond to an appeal against the decision of an area meeting. This is a constitutional role of Meeting for Sufferings that is only very rarely called on. The meeting as a whole will not be informed of the details but is required to appoint an independent appeal group ‘to make all such enquiries as seem to them desirable, from the member concerned and from others having relevant knowledge, to consider and determine whether or not the appeal should be allowed and whether any further recommendations should be made. In conducting such enquiries the healing power of worship will be helpful’ (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 4.25).

We heard about the Jubilee Debt Campaign – the Recording Clerk and clerk of QPSW central committee have now signed the ‘Jubilee for Justice’ letter to the prime minister on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting. Other business included BYM Trustees report, routine appointments and the dates of future meetings.

David Sanders

Quakerism – Early Christianity Revived?

I have been fortunate over the years to be able to attend many workshops, training events, conferences and retreats. Some of these have stayed with me and had an ongoing influence in my life, but the majority have been forgotten, some deliberately, others through an ageing memory! I expect that the experience gained from attending the recent one-day event in Inverness called “Quakerism – Early Christianity Revived?” will remain with me for a long time to come.

Inverness Local Meeting had discussed holding an event where Friends could come together and explore an issue of interest to them in a relaxed but nonetheless intellectually stimulating manner. John Melling of Inverness Meeting kindly agreed to arrange such an event with Woodbrooke-on-the-Road. Part of the preliminary stages of organising the occasion was to settle on a theme or topic for the day. This was no mean feat as you can imagine. The Meeting decided that we would like to explore our connection with the early Church and early Friends, and consider how far we as Friends today still identified with those historical roots.

The event was held on 20 October in Inverness and was attended by around twenty-five Friends, mostly from the local Meeting but with some Friends coming from other parts of the Area Meeting. We were very fortunate to have Timothy Peat Ashworth, Woodbrooke's tutor in Biblical Studies and Interfaith Coordinator to lead us through the day. As a former teacher and lecturer in teacher education I spent many years assessing teachers-in-training, and I still find it difficult to “switch off” on occasions and just become a member of the audience. On this occasion however, I found myself not only sitting and engaging with riveting material but also enjoying Tim’s professional skills as a presenter and the depth of his knowledge and academic experience.

We had set Tim a very demanding remit for the day. Not only had we asked him to share some of his insights into the experience of early Christians, but we had also asked him to help us look at “the boldness and freedom of early Quakers”. He was then invited to link the insights gained with Quaker faith and practice today - all within six hours!!!

Tim structured his morning presentation around the use of a number of primary texts from the seventeenth century including some of the writings of George Fox. He read these aloud, which brought the texts to life for me, and distributed copies for us to take home and read again at our leisure. Tim also made extensive use of scriptural references when exploring the life of the early Christian Church. I appreciated Tim’s willingness to take questions “from the floor”, and his manner of addressing these questions reinforced for me his grasp of the subject matter. The afternoon session was a mixture of group discussion, a plenary time with Tim, and worship. All of this was sandwiched together by wonderful catering provided by local Friends.

The whole day has left me wondering about my own commitment as a Quaker and how willing I am to face the challenges of life compared with my fellow Friends and Christians from centuries gone by.

I have no doubt that many of the Friends attending the day have been left with searching questions of their own. Despite some of the obvious advances made in recent centuries, I am left thinking that people of faith today still encounter many similar challenges to our fellow travellers all those centuries ago. And perhaps we lack some of the benefits enjoyed by our earlier Friends?

I often hear it said that people living in the north of Scotland are disadvantaged when it comes to affordable, quality training and educational opportunities because of the geographical distance from urban centres down south. This is one of the reasons why I believe that Friends should seek to make full use of the services provided by Woodbrooke-on-the-Road. We were truly blessed with what was provided for us on the day. So blessed in fact, that Inverness Meeting is already looking to book another Woodbrooke-on-the-Road event for next year!

Ian Bonner-Evans, Inverness Meeting

Inverness Meeting; Towards a Green Meeting?

Discussing sustainability and care for the environment.

“Sustainability is an urgent matter for our Quaker witness. It is rooted in Quaker testimony and must be integral to all we do corporately and individually.”

(A framework for action 2009-2014)

Stories of the environment, climate change, carbon footprints, transition movement and sustainability are never far away in the news. But where does that leave us as individuals, as Meetings and as Friends? What contribution can Friends make through participation, awareness raising, action and lobbying? Firstly some jargon definitions, for those a bit baffled by the terminology (apologies to those that know already):

Sustainability, originally used by the 1987 United Nations Bruntland Report and is defined “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, it just as much about the environment as it is about sustainable economic and social justice too.

Carbon is used constantly, basically this is the component of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) the main chemical of climate change, combustion of most fuels leads to CO₂ emissions, the carbon footprint is how much carbon dioxide is produced, say in driving by car or using a plane etc.

Climate change, this is a result of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere creating a “greenhouse effect” i.e. trapping heat in the atmosphere, leading to increased temperatures resulting in rising sea levels, and melting snow at the poles, and also leading to changes long term e.g. wetter summers and colder winters could be one possibility and more frequent extreme weather events e.g. flash floods to droughts. Obviously this will have global consequences and obviously with increased severity in different parts of the world.

Transition Movement is a grassroots network of communities that are working to build resilience in response to: environmental and climate change, and economic instability, also looking at a future beyond oil use.

The idea caring for the Earth and the environment is nothing new amongst Friends:

“We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation” Quaker Faith & Practice. Or John Woolman's words in 1772 sound clearly to us now: “The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.”

Inverness Meeting Discussion Group on Sustainability

Inverness Meeting has been having a series of discussion group Meetings over a shared lunch which helps get the conversation going, and then a discussion based on Friends Sustainability Toolkit. The spark for our discussions was the Swarthmoor Lecture 2011, Minute 36: “The action we are ready to take at this time is to make a strong corporate commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community.”

We started by looking at what we value about the environment and where we live, what environmental issues concerned us. The discussion was wide ranging over several Meetings and included everything from global economics to where to recycle plastic locally to green woodland burials. We soon realised that sustainability and the environment covered many areas of our lives, and what steps we could take to change our lifestyles to become greener if possible.

Awareness Raising & Green Meeting

Inverness Friends decided to have a notice board of activities about what individuals are doing as way of inspiring and involving individuals and collective action. It was felt at the same time not to make people feel guilty if they are not doing enough, more important was getting people interested and inspired.

A Green Meeting House: this won't apply to all Meetings, as I know many rent rooms in community and church halls. But know harm in mentioning if possible to the owner about the heating regime, insulation and glazing, especially if there is a long term financial gain for them too.

Quaker Meeting Houses: Can you reduce heating usage & bills; improve insulation glazing, solar panels, low energy bulbs etc. Use of locally, sustainably sourced if possible reclaimed and recycled, materials and local firms? Obviously this will depend on budgets.

Meeting House Garden: Is there any scope for a garden round the meeting house, maybe an activity for children during Meeting or a shared gardening group? Even a few containers would maybe brighten the place up?

Transport: Can lift shares be arranged between Friends, going to Meeting? Or cycle or walk if possible.

Furniture: Can furniture be bought or donated from/to a furniture reuse charity, if possible?

Fair Trade: Is fairly traded, organic tea, coffee, food and biscuits used where possible?

Waste & Cleaning: Is waste recycled from the Meeting? Are eco-friendly detergents, cleaners and toilet roll used?

Local Environmental Groups

Find out what's happening locally is there a: Friends of the Earth Group, Transition Group or Zerowaste Scotland Group, Car Sharing or Community Reuse & Recycling or Community Garden project nearby? Do they have resources to borrow, invite a guest speaker, or do they have regular meetings? Inverness recently invited the local Friends of the Earth organiser, to give a brief talk about their work and what is happening locally in terms of environmental campaigns and projects. Some Meetings even go as far as hosting a Green Fair or hiring meeting rooms for Transition Groups or Friends of the Earth meetings.

Obviously a first step is to talk about the issues concerned, and decide together how you can take it further.

I always remember this quote from George Fox, that seems more insightful and meaningful than ever after 350 years when he said “Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone”

Best of luck

Alastair Simmons, Attender at Inverness Meeting

More Help and Information

- The Quaker Sustainability Toolkit; this is full of practical advice and pointers for discussion on sustainability and environmental issues. The Sustainability Tool Kit can be downloaded or is available from Friends House, <http://quaker.org.uk/sustainability-toolkit>
- Quaker Living Witness project has resources and we had a speaker at one of our Meetings to talk about their work.
- Friends of the Earth organise a lot of local environmental campaigns; Friends of the Earth Scotland, Thorn House, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR, Tel: 0131 243 2700
- Transition Town Network UK, 43 Fore Street, Totnes, TQ9 5HN, UK, Tel: 05601 531882

Junior Yearly Meeting 2012

I had my first experience of Junior Yearly Meeting back in May this year, where I met with seventy-four other budding young Quakers who had travelled all over Britain to Lee Valley Youth Hostel. I enjoyed four sunny, jam-packed days of Quaker fun while we explored the theme ‘Bearing Witness to bring about a just and compassionate society’ in different ways.

I have been lucky enough to attend other Quaker events and I enjoyed the familiar creative games and activities, as well as the peaceful epilogues. I found that JYM gave me a chance to learn a lot more about Quakerism and living in a Quaker community which I did not know before.

This year’s JYM was held at the same time as Britain Yearly Meeting, based on concepts of ‘economic justice and sustainability’, at London’s Friends House. A Quaker business meeting was a completely new experience for me, and being able to join in with the BYM meeting for worships and decision-making sessions was really thought provoking. The ministry from JYM participants made me realise how involved young Quakers can be in the community of British Quakers and that, although I did not give my own ministry, my opinions and issues that are important to me can also be heard and valued.

One thing I learned at JYM was the extent of Quaker influence in the world as the Swarthmore Lecturer talked to us about her work with QUNO. I found this incredibly inspiring, as I was amazed to learn about just how much Quakers were involved. It also left me wanting to learn more and realising that I can actually have a effect on the world.

We did simulation exercises which showed the injustices of power and wealth, and discussed what it was that we ourselves could do to bear witness. I learnt that people have gone against the tide and lived by what they feel is right, even if it was difficult at times, and you need only make small changes to bring about a just and compassionate society.

Nearing the end of our weekend, we were encouraged to think about what Quakers meant to us. Instead of thinking, ‘What is Quakerism?’, we asked ourselves, ‘Why am I a Quaker?’. This inspired such a wide range of answers, from being dragged to meeting every Sunday, to being part of a community where everyone can feel belonged and heard.

I sometimes consider myself as a ‘Quaker in Training’, and although I don’t have much experience of Quakerism, I enjoy every chance I have to learn a little bit more. JYM was a fantastic opportunity to explore Quaker spirituality, to listen to other young people’s opinions on issues and to connect with other young Quakers, as well as making friends and having as much fun as possible!

Ellie Palmer, Aberdeen Meeting

10 reasons why spirituality is important for prisoners

1. Many prisoners are deeply shocked and even traumatized by the idea and the experience of going into prison. They need *comfort and consolation* for what has happened to them. Spirituality can offer that.
2. All religions, whether Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism, contain ideas of religious *practices* like prayer or meditation. These practices can be consoling in themselves, but they can also create a more reflective, calm frame of mind.
3. Some people talk about mindfulness. The idea is not just to be aware of what you are thinking and feeling, but to be totally *conscious* of your thoughts and feelings, thinking about thinking and feeling about feeling, as it were. There is good evidence that this produces therapeutic benefits.
4. Mindfulness can also contribute to *self-control*, and one way of looking at crime is that it is the result of a lack of self-control, focusing on immediate gratification and ignoring the potential for harm to others and risks to your own longer term prospects.
5. Religious belief almost always contain the notion of *atonement or redemption*. The emphasis is placed on recognising what you have done wrong and doing something to make amends, over and above simply deciding not to do it again. This idea is closely akin to ideas of restorative justice and these have been found to be extremely effective.
6. Many prisoners can be depressed or have mental health problems. Religious belief can certainly contribute to combating feelings of isolation, loss or abandonment.
7. Chaplaincies have been an important part of prison life since the 19th century. They are an alternative centre of *kindness and calm* within prison life which can sometimes seem regimented and even hostile or threatening.
8. Many chaplaincies are also a bridge to the outside world on release. Ex-prisoners can be connected to local faith communities near to where they may be living.
9. Faith communities also have many volunteers committed to helping people in need of support such as ex-prisoners.
10. Religious believers will often have an ethos of *forgiveness* and never giving up on anyone, however bad they have been. That means that religious communities can be places where people who may feel extremely guilty about what they have done can find people to talk to who may be less judgemental than the public at large. Serious offenders, like sex offenders, have sometimes found a warmer welcome among religious people than in among a suspicious and retributive public.

(received from Mike Nellis of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network, and posted on the PrisonerActionNet website (www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/prisoneractionnet) "Helping those working to strengthen positive identity and belonging in prisoners and ex-offenders")

A Spiritual Renaissance

A spiritual renaissance was taking place when early Friends began to understand 'the Light within'. We are again at the threshold of a major leap in our evolution and at its core is another spiritual renaissance. No one can foretell what the unknown might yield up. But, there is something deep in us

all that conspires to remain within safe boundaries, to stay the same. Yet, there can be no spiritual growth if we do not remain open and vulnerable to what is new and different. We need to learn to recognize when new leadings, beginnings, promptings await us.

Part of the art of living wisely is to learn to recognize and attend to such profound openings in one's life. In the letters between Boris Pasternak and Olga Ivanskya, collected in *A Captive of Time*, there is the beautiful recognition: 'When a great moment knocks on the door of your life, its sound is often no louder than the beating of your heart and it is very easy to miss it. To live a conscious life, we need to constantly refine our listening.

Sometimes new beginnings catch us unawares. I often find when something is ending a whole new train of possibility is in motion before I realize it. If we are still and trust in the Divine Light unforeseen things can emerge. We need to listen inwards with complete attention until we hear the inner voice calling us forward.

This is always a challenge and demands courage and a sense of trust in whatever is emerging. This change in life's direction can occur as a result of illness, suffering, loss or unemployment. At such times we desperately need divine blessing and protection. We never know what destiny shapes each life there is so much that is mysterious.

'The fact that Friends seem to have lost contact with their spiritual roots has become a matter of increasing concern within the Society in recent years. Early Friends seemed to live constantly 'In the Light' and their awareness of a greater Spiritual Reality within and beyond themselves enabled them to undertake so much which modern Quakers are often unable to comprehend, let alone carry out.'
David Hodges, a retired biological scientist and university lecturer

We need to rediscover and re-explore the Spiritual Reality which was so real to early Friends. The wonderful gift of the eternal 'Light' that is within us all.

Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen Meeting

Quaker Life Rep Council: October 2012

Well first an advert for Quaker Life! I think the work done is amazing. "Working to strengthen and sustain the fabric of Quaker life within the Yearly meeting", there is pastoral care; the library of the Religious society of Friends; Quaker centre at Friends House London; children and young people's work; wardenship and employment; Swarthmoor Hall; Outreach; the magazine "Quaker Voices"; and the Quaker Life Network, which I have been asked to publicise.

Would you like to review a book? Be a support to other meetings through the "explorations" initiative? Be on a national committee? Work and play with children at Yearly Meeting? Sign up to receive the Quaker Life Network e-newsletter online at www.quaker.org.uk/qln-eneews and find out about opportunities.

Our meeting this time focussed on "Deepening the life of spirit through service". Richard Summers said afterwards: "I was struck throughout the week-end by the need to reframe our approach to jobs; to identify what is important for us to do, and to engage with that as part of our personal and communal spiritual development, rather than as burdensome tasks to be undertaken with reluctance. I hope we can encourage Friends in our Meetings to develop a more positive approach to the idea of service as a key part of our spiritual development".

We were asked to look at how service; any sort of service; has enriched our Quaker faith. I looked at what I do at local and Area Meeting level and was quite surprised. I come to Area Meeting when I can and sometimes to General Meeting; I am our local meeting correspondent and help care for our "library", i.e. pamphlets, leaflets and a few books and DVDs; I get in early on meeting for worship

day to open up and help set up the room; I am an elder/overseer. I am on Quaker Life representative council and the Pluscarden committee. I have refused 2 other AM requests. I might have been able but was unwilling! (I do have a life outwith Quakers)

So how am I enriched by the service?

- I get to meet and be inspired by Quakers in the Area and Yearly meetings as well as my own.
- I get to read “The Friend” and all the info coming through the post if I want to, before passing it on, so I am learning more and more about the Society.
- I feel useful!

To give a taste of the weekend I have picked out a few bits from my notes.

- Hopefully see Quaker service not as a duty but as a joy.
- If we all do a little nobody will have to do a lot.
- Do we do oversight/eldership too quietly and discretely so people don’t know who to go to if there is trouble in the meeting, e.g. inappropriate or too lengthy ministry; or somebody is stressed out?
- Working together gives better worship together.
- Seeing other Friends faithfully witnessing in service can be very moving.
- Outreach is about allowing people to discover us. It is not proselytising. The greatest outreach is ourselves.
- Service can be how we go about living.
- Service is simple human kindness expressed at some personal cost.
- The act of service may bring us face to face with our own shortcomings!
- There can be mixed motives. It can be an escape and/or healing for personal worries and challenges. It is worth looking at motives. E.g. Am I doing yet more out of a sense of love and sharing? Or is it ego? Is she wearing herself out? Is a control freak wearing out everybody else? Do I need to let something go? Ask for divine guidance.

We had some suggestions, including:

1. Can we share about our jobs at Local and Area Meeting level? E.g. “my job as treasurer / E/O / nominations committee / clerk / care of books, pamphlets etc.
2. Pass on effectively to the next holder of the job we have been doing: tell what it is like as well as what needs to be done.
3. E/Os could look at members of their meetings and make suggestions to nominations about something somebody might like to do, or special skills.

Could you think now of one particular service you have undertaken in your local or area meeting, and share with somebody? In what ways was this a positive experience? Was it also problematic in any way ?

Diana Brockbank, Forres Meeting