



August 2018

Scottish Friend



Youth at GM: The Hitchen boys.

© Oriole Hall



Sila

Welcome to the August edition of the Scottish Friend. There is a slight delay in getting this edition out due to my being down at Woodbrooke in July. Comments and suggestions would be welcomed. When sending in contributions, please note your LM.

In Friendship

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Please send articles as an **editable attachment** to silartist100@gmail.com or typed or hand-written to 27 Creag Dhubh Terrace, Inverness IV3 8QG to arrive five weeks before GM, i.e. by **13 October 2018**. If you submit **images**, please ensure that they are about 1Mb in size. Any captions provided with your images should be short!

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<p>The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain or elsewhere.</p>
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General Meeting for Scotland: 16th June 2018

Kate Arnot and Jacqueline Noltingk

Forty-three Friends, including a visitor from an English Meeting, came to General Meeting for Scotland which was held in Inverness on Saturday 16th June. GM holds four meetings annually which rotate round the four Area Meetings in Scotland – East, North, South East and West. The geography of Scotland means that Friends, particularly those living on islands, have long journeys to attend. Friends from Orkney were present but Inverness to Scrabster is 111 miles and then a ferry journey, so attending a one-day meeting involves 3 days. (The ferry from Aberdeen to Shetland takes between 12 and 14 hours.) Friends from Castle Douglas in West Scotland were also present; the distance is 405 miles. The hospitality provided by our hosts was very generous and much appreciated.

There were two substantial items on our agenda as well as agreement on dates and venues for future GMs, 9 new members, and, sadly, a death, as well as the work of our Trustees. We also read of the work of our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group which was pleased with the report produced by the Petitions Committee on Militarism in Schools. Friends outwith Scotland may not be aware that more powers are being devolved to the Scottish Parliament (11 benefits). The tabular Statement showed the same number of members in 2017 (685) as in 2016.

During our morning session, Mary Woodward led us most ably through some of the deliberations of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). She concentrated on the decision to revise our Book of Discipline, Quaker Faith & Practice. Adwoa Bittle, Clerk of General Meeting, intended to show us a DVD of her speaking at BYM but technology let us down. We could see Adwoa and she synchronised what she had said with the DVD. Adwoa, a member of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, told us, as she had told BYM, that she had started off believing the book should not be subject to major change. However, she and BYM's discerned decision was to begin the long process of

revising Quaker faith & practice. In worship sharing, Friends shared multiple examples of feeling “outsiders”, feeling excluded and seeking support in QF&P for their situation or that of their family and finding very little or no support. We were assured that what will follow will be inclusive, be accessible and contain more than words. Within QF&P, the sections dealing with church government are no longer fit for purpose.

During the afternoon, we conducted more of our regular business starting with Nominations, followed by the Annual Report by our Trustees. This is an internal report from Trustees and detailed their work, including agreeing a new memorandum of understanding with Friends House which will extend the post of the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer for a further three years.

We then spent much time seeking a way forward in response to a minute to GM from North Scotland AM. NSAM had set up a Listening Group which expended much time and energy travelling extensively (see above) to gather ideas to improve NSAM as they, in common with meetings throughout the UK, have difficulty filling certain roles. We had a summary of the telephone conference held between GM Trustees and NSAM Trustees which did not come to unity. “ We recognise that this area of concern is one that we want to fully understand and come to unity on. There is a need for those concerned to move forward, to continue to explore and look at all possibilities with as positive a light as possible. We celebrate the work of The Listening Project and want to acknowledge the passion, work and listening that went into this. We also feel the distress at the sense that the amount of work completed has been forgotten or may be repeated. We hope NSAM’s role holders can be better supported. We realise that we need to seek and give support. This can be sought and found among Friends in LM, AM and hopefully from God”. This was a moving and deeply gathered session which needed time, as strong feelings were aroused. The outcome of the session was “We warm to the idea of setting up a meeting with

Paul Parker our Recording Clerk to include Scottish AM trustees, GM Trustees, Clerks to AM and GM Nominations Committees and those in GM who feel invested in this concern.” (Quotations from GM minutes).

We look forward to our next GM to be held in Glasgow on 15th September 2018. ■



Dad, look what I've made.



Hello, come in and see what we are doing.

Photos. Oriole Hall

Meeting for Sufferings, Quaker House, London 7th April 2018 Michael Shilson, Mull and Iona Meeting

This was the last meeting of the triennium, and I attended as a visitor representing the GM Scotland. The key items to share from the minutes of this meeting were:

Minute 5. Appeal Review Group report

This concerned **conflict in meetings**. Some of the procedures to resolve conflict were thought no longer to be useful and it was agreed to changes in our current appeals procedure. It was realised that some conflicts were due to fundamental problems: both of a lack of familiarity with our Church Government and the spiritual basis of our decision making, and of the increase in mental health issues within our meetings.

We all need to realise this is a big issue, and Minute 5 outlines some guidance as to how we should act in the first instance, and that we need to prioritise preventive work by encouraging a ministry of teaching in cultivating our understanding of Quaker ways. It is important for us to ask for support and advice from Quaker Life at an early stage and to be realistic in our expectations

Minute 6. Report of the BYM Sustainability Group Review Group

This was a disheartening and challenging report from the Review Group, especially with the additional statement from the clerk of

the group, Lis Burch. The group felt constrained and inhibited in fulfilling their remit. It is a concern that 5 groups in the past 30 years have stood down because of being unable to fulfil their remit regarding climate change and sustainability. Yet, **Climate change and sustainability are a key Quaker priority**, as Yearly Meeting minuted in 2011. *“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”* (AFFA 2009-14)

Minute 6 re-emphasises that our Quaker faith is the spiritual basis of this concern which should permeate everything we do. But as we also minuted, we seem unable to go forward with this as we would wish and so, as an organisation, we have started on a different approach. The MfS meeting asked that a specially convened meeting, with representatives from each of the major Quaker groups, be held to determine jointly how this work is to be taken forward.

Minute 9. The post-truth world and Quaker response

Friends in Southern Marches AM are concerned about a **lack of honesty in public affairs**; and that in turn this impacts on **how we live Quaker values in the world**: promoting egalitarianism, conflict resolution and non-violent communication. Various aspects of integrity were highlighted, including politicians, the press and media; and for our own role ~ how we listen to, and communicate with (including via social media), those who do not share our views, and with whom we disagree.

MfS asked Area meetings to test this concern and to report back for the November MfS ■

British Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group Review Response A Personal View Michael Shilson, Mull and Iona Meeting

The Sustainability Group has been faithful in trying to help the yearly meeting follow its leading, and I hope that you will have reminded yourselves of our report to your last meeting. But what I am going to say now is my own view, not the agreed view of the Sustainability Group.

There are several recommendations in the report, some of which are helpful and others don't go far enough. Where the review has been really clear is in identifying the major blockage to our work. But we need a bolder response than these recommendations.

There are three main points that I want to respond to:

1. that the Sustainability Group is laid down
2. that a group of committees and staff take responsibility for taking the commitment forward
3. that Meeting for Sufferings takes responsibility for reviewing progress

1. That BYMSG should be laid down

The major reason why the report recommends laying down the Sustainability Group, is that the Group sits outside the 'normal structures' (that is, the centrally managed work) and has found it difficult to engage with them.

This is true. It's also *outrageous*. It's shameful.

Think about it Friends – we have a yearly meeting concern, about a global emergency. A group is set up as a working group of Meeting for Sufferings, with representation from the centrally managed work. So firstly, how do we come to think of this working group as being *outside* the structures? It's a cross-section of the yearly meeting, trying to link all the different sections of our community. Why can't that work?

At the last meeting of the Sustainability Group, Paul Parker explained (and the report cites this too) that the problem has

been in clarifying our role and authority because *working groups* have advisory roles, with no resourcing allocated to them, whereas the centrally managed work has *committees* discerning priorities, resourced by Trustees and employing staff. So as an organisation, we've set up structures in which committees and staff effectively outrank and don't have to cooperate with working groups of Meeting for Sufferings. This seems to me inflexible and wrong. How can it work, when both committees and working groups are functioning in a worshipful way? Does the Spirit know not to bother sending any leadings via the working groups? This is more Kafka than Quaker.

What this has meant to the Sustainability Group is clear from the report but let me remind you of some examples.

- in February 2016 the Sustainability Group asked Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee for a joint meeting and in February 2017 we were invited to a session to present to them. Yes, it took 12 months, and even then it wasn't a dialogue.
- The report says that the Economics, Sustainability and Peace committee expressed surprise that they had not heard more from the Sustainability Group, yet there has been a staff member from ESP ex-officio on the Sustainability Group all along, precisely to provide this link.
- The Sustainability Group is charged with running face to face gatherings *at least* every 2 years. The next one will be 2 ½ years after the last one, because this was the earliest date that Staff could allocate time for.

You now have to decide whether the answer is to lay down the Sustainability Group, or transform the structures. The Sustainability Group's experience has certainly flagged up a problem. Are you going to shoot the messenger, or heed the message? I am not here to argue for the continuation of the Sustainability Group per se, but we must understand why it

hasn't been more successful, and change how we do things in the future.

2. The role of committees and staff

It's right that the commitment should be embedded across *all* the work of the yearly meeting. This is something the Sustainability Group supports and has been trying to achieve.

The major problem has been in how we connect a YM concern with the existing BYM workplan. It is shocking that it has taken this long to get a recommendation that the different committees and staff members should work in a concerted way to meet the YM commitment. The review helps us understand why this is: we now need to decide what we can do about it.

I think the review report overstates the extent to which most committees are currently engaging with the commitment. Management Meeting and BYM Trustees have provided substantial funding for the more secular, political expressions of our concern. But the Sustainability Group has repeatedly asked for priority to be placed on the ways our sustainability commitment relates to our Quaker faith and lives. Staff seem unable to get beyond preliminary exploration of possible work in these areas.

So although I support the idea of making all committees and staff responsible, if it is to work it will need careful planning and monitoring. We can't just diffuse the concern among a number of groups, so that championing it is always seen as someone else's role. I think we will still need a group whose main focus will be keeping the YM commitment on track.

3. That progress is overseen by Meeting for Sufferings

If you accept this recommendation, you will be responsible for keeping the YM commitment on track. You will need to be clear-sighted when the committees report to you, ask probing questions, speak plainly, hold them to account, be bold. And for area meetings, it will be *your* responsibility to be the inspiration, the champion, the support. Think of the Friend in your meeting

who says 'Oh no, not sustainability again,' - how will they be reached? Are you, as members of Meeting for Sufferings, able and willing to educate yourselves about what this will mean, and to educate the yearly meeting about what it means to follow a corporate leading?

If you can do this, meeting after meeting, year after year, with all the other items on your agenda, this could just work. If you can't, we need to plan differently now.

This is important to me. At the start of YMG in 2011 as far as climate justice was concerned, I was an average, well-intentioned but ignorant Friend. By the end of the gathering, I felt inspired by the movement of our gathered meeting to make that remarkable and serious commitment together. I am committed to Quaker ways of working. I took the YM commitment very seriously. I trusted we as a yearly meeting could be true to our leading.

Can we?

Conclusion

At least five groups in the last 30 years have attempted to discern a way forward for the Yearly Meeting on sustainability.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in the 1980s/90s.

The Earth: Our Collective Responsibility in the early 2000s.

The Testimonies Committee, focused in its final devastating epistle to Sufferings in 2007 on the urgency of engaging with climate change.

2011 the Canterbury Commitment Group set up, worked for three years, laid down.

2014 BYM Sustainability Group set up, worked for three years, now proposed to be laid down.

We set up groups with limited authority, and then lay them down when they begin to find a voice. One after another. Why?

Of course there are reasons for this. Climate change and sustainability are complex and challenging. It's not surprising that we find it difficult, everyone does. We say we are called to be patterns and examples but I think we can be sure this kind of

pattern and example is not what George Fox had in mind. If we can look openly and honestly at what is blocking us in our own corporate response, and allow ourselves to be led to new corporate life, it could hugely enhance our spiritual lives, our vibrancy in meetings, our diversity, and our capacity to know a place to stand in and what to wait in. Every word in the epistle from the Testimonies Committee to Sufferings in 2007 could still be said now. Nothing has changed, except the overall situation has got a lot worse.

The report gives a reasonable overview of the work of the Sustainability Group in the sense that what the Group has achieved is as clear as the problems we've faced. And certainly if I were beginning now as Clerk to the Sustainability Group I would do things very differently. It's taken us a while to figure out what the problem is and why things haven't worked more effectively. But we do now know that much of the problem is in our structures, and how we all respond to corporate leadings. We might say with Thomas Ellwood that there are many plants growing in us which were not of the Heavenly Spirit's planting, and that all these ... must be plucked up. I think the recommendation which is missing from the review group report is that, in the same way that we review our committees and working groups periodically, that there should be a thorough review of our YM structures, including the centrally managed work, and the ways in which they can adapt as new concerns arise. If in the last 7 years we have been unable to meet a YM commitment because of our structures, we need to be prepared to change those structures.

You must now choose whether your decision will be to repeat old patterns, to fudge, to bury difficult things, or whether this will be a transformative moment for our Society. Scour your hearts to be clear what love requires of us now. ■

STOP PRESS: See page 35

Grasping at an idea of our future as Quakers in UK

Chris Mayo, Inverness LM (Brora)

For the past three years, North Scotland Quakers have been concerned about how to fill the various posts to maintain our Area Meeting. In 2017 we carried out a careful listening process throughout the AM. The results of our listening process were then brought to AM where we were led by a Friend outside our area to allow us to consider what the Listening group had heard. Friends were enthusiastic about MfW but not at all about AM and the burdens of being a Charity and the necessary bureaucracy.

What follows is primarily for Scottish Quakers, but Friends felt it would have resonance across BYM

My observations are based upon my work as a missiologist and my experience as an attender in Wolverhampton and member here in the North.

Apart from SOME Evangelical churches, the experiences described are felt across all denominations. Indeed even for the Evangelicals, there is increasing drop-off as people enter their middle years, with some evidence of 'transfer' growth to more 'middle of the road' and contemplative traditions for those wanting to broaden and deepen their journeys.

Unlike many I do not believe this to be a bad thing. It is forcing churches to seriously engage with the question of why they exist in the first place. A 19th Century RC theologian said 'Jesus came preaching the kingdom and what did we get? We got the church!' (obviously in a rather sarcastic tone - he was later excommunicated).

IF the reason for our existence is to be a people who wait upon God and act through the discernment of God's life among Friends, then the primary consideration is what helps and what

hinders that purpose. To my mind, the officialdom of charitable status detracts as much these days from what should be the primary 'work' of prayer and prayerful living as that thing that dominates most denominations' vestries, church councils, and MwFbBs - maintaining the buildings! Such things, when conducted by the scarce resource of a few, usually the same, people, can end up being unwanted ends in themselves. Resourcing, then, is an issue. Structures should enable the primary purpose and perhaps even drive them onward and when it becomes almost exclusively a return upon return to the material needs of building maintenance, safeguarding, charitable reporting, etc., the life can be drained.

There is ample evidence that people are increasingly engaged in spiritual introspection but they want to see the energies of a worshipping community focused on that - worship and spiritual growth.

I feel there needs to be a correct mechanism for ordering the mundane elements (and I use the word 'mundane' in its truest sense and not to imply boredom or run of the mill but rather the everyday work that enables a community to function structurally in the wider world). With currently scarce resources that end up taking time away from the primary reason for being Quaker it would make sense to decrease the number of bodies where the multiplying of functions occur. Structurally it can no longer be about geography per se - a handful of people doing the same thing for an only slightly larger number of people within any one AM seems both inefficient but also draining. For me I feel it would be better to lay the AMs down as things stand, so that GM (for Scotland) might focus on the structural elements, in turn perhaps giving it a greater *raison d'être*. With so few people it seems hard to justify a GM as things stand within the context of BYM. LMs can then be released to concentrate on the work of prayer, discipleship and outreach. Old-fashioned words maybe but these are at the heart of things.

A few other things of note. Many simply do not know who Quakers are and how we are different. We need to find greater ways of communicating this. If we are looking to engage people earlier we also now need to take seriously the online and social media worlds and if we are few and dispersed such mechanisms might also be helpful to those of us in existing membership.

We need also to be clear about what MfW is for, let alone MfWfB. Yes, people are interested in mindfulness but the reasons for that are many and often more based around stress-reduction. Whilst not denying that it shows a thirst for introspection, mindfulness is not our silence. Indeed our silence is not what many mean by silence! Our LMs need to overtly focus on being a contemplative opening for those who are searching. Again in my work as a mission priest more and more I am finding people who find engaging in silent worship and contemplation is growing, bolstered by the more overt elements of 'spiritual mindfulness' from the eastern traditions. We do also need visible elders. I do not say that as one ordained, which my own personal theology now questions anyway but as those whose only discerned gifts and sense of calling is such that the LM is encouraged and supported. Elders are perhaps even more needed now as the teaching of the Quaker Way needs to be encouraged and also communicated beyond the bounds of the LM itself. Whilst all can and should in their own way by their lives communicate different aspects of what it means to be Friends, those of experience and the calling are essential in encouraging this.

I could go on and on but for now, I feel four essential points then need to be taken on board:

- Lay down AMs and associated trusts - let the gathered resources of GM and a single charitable status simplify and reduce the unnecessary multiplicity of work, thereby releasing LMs for the work of worship and engagement

- Revitalise LMs - with perhaps a greater number of small meetings rather than trying to maintain one larger one over a spread geographical area. Couple this with online work and, perhaps similar to Woodbrooke, occasionally look at online MfWs to bring a number of LMs together.
- Take very seriously the role of Elders and discernment of those who may have a calling
- Place effort into ensuring who we are is known both amongst our ecumenical partners but also by school visits, community gatherings, etc. Again, elders are an essential part of this. Communicate that we are not simply a group of friends but Friends of, and in, the Light

I truly believe Quakers have a future and a particular vocation that both stands on its own merits but also is a partnership with other denominations. I am hopeful for the future but only if the structural elements are handled realistically and the burdens taken away from a struggling few. Change is hard and carries much emotional weight but it can be effectively managed and be a source of revitalisation. For me it boils down to a question - who do we believe ourselves to be? Everything else springs from that. Yet without the change of focus away from repeated structural work the time and energy simply will not be there to 'tell our story'.

Yours in Friendship, Chris.



Scottish Episcopal Synod 7 – 9 June 2018,
St Paul's & St George's, Edinburgh.
Mary Woodward

The Scottish Episcopal Church [SEC] holds its General Synod every year – it acts as the Parliament of the SEC, making decisions both about canon law and internal church policy, and about wider issues of national and international concern, when it can speak out and call for action on behalf of the whole church. 124 elected members, half clergy and half laity, join with the seven bishops and the convenors of Standing Committee [the equivalent of our Meeting for Sufferings] and of the various boards that carry out the work of the church.

Synod was held in the nave of this large church from which the pews have been removed, creating a space which can be set up in many ways. Rather than sitting together in diocesan groups, everyone was mixed up together at 21 red-covered tables for eight: I was at a table at the very front with my Buddy, Alistair, sitting beside me and the others at my table sitting behind me. I had a splendid view of the proceedings at the 'top table', but was less aware of the body of people behind me. There were microphones at various points around the hall at which people could make their contributions, and the excellent sound system made them all appear to be speaking right beside me.

We assembled for coffee before the opening Eucharist which had some jolly hymns (only one of which I really couldn't bring myself to sing), a little Gregorian plainchant, and the *kyrie* etc from James MacMillan's St Anne's mass – a lovely mixture of ancient and modern. In the second reading St Paul advised us to avoid wrangling over words, while the Primus' address pointed out that "we are much better at loving God than our neighbours" and that the Good Samaritan got his hands dirty. He also reminded us

that our neighbours were watching us, and that “life is hard enough without coming to a place of argument”...

The Thursday's business opened with the ecumenical delegates receiving an individual welcome and a handshake from the Primus – ‘head Bishop’ Mark Strange. The rest of the day contained ‘admin stuff’ which I found interesting but rather dry, and very wordy. Someone introduced each subject; comments and objections were invited; person after person spoke with no pause or silence between each contribution; there was a vote, and we moved on to the next thing. Even the evening prayer with which we closed consisted of string after string of words, with pauses in the middle of the psalm lines rather than at the end.

I was very glad that the ecumenical delegates and their buddies had been invited to lunch at the National Portrait Gallery – though even there the conversation was nearly non-stop – and that we had a break before the evening's dinner at the Principal hotel on George Street. I was even more thankful for the Baptist delegate's invitation to go with her to her hotel room to change for the dinner. The dinner itself was lovely, and for most of it I sat next to bishop-elect Ian whose current charge is Old St Paul's church, so as well as my asking lots of ‘bishop’ questions we were able to have a delightful conversation about Alison Watt, whose painting *Still* is such a deeply-moving addition to the memorial chapel there.

Friday began at 9am and finished well after 5, due to the enormous amount of business to consider from (among others) the Faith and Order Board, the Mission Board, the Institute Committee, the Church in Society Committee, and the Pension Fund Trustees. I made lots of notes, and found it all most interesting.

The work done by the Church in Society Committee was set out in their extensive and wide-ranging report. We focused on one area – child poverty - but unfortunately there was little time to

reflect on what was being said. Even when we were given “table time” to talk about it, we only had about ten minutes for eight of us to answer three questions - *what is my experience of child poverty, what would I like to do about it, and what one thing am I going to do about it when I get home?*

Saturday morning came alive with a presentation from the young people of the Provincial Youth Committee and a report from Charlotte White who attended the 62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. In addition to a residential week at Glenalmond, the young people told us about the things they’ve been getting up to together (with an illustrative slide show) and the events at which they’ve represented the SEC, including helping to choose a new bishop and taking part in a meeting with Nicola Sturgeon. One young woman read a moving poem appreciating everything their youth workers do – it was greeted by a positive storm of applause.

We were tested on our knowledge of ‘youthspeak’ and told in no uncertain terms that young people are not *the future of the church* – “we ARE the church NOW: talk to us like equals, respect us, and listen to what we have to say”... One young woman was presented with her prize – a certificate entitling her to be Primus for a day: how I would love to be a fly on the wall for that! It was great to see the warmth of the relationship between the young people and the Primus, and I wish they could have been present during the previous two days’ proceedings (as did the Primus in a brief conversation I’d had with him the day before).

Charlotte White’s account of her fortnight at the UN in New York was equally fascinating. She spoke of the joys and the mind/heart-expanding encounters she had, of how much she learned, and of the frustration of seeing the initial proposals watered down by various countries’ objections – including the UK, who perhaps were more interested in preserving British sovereignty than in achieving major progress...

I was grateful to be given the opportunity to offer Synod loving greetings from Quakers in Scotland, to thank Synod for the invitation, and offer a brief silence within the busyness, to enable us to take all we had heard into our hearts and consider how to carry it out into the world. I was glad to be Quaker, and thus able to address those present as “Friends” rather than the official “Primus, members of Synod, guests” with which I felt uncomfortable.

The whole Synod was enormously enjoyable. I was glad of the presence of URC delegate John Bremner, who came to GM in Edinburgh a year or so ago, and of my ‘Synod buddy’ Alistair, who was outstandingly helpful and supportive, and great fun to be with. By the end of the closing Eucharist I felt I knew many more people in the room and that exchanging the sign of peace meant a much more than the polite handshake with a couple of people in the opening Eucharist. John Bremner, addressing Synod on behalf of all the ecumenical delegates, referred to Paul’s image of the body of Christ, and how coming to Synod means that delegates can connect with other parts of the body and by taking part enter into the life of another denomination and “see the world through slightly different eyes” – *this friend speaks my mind...*

I was impressed by the commitment of the people serving on the various committees and the vast amount of work they do, and was relieved to learn that they do so for a limited period of time. I was challenged by the continuous stream of words from the opening prayers to the ending of each day’s business, and taking part in the liturgies confirmed that this is most definitely not my way of reaching the divine. I enjoyed going to RIO a lot with Bishop Kevin – looking at ourselves and our projects / proposals to see if we / they are Realistic, Informed, and Obedient: we could all do with taking a trip there from time to time... I was warmed by the joy, the passion, the enthusiasm, and was moved and

humbled by the welcome I received and the obvious respect in which Quakers are held. I relished sharing, exchanging experiences, learning, and forming bonds. I loved being part of God's multifaceted family: all in all, I had a ball, and would love to do this again! ■

**Congregational Federation in Scotland:
25th Annual Assembly, Airdrie: Saturday 12th May
Kate Arnot Polmont Meeting**

I attended the above on behalf of General Meeting and much appreciated the day, learning a lot at a most hospitable event.

There are 23 Congregational congregations in Scotland from Shetland to the Borders; their administrative HQ is in Nottingham and I didn't pick up that there was a Scottish equivalent (very similar to ourselves, although not Han HQ). Registration was the usual lots of delicious church home baking. The formal part of the day began with worship conducted by the minister Rev May-Kane Logan who chaired the day. There was the usual business of churches: - youth and children, mission, ecumenical relations, women's fellowship, rural group and reports from both the secretary and treasurer. The last of these occasioned the most discussion, around mileage rates and the money to be remitted to Nottingham (familiar discussion but a different place).

Lunch was just as delicious as registration, lots of choices of soup, sandwiches and cakes.

The afternoon session was a most informative session on GDPR; I am very pleased that I just have to reply (or not) to emails rather than work out what to do. Many thanks to GM Trustees! Again there were questions on children and at what age they comply with the legislation by themselves.

This was followed by a long discussion on safeguarding as their previous registering agency is laying down this work and a new route to safeguarding has to come into being.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the day was news from the (individual) churches, with a wide range of news, information and “concerns”. Very similar to ourselves – smaller congregations, fewer children, less money, fabric of churches requiring expensive work but much use by a huge variety of organisations, including Anonymous groups. An increasing focus on creativity, art, music, messy church although the term could be changed. One congregation (sorry I forget which) has installed showers and washing machines for the use of homeless people.

The response from the ecumenical guests was given by Mary (?) from the Roman Catholic church. Throughout the day we were seated in the front row which was great for me as better for hearing. Microphones were used for all contributions from the pews which also helped for hearing.

I didn't stay for the final tea, etc as it was such a bright sunny day that sunshine beckoned.

I would like to thank GM to extending this invitation and hope we can continue to support our fellow member churches of ACTS.

■

SoulofWoMen Conference 25th June Margaret Roy, Lanark Meeting

It is spelt this way because it also includes men! This was the second international conference held at Allanton Peace Centre at Auldgirth near Dumfries. The original inspiration was from eight women under Mt Fuji, part of the Fuji Declaration – *building upon the belief that there is a spark within the human spirit that when ignited can bring about a true revolution in consciousness within ourselves and all spheres of society, the Fuji Declaration is an invitation to harness the power of our shared intention for a thriving world.* The objective of the SoulofWoMen is to explore feminine spirituality with the idea that global peace will come from balancing the masculine and feminine.

In this second conference, the intent was to concentrate on developing skills. There was a huge variety of workshops. There was a warm inclusive atmosphere that soon relaxed one – I don't like large groups and was apprehensive and a little bored at the thought of 'skills'. Whilst I would criticise the absence of a clear attempt to link the skills to the overall objective, however, a lot of fun was had.

The conference was opened by the daughter of Masama Saionji, one of the founders. Riki Saionji Yoshikaw spoke of learning to dance with both qualities of masculine and feminine and a capacity to connect with nature. *The wounded masculine healed; the buried feminine revealed.* She ended with an exercise in deep breathing that typified the practical interludes of the day.

Afterwards a workshop – I joined Bibi from a Yoga Dharma Community from Rome to do a salutation to the Moon. I should have realised it was yoga! You will appreciate that I did the first of eight and managed to get up off the floor by myself.

The next speaker was introduced as an amazing spiritual activist spoken of by the BBC as a leading environmental campaigner. It was our own Alastair McIntosh who started his talk with a deep silence, Quaker style. He spoke of the violent religion we still carry around inside. He was heading for our personal spiritual pilgrimage – the journey within. Peace in Greek, *eiréné* means oneness, a feminine noun, it means to join or tie together. To become whole in this world we need to recognise its deep disjointedness. We need to remember what has been dismembered. It was a beautifully choreographed guide that touched our history through poetry. Gilgamesh rejected the Goddess' advances to cut down the forests. He embodied the #MeToo mentality. Robert Burns in *The Vision* meets Coila, a local form of Bride who gives the gift of poetry. The Divine Feminine is found in every land in the most ancient writings. How do we connect with the deep spiritual today?

Due to an organisational malfunction, his talk was cut abruptly short but when he ended the silence was palpable and I believe many seeds were sown. I would dearly love to hear the full talk especially delivered to Quakers. It would drive our efforts of sustainability form sacred core with ourselves as creative spiritual beings. Alas, when I attended the workshop in the afternoon to hear the end and develop the theme the space was hijacked by two men who missed the whole point of the conference, had no concept of being in a group and for me demonstrated the basic problem of unbalanced egoism unable to listen and participate within a community.

Other items of the conference saved it for me. A MOOL (Massive Outpouring of Love) choir sang stories. No negativity but an exploration of themes, e.g. their '*this is home*' sang of the feelings of the refugee in a new land. They seek to reclaim the word *love*. It was harmonious and inspiring. There was even a song inspired by Theresa May – *those making decisions must feel it, do what*

you can, all the world rests in your hands, my heart breaks when I think of you.

The conference was superbly well organised. Each table had an inspiring photo of a sacred place. The beautiful blue of the flower vase on each table reached the soul! Even the food was an example of the bounty of the earth.

The last talk on the Maggie Centres seemed out of place until you recognised this was woman in action. I remembered this from Northern Ireland (Women Together) how we roll up our sleeves and do the necessity, but Maggie Centres do it in a way that makes for the inner journey by listening and allowing the individual's way of coming to terms with illness and death. ■



Silver Bridge

Oriole Hall

Appeal from Erin Quinney Smith

Dear Friends,

My name is Erin Quinney Smith, I am a young Friend living near Inverness in the North of Scotland. Recently, I was offered a place at a United World College (UWC) in Wales. The UWCs are 17 sixth form colleges around the world, dedicated to promoting international and cultural understanding, sustainability and peace, through education - ever more pertinent in a world that seems to need much more understanding and awareness of the different needs of peoples and nature around the planet. <https://www.atlanticcollege.org/>



What appeals to me about UWC is that they have succeeded in combining a vision for a more sustainable and peaceful future, with education. The stated UWC mission is - to make education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. Now, when I am looking for ways to benefit communities and further understand about our world, I can, even while continuing with my education. I am excited by the opportunity this will present, to learn more about the world in a way which crosses over with my Quaker testimonies.

I was offered a place following my second application, and in part, I put my determination to re-apply for a place down to Quaker influences, especially at young friends events such as Summer Shindig, Link weekends and Junior Yearly Meeting. Until I was 11 going to Quaker meetings was more of a habit than something I consciously did. I remember once, my brother and I were asked why we attend Quaker meetings and we had responded with 'mum' and 'the biscuits'! It wasn't until I went to Shindig that I really started asking myself - "so what are

Quakers? What are these meetings for worship for and why do I go?" Being at shindig - where for the first time I experienced young Quakers maturely discussing our beliefs, opinions and also current issues - opened a whole new avenue for me. I realised I enjoyed learning about the world we live in. From there this new avenue continued to open, branching away from just Quaker events into other areas of my life. Starting an Amnesty International group at school was one such outcome, leading me to UWC was another. I believe it was this particular path to UWC that gave me the resilience to re-apply after not succeeding the first year.

I commence my studies at Atlantic College on the 27 of August 2018 until July 2020. I received a 2/3rds bursary scholarship and I am now seeking to raise approx. £1000 each month for the next 2 years/£6000 each half year (£25,000 total), which enables me to take up this opportunity. I have approached companies, and received one sponsorship so far. I am also doing a Sponsored Workathon, where I have asked my term-time weekend work place to give me as many hours as possible from when I finished school in June, till I leave in August. And I am asking friends and family to match-fund my earnings, or a percentage of them. I would very much appreciate knowledge of any funding bodies, philanthropic friends anyone might know of, to give me a way to fulfill my goal.

With thanks.

In Friendship,

Erin Quinney Smith

erin4qsmith@gmail.com

Woodend, Lochloy, Nairn, IV12 5LE

Travels South.
Sila Collins-Walden, Inverness LM

We travelled south by car recently to holiday in Hampshire to stay with a friend. We then took the ferry across to the Isle of Wight to our friend's holiday home and finally finished our holiday at Woodbrooke. The weather wasn't favourable, with sun, rain and wind, however it was enjoyable all the same. By the time we arrived at Woodbrooke the weather improved. At last some sun!

As a fan of Jane Austen I had always wanted to visit Hampshire and the various places where she visited, lived and wrote her novels. Our friend David Bell (whom we met at Woodbrooke last year) offered Brian and I a holiday in his home town of Basingstoke. He knew quite a lot about Jane, where she was born and the places she lived and the little church where she was baptised. So David took us both on a conducted tour of Steventon and Chawton.



St Nicholas, Steventon

I hadn't been to the Isle of Wight before. David mentioned to me that Quakers had their meeting at the Rope Store which was housed within the

Quay Art Centre at Newport. He investigated the meeting house

on my behalf. He looked up times and dates and so I went along to MfW at the Rope Store. It is situated along-side the art centre. It's a lovely setting which looks out onto the Medina River with decking and chairs to sit on in better weather. It was a friendly meeting and as usual I was asked to identify myself. I brought greetings from Friends of Inverness LM. I stayed for tea and had a chat with a couple of Friends and was invited to sign the visitors book, which I did, leaving my name and email address.

I received an email from one Friend who wished to maintain contact and to keep me informed of anything of interest to me. There is a book which I have read on-line about Quakers on the Isle of Wight. It seems they have been there for around three hundred and fifty years! The article is by a Friend, Patrick Nott, (deceased), you can find it on-line by googling Isle of Wight Quakers. There is quite a bit about Quakers and the difficult times they endured along with some details of burial grounds.



Woodbrooke (photo: David Bell)

All three of us eventually went on to Woodbrooke to finish off our holiday. We had five lovely days there, it was good to meet up with Friends, joining them at meal-times for conversation and discussion. We met two American Friends in Residence, Dan and Kate, who live in Belgium. Kate and Dan had read the Scottish Friend as there is a copy in the Woodbrooke library. I also sent them the email version. They liked it very much. Kate commented on the article on refugees written by Clunie who is also our clerk. Kate's own work relates to asylum and refugees. She is the Forced Migration Project Co-ordinator and works for QCEA. Dan forwarded a newsletter via email to me with information on Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg YM. An interesting read.

When I go travelling around other parts of the country I love visiting other meetings and getting to meet other Friends. Some meetings are conducted slightly differently, it's a learning curve too. I feel much at home at Woodbrooke. As always there is a lovely welcome for everyone. I returned to Woodbrooke again in July to attend the QAAD conference for which I was nominated. It was very informative. I learned much by my attendance and I enjoyed it very much. Just can't keep away. Oh! The Joys of being a Quaker! ■

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
Leonard Cohen

The Feast Of St. Pumpkin And All Marrows

Roger H Quinn, Inverness LM

This apt and somewhat irreverent description of harvest festival was coined by "padre" Hare, who, after enduring the horrors of the trenches, worked with my father in the nineteen twenties at a prep school in Sussex. Education was then, at least partially, in the hands of clerics.

Michaelmas, the feast of St Michael and All Angels, is an important time in the farming calendar for farm tenancies which begin or end then. The almanacs of the forties still printed both old and new Michaelmas days: October eleventh and September twenty ninth, reflecting the lost days between Roman Catholic Europe and Orthodox Asia Minor. The latter had found that it was lagging behind the west as it had not factored in the extra six hours it took the earth to go round the sun.

The Bible says that as long as the earth remains, seed time and harvest shall not fail. However the good book has many a tale to tell of famine and plenty.

Autumn, the alpha and omega of the growing season, the very continuation of life itself, is both time to lay down and raise up. A time to give thanks for the harvest, without which we cannot live.

In earlier centuries the church blessed the plough in late winter. At Rogation-tide each spring, choir, clergy and congregation beat the parish bounds to ask the Almighty's blessing on crops and stock. Later, tradition demanded the incumbent vicar cut the first sheaf of corn, the first fruits of the season. A parson who could adequately fulfil this task was known as "a proper shearman"!

Today, in this country, harvest has a different meaning to that of the men who were "boys when I was a boy". Nowadays, giant mechanical dinosaurs gobble up the standing corn, passing the

precious grains into capacious bellies and spewing out chaff and straw to the rear. Other times other harvests: In the late eighteen-twenties William Cobbett the farmer and Whiggish orator undertook a speaking tour of rural England , to drum up support for the reform bill of 1832 . In his Rural Rides, he describes riding into Lewes, the county town of East Sussex. In an excessively wet year the harvest was still being got in at Christmas. Yet the following year he finds all gathered in by the end of August.

The men "who were boys when I was a boy " will remember the harvests of yesteryear when sheaves fell from reaper-and-binder and strong lads of eleven and older earned a tanner an hour to make them into stooks.

Tradition demanded a sheaf of corn be attached to the pulpit as iron-tyred wheelbarrows rumbled churchward, each filled with the bounteous gifts of the Almighty. For harvest festival was and is the culmination of the growing year when the biggest and best pumpkin with its satellite marrows take pride of place, and flower-arrangers display their talents. It was and is time for the exultant organ to be pumped into its loudest fortissimo and the congregation to belt out "we plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land" and the "thankful people raise the song of harvest home"! ■

Notes: tanner = 6d or 1/40 of a pound.

Back then organs were pumped by hand.

General Meeting for Scotland – Saturday September 15th

Adwoa Bittle

Dear Friends,

Please do come to Glasgow for General Meeting! Usually around 50 Quakers from across Scotland meet to worship, discern, share food and build community. Come and be part of it. In Edinburgh and Inverness, at our last two GMs, a group of young people met alongside and with us. They would like to meet up again in Glasgow. The business in the morning will contain reports and feedback from this years Shindig. Hopefully lots of people who were at Shindig will descend on GM. To make this happen reasonably easily I need to know numbers and ages and have contact information for each young person. Please email me about this adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk **LM Clerks PLEASE pass this on to young people and their parents in your Meeting.**

General Meeting will be held on 15th September in Glasgow Friend's Meeting House, Elmbank Crescent, G2 4PS. There is a carpark opposite and Charing Cross train station is also just across the road. Coffee will be available from 10:30 with Meeting for Worship starting at 11 am. Lunch (please bring a packed lunch) will be at 1 pm and we hope to finish with cakes at 4:30.

During the Worship in the afternoon session we will be welcoming members of European and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) who are also meeting in Glasgow. In listening to each other what may we learn? How can we work together to promote love and peace in a fractured region? How best can we support isolated Friends? I would like to find time for us to gather in stillness and prayer.

Please do come. All decisions made are in your name and if you are not there, well what can I say!

Please remember to bring a packed lunch. If you would like B&B or local information, please contact Mary Alice Mansell mamansell54@gmail.com on the local arrangements committee. However, please be aware that Glasgow local meeting are heavily committed with hosting EMES so if we can sort ourselves out that would be helpful!

Papers and agenda relevant to GM will be circulated roughly a week prior to GM. If you do not receive them, please ask Marion Sharkey scotfriends@gmail.com for a copy. Reading the papers beforehand helps to prepare the heart and mind.

If you have any questions or need anything please contact me, your clerk, at adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk or 07854 177 450.

STOP PRESS: A late note from Michael Shilson:

Just a postscript to my submission:

Fortunately, QfS are unable to unite with the recommendation to lay down the BYM Sustainability Group. Please support the call for U.K. Climate action by writing to your MP:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/sustainability/climate-justice-1>

Congratulations to the Hitchen family on doing the Great Wilderness Challenge. Also to Maggie Trevelyan on doing the Highland Cross. An inspiration to us all!! Inverness LM.

The Crystal Diggers

Who first saw the gold? Shining on a cold winters day
Realised the perfect geometry of a crystal
Saw the light pass through quartz
A fly trapped in amber
The purple in amethyst
Or the turquoise in jade
Who rubbed and cut stones to make gems?
Lit the first furnace,
Smelted metal till it shined
Made the first ring of jewels
To place on a finger
To mark a union of man and women
Then place it in the grave of the departed
They have all vanished
We don't even know their names
Then to be rediscovered, revealed and revered
Shining on a cold winters day

By Alastair Simmons, December 2013