



February 23

Scottish Friend



Photograph 1: Kilmodan Church, Clachan of Glendaruel, Cowal peninsula.

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1 GM affairs

1.1 Calling for General Meeting for Scotland

Saturday, 11th March 2023

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all!

As Susan Mitchell and I begin our period as clerks for our General Meeting, we can express appreciation on behalf of all of us for the service given by Elizabeth Allen as clerk and Adwoa Burnley as assistant clerk over the previous three years.

Our next General Meeting will be a blended meeting will be on 11th March, in Glasgow.



The first of four meetings scheduled for this year, it will be a ‘blended’ or ‘hybrid’ meeting, with some Friends present in the Quaker Meeting House, 38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow G2 4PS, and others joining by Zoom. **We will start with worship at 11.00 am, break for lunch from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm, and our afternoon session will finish about 4.00 pm.** We will be sending details of the arrangements, including details of how to register and join in, in due course. **Please do come! All are welcome.**

This is an opportunity to meet in person and virtually with Friends from across Scotland. We worship together and in a spirit of worship we attend to our church affairs, and matters concerning the spiritual life and witness of Quakers in Scotland. We hope to make arrangements for any young people of Shindig age (11 and up) to come to GM. Details of these and guidelines for young people attending GM will be circulated with the final arrangements email and papers in advance.

So, what will we be doing at GM in March? *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03 starts off by defining the role of General Meeting as “to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland”. Hence, we seek to keep abreast of the issues affecting our meetings and to see whether there are things we can do in support of each other. We will have an update from the Options 2 Working Group in preparation for the receipt, in June, of their report and recommendations on the future structures for Quakers in Scotland. This

should be significant. Area Meetings will be able to consider the report beforehand. Many of you will have taken part in the recent consultations on zoom arranged by the group. We are aware that in the meantime some Area Meetings are facing difficult choices and we hope to be responsive to these, and we will have time for reflection on this. We will also have an update on Meeting for Sufferings, the representative body for Friends in Britain, which is also involved in wider review of how we organise. We'll hear from our own Parliamentary Engagement Working Group and our ecumenical and interfaith representatives. We also have a report on the work of our GM Trustees in 2022, and will receive the revised guidance on Safeguarding.

Papers and the draft agenda will be circulated by email about ten days prior to the GM. If you do not receive them, please ask our administrator, Sue Proudlove (scotfriends@gmail.com) for a copy. If you have any questions, please contact me, your clerk, by email scotfriendsclerk@gmail.com or telephone 0141 770 7865.

Michael Hutchinson,
Clerk,
Susan Mitchell,
Assistant Clerk.



1.2 Report of the GM for Scotland in November Kate Arnott, SE Scotland AM

General Meeting for Scotland was held on 19th November 2022, with Friends present in Aberdeen Meeting House, North Scotland AM and Friends joining on zoom. Unfortunately on 18th November and into 19th over a month's rain fell on Aberdeenshire and flooding prevented some Friends from travelling to Aberdeen, God and Scotrail were not willing.

However, we had a very productive Meeting. Apart from the regular, every time, items for business, we accepted the budget approved by Trustees earlier and agreed donations and affiliations, with one addition; we agreed the priorities for the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group which are broadly the same as before as we remain so far from living in a world of peace and justice (Peace and Peacebuilding, Climate Emergency and Economic Justice and Land Reform); and also the priorities for the local development worker (expanding networks of role holders, supporting Quaker community building, and enabling information about resources, etc).



Photograph 2: An autumn afternoon at Bield House, Perthshire.

The Church of Scotland has received funding from a charity to consider Christian Perspectives on Scotland's Constitutional Future to facilitate informed and respectful dialogue on this issue (too often during the 2014 referendum there was too little of this as well as much creativity and engagement). We agreed to take part in this, ask nominations to bring forward the name of a representative and further agree

that any event we organise will be inter faith.

Also on an ecumenical note Christian Aid Scotland is asking member churches to consider if there needs to be more focus on Israel/ Palestine. We would welcome an increased focus on this by churches and other faiths.

Internally a highlight of the day was a video of young people and an interviewer on Summer Shindig 2022 and hopefully this delightful reporting back will happen again in 2023. We had a written report on Peace Witness, focussing on 3 organisations on which GM has representatives. The report had some dispiriting information as well as much encouragement, 40th Anniversary of Faslane Peace Camp, the second Carnall Peace Award and separately the second Carnall Peace Lecture took place and Peace and Justice Scotland now has new premises. There was a verbal and written report from the Gender Based Violence group, a concern of West Scotland Area Meeting. For Quakers, all forms of gender-based violence are rooted in a denial of 'that of God in everyone' and are a negation of human rights. There is a direct connection to our testimonies to equality and peace. The group is now seeking to broaden its discernment to increase links with other forms of violence and abuse - economic, of the earth and war.

I felt truly the Spirit prospers amongst us. We are no longer a small and rather obscure community in Scotland (Marwick 1948); we may still be small but we move forward building on almost four centuries of continuous presence, witness and faith in action in Scotland.



1.3 Fund for Healing

Robin Waterston, Clerk of GM Trustees

I write this at the request of General Meeting Trustees. We wish to draw the attention of Friends to a small fund that has been held in the GM bank account for many years with almost no activity. We believe this is not good stewardship, and so we are hoping to find a way to put the funds to appropriate use.

The fund is known as the Fund for Healing and contains about £1,600. It originates from a donation to GM in 2012 which followed the closure of the Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland). GM accepted the funds on the basis that it could be used for “supporting activities by Scottish Friends or attenders within the field of spiritual healing (in its broadest sense)”. GM Trustees later asked the Trustees of the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust to take responsibility for making grants from the fund, which they agreed to. But since then, there has been almost no call on the funds, and the JW(E)T Trustees have found it difficult to know what qualified for support.



We need to find a different way of putting the funds to use. One proposal is that the full amount be donated to the Friends Fellowship of Healing. This is a national charity and a recognised Quaker group. More details can be found on their website <http://www.quaker-healing.org.uk>.

I have made an initial approach to their treasurer, and have been assured that it would be possible for them to accept a donation which could be earmarked solely for use by Friends and attenders resident in Scotland.

GM Trustees believe that this would fulfil the spirit of the original gift, and would enable the funds to benefit those in need. But we would welcome any comments or alternative suggestions.

Please contact me at robin.waterston128@gmail.com if you have any thoughts on this idea. The matter will be on the agenda for next General Meeting.

2 Other Yearly Meetings

2.1 Ireland Yearly Meeting

Derek McLean, West Scotland AM

Report

Theme: Hope, Renewal and Healing-*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. (Romans 12:2)*

This was a very intimate and relaxed YM with around 80 Friends present and up to 20 Friends joining via zoom. Irish Friends gave a warm welcome to representatives from the UK and several European countries. Business was kept to a minimum to provide space for a number of international speakers, mostly women. Because of the small numbers I had warm and recurring encounters with several Friends over the weekend. There were strong themes of empowering women, anti-racism, climate change, tackling injustice and working for peace.

Barbara Luetke, spoke to us from Missouri, USA on the theme of ‘My Spiritual Journey – writing Historical Quaker Novels’. Barbara explained that she wanted to bring alive the story of young Quaker women in the early years of the Society. Her first novel *The Kendal Sparrow* is about the life of Elizabeth Fletcher. She has recently moved to live in Missouri and has become aware that the past prosperity of the hemp industry there was built on African American slavery and is researching this.

Jacqueline Stillwell, from New Hampshire, USA, spoke to us on the theme of ‘Sharing God’s Abundant Love’. She is General Secretary of Right Sharing of World Resources, an independent Quaker not-for-profit organisation which ‘promotes a ministry of right sharing and right relationships, sharing God’s abundant love with our brothers and sisters’ in Kenya, Sierra Leone, and India. Grants are



Photograph 3: An ingenious Christmas tree, Port Partick.

given to marginalised women to start a business who come together in groups to support each other. Jackie asked us: ‘are we aware that we always have enough and more to share, and do we pay attention to the difference between what we need and what we want?’

‘Celebrating Women’s Prayer Meetings and Peacemaking’. **Esther Mombo** Associate Professor in Theology at St Paul’s University in Limuru, Kenya joined us online. She has a particular interest in the nature of prayer meetings and the role of women in peacemaking. She explored with us her work with the United Society of Friends Women, and how they develop strategies to navigate the culture of power that comes from a triple heritage of patriarchy. The Society was set up originally by missionaries, started as a prayer group, but then became an empowering way for women to interpret and share the scriptures together. It has given them hope as they put their trust in God to lead them through difficult situations. The Prayer Groups provide care for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, but also question how they as women can challenge the cultural and socioeconomic systems that breed conflict in order to resist injustice and build peace. The United Society of Friends Women sets an inspiring example to women across the world.

‘My Journey to Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and hopes and



dreams for the future.’ We welcomed **Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge (QUNO)** who was appointed as Director of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva in November 2021. Nozizwe is a pacifist and lifetime campaigner for human rights and justice, and brings all this experience to her new role. She shared some of her past struggles in South Africa, which set out her path

to peacemaking through times of imprisonment and hopelessness during the apartheid era. Following the light and hoping for ‘freedom in our time’ was what sustained her and the other campaigners.

Nizizwe told us that the current QUNO programmes in Peace and Disarmament, the Human Impacts of Climate Change and Human Rights and Refugees are all interconnect with the aim of fostering lasting global peace. A fourth pilot programme, Sustainable and Just Economic Systems, looks set to be made permanent if funds allow. She said ‘our enemies are not external ones requiring increasing military spending, but ill health, poverty and homelessness. Courage is the ability to overcome fear. In the depths of my vision it doesn’t matter if I’m afraid.’

The public lecture ‘Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet: The Challenge of Asking Beautiful Questions’ was given by **Lynn Finnegan**, member of Coleraine Meeting, currently worshipping with Limerick Friends. Lynn is a writer for the International Institute of Sustainable Development, an independent think tank working to create a world where people and the planet thrive. She is also an illustrator, and lives in the Cloughjordan Eco-village, Co. Tipperary with her husband and two small children.

Lynn challenged us to ask what does it mean to be a spiritual community when the living planet is under threat? She urged us to build our relationship with our landscape and to see the world as something sacred. Good, beautiful questions are more interesting and useful than the right answers; they can have the power to open up the possibility of relationship and move us towards a more shared humanity. We learnt about the idea of the ‘Tragic Gap’ presented by Parker Palmer, a US Quaker writer - the gap between the hard realities of life and what we know is possible. Lynn explored various understandings of hope from ‘eco-psychology’ literature and Quakerism, including Joanna Macy’s ‘active hope’ and the notion of ‘living in the power of love.’

To move toward a world in which both people and the planet can thrive, we must have the courage to stand in the Tragic Gap - as Quakers have been doing for centuries. Our faith asks us to see the world both as it is and as it could be; we should fully acknowledge and welcome both our anger and our optimism, both our grief and our love for the Earth. Lynn suggested that we need to bring the whole of our sustainability journey under the ordering of the Spirit, surrendering ourselves to the way of Love. She ended with the challenge ‘See you in the Tragic Gap.’

“What does love and our Peace Testimony require of us?” In a period of discernment we remembered Nozizwe Madlala – Routledge’s statement that to achieve peace, we must prepare for peace. We asked how can we help prepare for peace in Ukraine? What would restorative justice look like for Ukraine, and for Russia? How would it look for European communities and institutions to be “pre-positioned for peace”? These are challenging questions in a time when our societies and governments are becoming increasingly militarised.

After the experience of lockdown it was a great joy to meet together with Friends in Ireland along with international visitors and speakers. I found the talks and the lecture inspiring and left with a sense of hope about the future. And I remember Lynn Finegan’s words on the usefulness of asking beautiful questions which have the power to move us towards a shared humanity.



Photograph 4: Attendees at the Ireland Yearly Meeting. Photo credit: Derek McLean.

Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

We send loving greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held in sunshine from 11th – 14th August 2022, at the green and leafy campus of Stranmillis University College, Belfast. The theme of this year’s Yearly Meeting was ‘Hope, Renewal, Healing’, supported by the Bible verse *‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.’* (Romans 12:2)

This was our first Yearly Meeting to take place in Belfast, and also our first ‘hybrid’ meeting. With the help of a skilled volunteer technical team we were able to welcome visitors and speakers both in person and from around the world. It was a joy to gather again after the cancellation of Yearly Meeting in 2020, and the online only event in 2021. The hybrid nature of the event was really enriching, and

enabled us to welcome more visitors from distant locations than usual. Barbara Luetke joined us from Missouri on Thursday evening in the Ministry and Oversight session to talk about her novel 'The Kendal Sparrow', based on the life of Elizabeth Fletcher, a young 17th century Quaker. On Friday we welcomed Esther Mombo from Kenya, who told us about the inspirational peacemaking work of the United Friends Women's prayer groups. Friends joining via Zoom from places including Mexico City, New England and Dublin were able to ask questions and take a full part in the proceedings.

Two Friends who continued this global theme were Tim Gee, new Director of FWCC, and Jacqueline Stillwell, Director of the Right Sharing of World Resources. They both challenged us with questions. How can we reach out to Friends across the world and connect in our spiritual lives? How do we decide what is enough for our needs? Can we share more generously with those for whom relatively small amounts of money can have a huge impact? We are called to make a more radical expression of our faith and surrender ourselves to the ordering of the Spirit.

The Public Lecture this year was given by Lynn Finnegan, a Young Irish Friend, on the subject *Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet*. Lynn challenged us with a series of 'beautiful questions' about what it means to be members of a spiritual community when the living planet is under threat. If we can surrender ourselves to the way of Love, we are nearer to bringing the whole of our sustainability journey under the ordering of the Spirit.

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, Director of QUNO in Geneva, spoke about her journey as a lifetime campaigner for peace and justice. This included time spent in prison in South Africa during the apartheid era. We heard about the current QUNO programmes in Peace and Disarmament, the Human Impacts of Climate Change and Human Rights and Refugees, along with the newer concerns of Sustainable and Just Economic Systems and Retrospective Justice.

Space was deliberately left in the programme to consider what love and our Peace Testimony requires of us in these turbulent times. The death and destruction in Ukraine following the invasion by Russia has made us long for hope, renewal and healing more than ever. We were asked what does the Peace Testimony mean to modern Quakers? The peace testimony today, is seen in what we do, severally and together, with our lives. 'We pray for the involvement of the Spirit with us, that we may work for a more just world.' (London Yearly Meeting 1993).

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Denise C. Gabuzda, Clerk William D. A. Haire Pleasaunce Perry, Asst. Clerk
Pauline Goggin

3 Ecumenical matters

3.1 The Future of Ecumenism in Scotland Adwoa Burnley and Mary Woodward

Adwoa Burnley begins the story:

IF you have been following the story of ACTS (Action for Churches Together in Scotland) and its journey over the last 5 years you will know that there has been a slow, gentle move towards creating a different body to best serve the Christian Churches of Scotland. ACTS had become, sadly, a body that no longer fulfilled the vision upon which it had been founded. Quakers have found this a difficult thing to acknowledge and at the beginning of this journey I was very wary of the transition. However, I have come to understand the situation and through making friends, learning and listening I can see why we are where we are, and I am pleased to be a part of this work.

Much of the progress has occurred through the lens of the COVID 19 pan-



Photograph 5: Rest and be thankful!

demic. This has not been easy with a plethora of logistical, financial and personal uncertainties.

At the ACTS Members Meeting on 29th October 2020, it was resolved to set

up the Scottish Christian Forum (SCF) and appoint the Ecumenical Officers [EOs] of existing ACTS member churches along with appointees from those churches not having EOs as an Implementation Group.

Mary Woodward continues:

A little under three years later I was appointed Quaker rep to the Ecumenical Officers Forum [EOF]. The move from ACTS to the Scottish Christian Forum has slowed down of late: all interested parties were invited to take part in a roundtable meeting at the Methodist church on Nicholson Square in Edinburgh on 16 January 2023 to consider the future of ecumenism in Scotland.

Representatives of the Scottish Church Leaders' Forum [SCLF], ACTS Members and Trustees, Ecumenical Officers, SCPO representatives and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland were invited "to come together and express their hopes for what kind of ecumenical body is needed going forward".

Quakers were well-represented - I was there as the Quaker Ecumenical Officer and Adwoa Burnley as our representative on ACTS and member of the SCLF. Martin Burnell, who was involved with ACTS for many years, was also there.

We opened with worship which linked in with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity's theme "Communities divided by injustice".

We were then introduced to four of the ecumenical models currently in use in Scotland, and invited to consider which might be the best model for the new Scottish Christian Forum. The Membership/ Trustee model requires the organisation to be a registered charity with trustees who bear collective responsibility. The Forum model is what was originally envisioned for the SCF: an umbrella organisation arching over a number of smaller fora such as the EOF and SCLF. The Lead Church model does what it says on the tin - one church takes the lead and other churches contribute as they can. This can lead to action skewed in favour of the lead church's priorities rather than being jointly decided and carried out. The fourth model - that of Bi- or Tri-lateral dialogues such as the St Andrew Declaration between the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church - was not seen as being suitable for an ecumenical framework, but did offer the opportunity for conversations and joint action at all levels within the signatory churches.

Discussion, quite literally round individual tables, followed as we considered which of the above models might work best for the SCF and quite how it might be funded. ACTS has funds arising from the sale of Churches House in Dunblane: how could this money be administered/ the burden on current

ACTS trustees be lightened? Where would the new ecumenical body best be situated to enable people and groups to engage with churches in Scotland collectively rather than individually? Who would lead it? How would it be administered?

Needless to say, one clear answer did not emerge from the plenary session which followed these discussions. There was considerable divergence of opinion, and it was felt that the Ecumenical Officers Forum was the logical place for next steps to be considered. We were charged with looking at all the opinions represented by the inevitable postit notes and instructed to facilitate another joint session in six to eight months' time, at which we would present options for the way forward.

It is very clear that two very separate conversations need to carry on – about the future use of ACTS' funds and the formation of the Scottish Christian Forum. It is also very clear that Ecumenism in Scotland is ALIVE – there is a lot going on at different levels in many different areas. I'm looking forward to playing my part in considering What do we want to do and how do we want to do it?

Watch this space!



Photograph 6: Lighthouse at Tiumpian Head, Isle of Lewis.

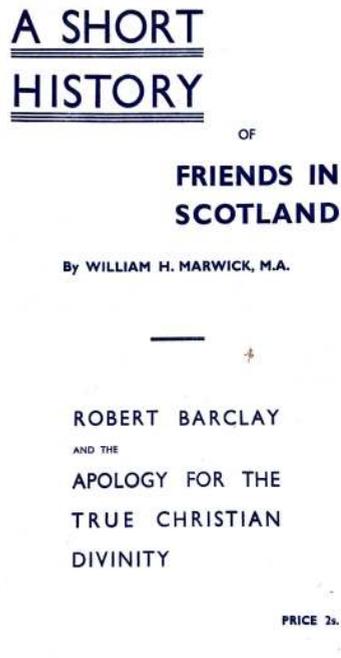
3.2 A Short History of Friends in Scotland: William H Marwick, M.A.

Kate Arnot, SE Scotland AM

At the Memorial Meeting for our late much missed Friend, Jim Pym, there were some tables with books, etc., that Friends could take away in memory of Jim. The above booklet, A Short History of Friends in Scotland, was published by Scotland General meeting for the holding in Edinburgh in August 1948 of London Yearly meeting, and to Commemorate the Tercentenary of the birth of Robert Barclay. It is quite short, 40 pages.

I am only writing about the last half of the 19th century and the 20th century but there is also much of interest for previous times, not least where Meetings for Worship were held. The book begins "In Scotland, Friends have always been a very small and rather obscure community. Their position has been similar to that of Friends in such Continental countries as Denmark and Holland rather than to that of Friends in England."

The membership of the Society in Scotland in 1902 was 363 (this was a high level); it rose to 377 in 1919 and then declined considerably partly through pruning of lists and removals to England. 316 was the total during 1947. General meeting continued to be the body embracing all Friends in Scotland, with two subordinate meetings, Aberdeen (Two Months) and Edinburgh (Monthly), the latter comprising 80% of the membership. Glasgow was added in 1868 and with the addition of Dundee, GM became quarterly. After a lapse of many years a Meeting was revived in Perth in their home by Cyril and Ethne Walmesley (1932). In Edinburgh the older Pleasance Meeting united in 1944 with the newer Stafford Street



**A SHORT
HISTORY**
OF
**FRIENDS IN
SCOTLAND**

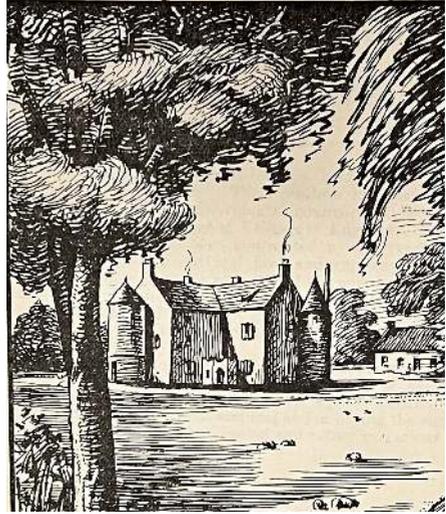
By WILLIAM H. MARWICK, M.A.

ROBERT BARCLAY
AND THE
APOLOGY FOR THE
TRUE CHRISTIAN
DIVINITY

PRICE 2s.

Photograph 7: Cover page of the book.
Photo credit: Kate Arnot.

Meeting (the latter established in 1938). Glasgow has grown considerably and in 1944 Friends purchased 16 Newton Terrace. An offshoot at Paisley of the Glasgow Meeting was recognised as an Allowed Meeting in 1946. In the latter part of the 19th century there was a considerable growth in membership in Ayrshire. A Meeting House opened in Kilmarnock in 1886. A “series of circulating monthly Meetings for Worship” were held, Ardrossan and Irvine (1895) and Crosshill and Maybole (1896). Kirkintilloch commenced in the 1870s and acquired a Meeting House in the next decade but was discontinued in 1933. There was also from 1896 to 1903 a Meeting at Annan and an allowed Meeting at Helensburgh for some years from 1914. An allowed meeting was formed at Dunfermline in 1907 at the house of John Yule who was for many years a leader of the Fife Miners’ Union. A group in Greenock was organised under the leadership of Helen Blake.



Photograph 8: Barclay House at Ury. Photo credit: Kate Arnott.

The large proportion of isolated Friends, remote from any Meeting, has been a chronic problem. A Scottish Friends Newsletter was inaugurated in 1944 with a view to maintaining contacts. Scottish Friends do not anticipate any marked increase in membership or influence but are glad to feel they are now as active and united a body as at any date in their history. They value their connection with London Yearly Meeting while desiring recognition of their entity as a national unit.

So similarities and differences from 1948. Certainly growth both in numbers of Friends and in the number of Meetings.

I would be happy to post the booklet to any Friend who would like it. My e-mail is the same k.arnot@btinternet.com and, if like me, your address has changed since the current book of members please let me know. I’d also be grateful if anyone could suggest where this booklet could find a permanent home.

4 Community matters

4.1 Heroic solution

Neil Crabtree, North Scotland AM

Tucked away in News in Brief (*Northern Times* 19 August) was a short article on serious vandalism at Golspie High School. This follows hot-on-the-heels of the wrecking of the public toilets in Golspie car park. This type of behaviour, which drives the police to distraction, it is not as grim as elsewhere; however, while most vandalism is random, these instances appear to be pre-planned. It is probably the case that many of the youths involved are seeking thrills and trying to act heroically in front of their peers. They are surrounded by images of distorted heroism in films and the media and these contrast with their seemingly boring everyday routines. Worse, their behaviours is completely at odds with that of most of the adult population's belief and structures, which they probably even fail to understand, never mind perceive as "boring".

I would like to suggest a "heroic" solution. A youth worker in Inverness once told me that when troublesome youngsters joined the Army Cadets, their behaviour in the community would often change. In other words, they learnt codes of behaviour which they took with them in to their everyday lives. This begs the question as to whether a similar "heroic" organisation can be designed to create a similar outcome and, to this effect, a future with global warming might present an opportunity. Despite the fact that hundreds and thousands of people globally are being displaced by this phenomenon, and that areas of Britain are now experiencing floods and fires, we are ill prepared for the future.

It can be imagined that communities will benefit from having trained volunteers who can act in an emergence situation both individually and as an extension of statutory and voluntary organisations. This could involve training in subjects such as First Aid, search and rescue, boat handling, fire fighting, creating and running refuge centre, working with groups and people under stress, and much more.

Back from the future. such a development presents an opportunity to work with young tearaways now if it is professionally well thought through. Problematic youngsters could be approached b the police, social workers, teachers and youth workers are asked if they would be prepared to help make their neighbourhoods safer, not just in the short term but in the furture too. They are presented with information about a training course which has input from genuinely heroic organisations such as the police, the army, Scottish Fire and Rescue, a mountain rescue team, the Red Cross and the Life Boat Associa-

tion; all who contribute to the training.

Such a course, and its introduction of real heroic role models, might serve as a rite of passage for youngsters (a function that is now sadly lacking) especially if there is a certification ceremony when they complete it, in recognition of a valuable contribution which they will take with them into the future. They are made to understand that they will always be part of the organisation, will be kept upto date with the developments and called in for refresher courses. A partly could be organised by the community in recognition of their efforts and they could even be given cards which give them discounts in popular shops (there is an old African proverb which says, “It takes a village to raise a child.”). As I have tried to suggest, even young people who do and thing things which are wrong, and also have good qualities and potential. We need to encourage activism and participation in the society to help build a sense of identity and a moral compass.



Photograph 9: Somewhere in Perth!

4.2 Your views

Neil Crabtree, North Scotland AM

It is late and I am a bit tired, but I feel the urge to send in this letter concerning the gender rights bill which is currently moving its way through the Scottish Parliament. It says something for this government that they are prepared to pursue this act despite much pressure and opposition, not just from a reactionary media but from within its own party. However, the most ardent negative force is from women and feminists who refuse to recognise transgender men as being women living in a male body.

I am transgender and in denying this I have suffered from serious mental health problems and have been put at risk for my safety. Not because I approached men or wore feminine clothing but because of my nature, I have been mocked and shunned by some men. Others cannot make me out because I look like a man, but I am not obviously not gay-though many think I am.

As this 'condition' is only beginning to be recognised in our society due to people such as the comedian Mr Izzard who now declares himself as a full blown woman (despite the mockery, and yes, danger directed at him) the nature of transsexuals is only just starting to be understood. This goes well beyond the current debate around changing rooms in public spaces, it will mean that our structures, policies and ways of living and interacting will need to be transformed, from nursery schools upward. In the early years of this transformation (and it has taken a long time for women and gay people to gain justice and recognition) trans people will require legal protection from bullying in schools, employment and wider society, until their state of being is finally recognised, much as how gay men and women are now accepted within the society. Even so, they still face risks from rogue elements; violence and murder included. Me- I'm quite a tough character. I've had to be. I paint my nails, wear aspects of women's clothing and wear face foundation. 'Coming out' has made life easier. However, I do worry about the millions of children and young people who are trans, not just in this country but worldwide, who are being oppressed or killed even for their gender. This isn't only child abuse but it is a human rights problem, a crime against humanity. My best wishes go out to the courage and sense of decency within the Scottish National party. Thank you and watch out for the ball gowns.

5 Poetry corner

5.1 Snow

Lysana Robinson, North Scotland AM

For days a deep covering of snow
Brought bright white winter light,
a silent, enveloping comfort blanket.
I revisited Lockdown confinement,
safer to stay home,
away from the treachery of ice.

Unexpectedly over night, a ruthless thaw
revealed colours, a dazzling green
startled my bleary morning eyes as they
peered through the opening curtains.

I had stayed home safely,
now came venturing out, the release.

All is eternally becoming,
emerging, renewing, disappearing.

The calm stillness of the snow
an illusion veiling hidden activity,
even in my safe home,
preparing to burst forth with surprises.



Photograph 10: A snowy day at Chatelherault country park.

5.2 Strange Old World

David O'Donoghue, Monkstown Meeting Dublin

What a strange yet beautiful world
Spinning around;
But we don't feel its movement.

All we see is night and day:
Sunrise at dawn
Sunset at dusk.

New moon
Mezza luna
La pleine lune.

Daily, monthly, yearly
Old earth dances around
On its mad axis.

And we cling on for dear life
Relishing each season
As it comes our way.

Thanking every morning
For a brand new day.



6 Notices

6.1 Centering Prayer for Quakers Sheila Semple, North Scotland AM

Rosemary Field and Richard Eddleston, both Friends, are offering a weekend on Centering Prayer for Quakers from 19-21 May at Glenthorne, perhaps the closest of the Quaker centres to Scottish Friends. Rosemary was an Eva Koch scholar at Woodbrooke on the topic of Centering Prayer.

The link to the Glenthorne programme is: <https://glenthorne.org/events-programme-2023/>



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