

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

April 2018

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Clerk's letter March 2018

Wild geese are well known for flying in V-formation as they migrate or just travel around. Thinking about how they work together made me think about how we can learn about collectives and communities, Quaker Meetings and committees. In fact about moving forward together. You may have seen the following before, but it does no harm in relating it again to our situation.

- *By flying in formation together the whole flock add 70% greater flying range than if a bird flew alone. They benefit from being behind one another as this cuts drag and saves energy.*
- *When the lead goose gets tired it just rotates back into the formation and another goose takes its place. The geese are interdependent on each other but share responsibilities.*
- *When a goose gets sick or exhausted (or shot down) two geese drop out of the formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies.*
- *The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those who are leading to keep up the good work. These it appears are honks of encouragement not irritation. Positive honks.*

What can I say Friends, except honk! honk! honk!



Report on Area Meeting by telephone, 12 March

Twenty-seven friends, representing all but two of the island meetings, took part in this conference. It was good to have so many taking part; considerably more than in December.

Wigtown Meeting has raised a concern about how we deal with the deaths of Friends, both the arrangement of funerals and notification of deaths to other Friends. It appears that at one time the elders received training for funerals, but this has lapsed. We agreed to ask Elders to recommend procedures. It was also suggested that Friends might write a document (or fill in a form) recording their wishes for the conduct of their funeral/memorial meeting and lodge it with their meeting. Details of who should keep it were not discussed, though.

We welcomed two Friends into membership; one new and one, formerly in another meeting, returning after a gap.

We agreed that the Jenny Auld legacy should be used for the Meeting House in Glasgow, and also that Friends wishing to attend Yearly Meeting in May should be able to claim up to £400 from our funds. They should apply via their Overseer.

We appointed Bronwen Currie as Clerk to Trustees with Clare Phillips as Assistant Clerk and Ian Macdonald as Clerk to the Nominations Committee with Robin Davis as Assistant Clerk. Some Friends are taking part in courses training for Quaker roles; the Clerk encouraged other Friends to consider undergoing training for roles that they might be interested in performing at a later stage.

Because time was running out, we agreed to defer discussion on the timing of national Junior and Young People's Events, on militarisation in schools and on arrangements for an annual family-oriented tree-planting event at Wiston Lodge. Lanark Meeting is going to take over the latter matter from Glasgow.

On a lighter note, the Clerk had asked us to keep extraneous noises away from the telephone. At one point he asked that the person blowing their nose frequently could please do something about it. She immediately owned up, though there was absolutely no need for her to do so!

Some useful work was accomplished at this session.

Jane Mitchell, Argyll

Epistle , from Experiment with Light Conference at Glenthorne

To all Friends everywhere!

Greetings from the Experiment with Light Conference at Glenthorne, 26-29 March 2018.

Thirty Friends from all over Britain and beyond have gathered here to explore the questions: How might we be open to the leadings of the Light? How can we support each other with trust, courage and commitment?

In our experience Experiment with Light creates a space where we can feel confident to share at a deep level. Working into our hearts deeply and looking into the hearts of others enhances our relationships – with ourselves, with each other, with our Meetings, with the world around us, and with the Light.

During our conference we were looking at the issue of how we express our Quaker faith that presently causes concern for the unity of Friends in Britain and elsewhere. We were reminded of the answer Moses received to his question who was speaking to him through the burning bush: “I am what I am” (Exodus 3:14). We encourage all Friends to rest in this ‘I am’, which is beyond reason and surpasses human understanding.

Being grounded in this inward-leading discipline helps us to enrich each other and to come to right discernment. It creates a sense of connectedness and unity that transcends differences of expression.

“In the light walk, and ye will shine.” (George Fox)

Report on Experiment with Light Conference

It is unusual to go to a conference where the whole is like a family working together in harmony. Where ALL are known. There were 30 reviewing the Experiment with Light. All were experienced practitioners of the discipline so we were able to *gather* in the Light, to allow issues and insights to arise and envisage what has been done and what needs to be done to progress the experiment.

Klaus Huber presented the new book on its history. It has come a long way since 2006 when Rex Ambler sought to explore the practices of Early Friends in Meeting. Now BYM recognizes the practice and it is noted that it can enrich the spiritual dimensions of Meetings. It teaches basic Quaker ‘techniques’ such as discernment. We listened to Julia from Sweden tell us how it had been used in conflict resolution.

There are several Light groups in our Area Meeting. One on Wednesday afternoons at 2pm in Glasgow Meeting House is open to all. If you want to start your own and need help, contact me at margaret.roy@btinternet.com

Margaret Roy, Lanark

Elizabeth Fry 1780 - 1845

She must be one of our first and best known 'activists', appearing for many years on the Bank of England £5 note. Yet, you will read few of her words. She was a worker. Born Elizabeth Gurnley, one of five 'vivacious' girls from a Norfolk Quaker family. They were a banking family - think of the others such as Barclays, Lloyds (she almost married James Lloyd) and the Midland Bank that all have Quaker origins. In later years her husband's bank went bankrupt and she was freed from 'the burden of gentility'.

In her youth she was serious and physically delicate. She is reported to have had a nervous breakdown when her engagement to James Lloyd broke down, but she went on to have 11 children to Joseph Fry. She wrote: *I wish I had more solidity and less fluidity in my disposition. I feel my own weakness and insufficiency to bear the evils and rubs of life. I must try by every stimulus in my power to strengthen myself both bodily and mentally, it can only be done by activity and perseverance.*

She was a 'gay Quaker' Her heart was stirred when she met with 'plain Quakers'. Her first activity was to teach the local children to read and write – from 50-70 children of various ages gathered there weekly, some of them already wizened and distorted by work in the factories of Norwich'. *Betsy's Imps*, her sisters called them.

After marriage, living in London she was appointed by Gracechurch Street Meeting as a visitor to Islington Workhouse. There she read to the children and took them toys and things for their tea. For 20 years she was mistress of Plashat, an estate near Epping Forest. She set up soup kitchens in one of her large barns saying *those who have money did their duty for the benefit of the immediate neighbourhood*. In 1810 (after the birth of her 7th child) she was recorded as an approved minister visiting many other meetings. Her first visit to Newgate prison was in 1813, bringing bedding and clothes, medicine and soup. It was 4 years before she became involved in prison reform. Visiting was dangerous so they went in twos but soon the Quaker garb was recognised and they were welcomed.

The way was through the children. She established a school. 'By involving the aid of the women themselves, she put herself more than 100 years in advance of the most advanced thinkers of her time. She set going in that instance the most genuine reform that any had been able to approach. It was a renaissance of the soul'. With 10 friends she formed the Ladies Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate. As well as reading and writing, they brought in materials for the women to sew clothes for themselves and patchwork quilts to sell. There were difficulties to

overcome, economic and political – her husband helped by inviting authorities into their home. Even amongst Friends there was much contention. When women had no suffrage, she was called before a committee of the House of Commons to give evidence. She called for women warders and separate women’s prisons. She became involved in the prison ships sending ‘convicts’ to Australia getting rid of irons, enabling fresh air on deck and giving the women materials with which to make quilts to sell.

It was said: *Friendship and pity had come to dwell in Newgate, along with self-respect.*
Margaret Roy, Lanark

“What does Europe mean to me?”

Quakers and European Politics was the subject of a Woodbrooke course that I attended on 9th to 11th February, as the only representative from Scotland.

The question: “**What does Europe mean to me?**” was the focus of the weekend; led superbly by Andrew Lane, Director Quaker Council for European Affairs, Brussels and Maud Grainger, Faith in Action Tutor, Woodbrooke. We were invited to explore the future of peace and Human Rights in Europe following the Brexit referendum. I found it a very useful and stimulating insight to aspects of the EU and Europe that previously I was unaware of. I also realised how much facts and information is filtered out by the media and politicians.

We started by analysing William Penn’s 1693 proposals for interstate cooperation to end the almost endless wars in Europe. Andrew Lane then gave a presentation about the Influence of Quakers in Peace and Human Rights in Europe over the years from the First World War and the Spanish Civil War, and its role for present day politics, before discussing QCEA’s peace and human rights work in 2018.

He then outlined the European Institutions and how they fit together. [However, he emphasised that the Council of Europe and the EU are distinct in membership and nature. The CoE is a 47-member international organisation dealing with human rights and rule of law, while the EU is a quasi-federal union of 27 states focused on economic integration and political cooperation. The European Court of Human Rights is associated with the Council of Europe (and not the EU), so if Britain also withdraws from the Council of Europe, this will have dramatic implications on Human rights.]

Brussels is a major diplomatic hub and a centre in global influence, home of the European Union institutions- Commission, Council, Parliament. It is also the Headquarters of NATO and has over 200 embassies, more than any other city

To illustrate how the EU functions, we took part in a role-playing exercise where we each played the part of a different body within the EU system. Some were representatives of 3 Governments (Germany, France and Greece) with their different political flavours. Five participants each became a political party within the European Parliament. Others took roles within the European Commission, etc.

We followed a draft law on gender equality through the EU system, thinking about who would be likely to take what position and why. Our mock European Parliament voted 3-2 in favour of the new law, but our governments voted 2-1 against. This gave us the chance to see how the two decision-making bodies of the EU find compromise when they don't agree.

After lunch, to illustrate how the QCEA is involved in diplomatic influence in Brussels, the Cadbury room had been set up to create a role-play of a bilateral meeting between Turkey and the European Commission.

We experienced how confrontational and hierarchical international politics can be. After which we were led to a circle of chairs, and heard from Andrew Lane how a QCEA informal lunchtime discussion would be held. Andrew gave examples of how influential these informal discussions have been.

He also emphasised that the Open discussion and reflection sessions on Saturday night and Sunday morning focused on what we can do in the future. This included a thoughtful dialogue on Brexit. Sarah Dodgson shared the findings of her Eva Koch fellowship on Quakers and Brexit, and her extensive knowledge of more than 900 groups working, planning or campaigning on the issue. These include the leading 'Remain' organisations: the European Movement (attached to Scientists for Europe, Healthier In and politicians such as Ken Clarke and Stephen Dorrell); community network Britain for Europe; Open Britain (calling for close trade relations after Brexit, and linked to Peter Mandelson); Best for Britain linked to Mark Mallock Brown; and the online network – The 48%. We heard that some of these groups are trying to work more closely together.

On Sunday morning, we also heard from Lina Jordan, Clerk of Quakers for Europe – a grassroots group hoping to help people in Britain stay connected with other parts of Europe. Over the next year they'll be planning some interesting public discussions – such as on populism in Europe. This group was formerly called QCEA British Committee. It will continue to support QCEA, whilst also working locally to educate, inform and inspire discussion on in.

My final thought of the weekend, even if Britain leaves the EU, the work of QCEA must be supported, as it has a representative from every Yearly Meeting in Europe, and will continue to be an agent for Peace and Human Rights.

Mike Shilson, Mull and Iona

Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer 2017

Key pieces of work

Over 2017 our petition on militarisation in schools continued to be a major piece of work. The Public Petitions Committee heard from us in March, and then took evidence from the Deputy First Minister & Education Secretary (John Swinney) in April, and from the MoD in November. The process is expected to move towards conclusion in spring 2018.

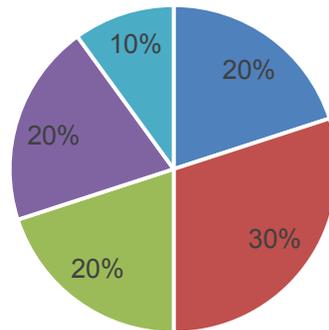
In March we responded to the Scottish Parliament investigation on destitution among asylum seekers. This was a submission made jointly between General Meeting for Scotland, Britain Yearly Meeting, and the Quaker Asylum & Refugee Network.

In May we made a submission to the Scottish Government consultation and to a Private Members Bill on fracking in Scotland.

In October we sent white poppies to Scottish politicians.

Breakdown of time

- 20% Engagement with Quakers in Scotland (details this page)
- 30% Engagement with other professionals (details c next page)
- 20% Engaging with BYM colleagues
- 20% Research and horizon scanning
- 10% General admin tasks



Engagement with Quakers in Scotland (approximately 20% of time)

Interaction with Scottish Friends through:

- Creating a Just Scotland seminar (April)
- General Meeting for Scotland in Glasgow (June)
- Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering (July/August)
- Media training in Glasgow (September)
- General Meeting for Scotland in Elgin (November)
- Link Weekend with young Quakers (October)
- Meetings of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) every 2 months

Engaged with Scottish Friends through:

- Reports to General Meeting for Scotland
- Email and telephone conversations
- Face-to-face meetings
- Media training
- Giving advice to local meetings
- Facebook and Twitter
- Elections guide



Joyce and Mairi, met with Jon Mason, SNP MSP for Glasgow Shettleston.

- QuakerVote website
- PEWG representatives
- Speaking at BYM on the theme ‘movement building’

Engagement with other professionals (approximately 30% of time)

I met and communicated with other professionals in:

- The Scottish Parliament
- Scottish Government
- Common Space
- Salvation Army
- Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office
- Education Scotland
- Scottish Government Equalities Unit
- Forces Watch
- Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre
- Sunday Herald
- SNP party conference

Formal engagement with The Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government through:

- Petition submitted to the Public Petitions Committee – including appearing before the Committee to give evidence
- A submission on asylum seekers and destitution in Scotland (a joint submission from GMS, BYM and the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network)
- Submission to the Scottish Government consultation on fracking
- Submission to the Private Members Bill on fracking
- Face-to-face meetings
- Telephone calls and E mails

How to contact me or the PEWG

I work part-time, usually Monday through to Thursday. If anyone has a burning question about my work then please do email or telephone me. My time does get booked up in advance. If you would like to talk to me about a specific subject in person it is likely that an appointment will need to be made a fortnight ahead, although this can vary. It may be quicker, and easier, to email me questions.

If your local area meeting would like a talk about political work then please do ask. Usually these are given by members of the Parliamentary Engagement Group, who have been appointed by GMS.



Above: At the SNP conference in October 2017 with Forces Watch, Child Soldiers International and Youth for Independence, at a fringe meeting on raising the age of recruitment.

Peter Dean, a public finance economist, spoke about the future and raised the possible impact of automation and depressed wage rates. He outlined some of the difficulties of UBI. For example: people like the mutuality of the National Insurance System, it could lead to the movement of businesses and people out of Scotland, it could be hampered by continuing tax evasion, Scotland being unable to do this without the agreement of the UK Government, and the questionable value of pilot projects. Acknowledging that the present welfare system is increasingly unworkable he concluded that some form of UBI may be inevitable.

Attendees then broke into small groups to discuss what they had heard and to produce questions and statements to bring back to the final session. The discussion groups were lively, but the final session reflected the feeling that people wanted to understand the detailed practicalities rather than just embrace the idea. Most people were in favour of the principles behind UBI, but they quite rightly grasped the complexity of moving forward.

The positive aspects of UBI were identified as:

- UBI could get rid of the tension between low paid work and the use of volunteers and avoid the stigmatisation of the benefits system.
- UBI can give employees greater bargaining power. People will be motivated to top up the basic amount with work, but perhaps will do less attractive jobs for fewer days/hours.
- UBI would support caring roles and allow the opportunity for increased creativity.
- UBI is based on moral principles – similar to NHS or opposing slavery and creates a vision of what kind of society we want to live in.
- Increased wellbeing and mental health could lead to major savings to offset costs.

However, although there was a strong sense that the present welfare system is broken and is damaging lives, and that new approaches are needed urgently, there was not an overwhelming feeling that UBI was the answer at this stage: most people wanted to understand the mechanics of how it would work first. The participation of a young homeless man demonstrated the power of personal stories in speaking about social inequalities. There was some discomfort about Quakers speaking about the poor or those on benefits as “the other”. We need to work **with** people not **for** people.

Many were concerned about how we could get from where we are now to a society which would adopt UBI. There was a feeling that we need to identify incremental steps which would work towards change. These might include:

- Standing up and saying clearly that the present welfare and tax system is unjust and does not accord with Quaker testimonies,
- Working to change a mainstream narrative of tax as a ‘necessary evil’ rather than a contribution in return for a fair and functioning society,
- Pushing for Scotland to have full independent tax raising powers,

- Supporting a Land Value Tax in place of Council Tax and Business Rates,
- Identifying alternatives to UBI e.g. a Scandinavian model of higher taxes and higher benefits,
- Continuing to help Quakers become better informed.

**A Basic Income Handbook by Annie Miller, 2017, £12.99, Edinburgh: Luath Press. ISBN: 978-1-910745-78-6*

**Learning to communicate better with some help from TED.
An invitation to a co-production opportunity.**

Over the last 18 years I have been caught up in learning experientially how to improve my own communication skills with AVP Scotland. I've always loved sharing the insights and activities with young people among my friends and family. Recently I have been working on developing some workshop materials to use more formally with young people.

The first TED I found that lit a light bulb for me was this one from New Zealand and uses dots to help understand how communication style can get in the way:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp9b2Hf7QWg>

The second develops Marshall Rosenberg's work creatively adding some new animals to the mix. Can seeing ourselves as a jackal or a tiger help us understand each other?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BZuWrdC-9Q>

I am hoping that young people will enjoy developing new exercises in co-production with me sharing their thoughts and insights. If you are involved in any youth organisations who might be interested in this co-production please let me know. I am retired and happy to travel about Scotland to get this off the ground. There will be full credit given to any individuals and groups involved in any publication that may come from this co-production. Looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

Mary Kennedy, Glasgow

TED is a media organization which posts talks online for free distribution, under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". TED was founded in February 1984 as a conference, which has been held annually since 1990.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY ENVIRONMENT FAIR

After a break of five years or so, Dumfries Meeting decided to take part in the annual Dumfries & Galloway Environment Fair once again.

We offered junk modelling for the children, which proved very popular, especially the binoculars made from kitchen-roll centres. The old ideas are still the best – but these days they need a risk assessment!

Then mainly for adults we chose what seemed to be an easy option, but at the same time deliver an important message, of a ‘GIVEAWAY ‘ stall. This built on the idea of the ‘Gift Economy’ stall at last year’s Yearly Meeting Gathering, where everyone was asked to bring some small item to put on a table in the busy hub area, and if there was something already there that appealed, feel free to take it! Obviously we had no opportunity to alert the general public about our stall before the Fair, so we just collected good quality ‘stuff’ amongst ourselves, and gave it away. This led to many very interesting exchanges with ‘customers’. “Why?”, “But you could be making money”, “Can I give a donation”……. So, despite what much behaviour in society would suggest; that people want something- for- nothing, or to pay as little as possible for goods, when actually faced with something free it is difficult to comprehend.

We simply said that both giving and receiving engender feelings of pleasure: that ball of wool I bought and never found a use for, was exactly what a lady who crafted felted landscapes was looking for! Win-win situation! Between the lines, and surfacing in the longer conversations, was the idea that money needn’t always be our first thought.

Jan Lethbridge

LANARK MEETING IN BIGGAR

Quakers were amongst a group of anti nuclear weapons activists who descended on the sleepy Borders town of Biggar on Sat 17th February. It was organized by the gareloch horticulturist trident ploughshares group. We were collecting messages from local people, to send to our MP David Mundell, urging him to remind the Conservative Government of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty which our Government has refused to sign. Mainstream UK media have ignored the UN Treaty while the Government believes instead in the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty which it has broken already by renewing Trident. The large card of messages will be handed to Mr Mundell at his next surgery. **Douglas Shaw**

CASTLE DOUGLAS

We met on 25th February to discuss ‘Austerity’. This came about through having to consider the future of Castle Douglas Community Centre where we have worshipped since our local meeting was formed in the early 1990s. The Centre is affected by council cuts to services, which is in turn a result of wider austerity policies being implemented by local and national government.

The discussion on the topic soon branched out into wider social, political and spiritual themes. It was a chance to explore whether we felt there was a need to respond to the Council in some way that would be consistent with our Quaker values. No conclusion was reached but everyone seemed to value the opportunity to express opinions and listen to one another in a spirit of shared concern for those in our local community.

Prayer

Sharing our experiences

A letter in the Friend recently said *'How little we know of the spiritual beliefs of those who sit alongside us'*. As a first response to this, in this edition of West Scotland Quaker Newsletter there are five contributions from Friends on the topic of Prayer. I spoke with these Friends either on the phone or in person, wrote a draft of what they said then passed it to them to amend. Each Friend had a set of prompts, also included in this newsletter. Friends may wish to use these either for personal reflection or in discussion with other Friends.

The next edition of WSQN will have contributions from Friends on the topic of Quaker Discipline. I'm looking for volunteers (but a warning, not volunteering doesn't mean I won't approach you!). I'm conscious that I started this first topic by asking Friends I knew well, local Glasgow Friends. So it's important to broaden the group to get others involved, including those from other parts of West Scotland AM.

I've found it so interesting, and enlightening, to have these discussions, and I think (hope) that the Friends involved found it helpful, too. I'd like to thank them.

Sheila Semple, Glasgow

Prompts to consider re prayer

- What does prayer mean to you?
- Has your view of, or your approach to, prayer changed over the years?
- Do you pray? How and when?
- What prompts prayer, for you... what seems to be the impulse behind praying? Is it coming from you or a response to a call to pray?
- Is it prayer TO...? Prayer ABOUT...? Prayer FOR...?
- What does it seem you are doing when you pray?
- Do you have an image or phrase that encapsulates prayer?
- Do you, SHOULD you, pray in Meeting for Worship? Or stand in ministry to pray?
- How does prayer relate to worship?
- What's the impact of prayer? On the one praying? On others?
- Does the phrase 'to do something prayerfully' mean anything to you?

Maureen Waugh on Prayer

I find that I am able to pray more deeply when our Meetings for Worship are conducted in total, or almost total, silence. When you get there, as a part of a worshipping group to the still centre through contemplative prayer, it's a space where you are upholding each other. In those moments I feel part of a greater whole and feel the presence of the spirit in the depths of the silence.

A very wise Friend that I knew in Bournville Meeting used to speak of “a Theology of the Everyday” - I like the notion of prayer being part of everything we do - when we meet and talk to other people, try to get to know them and try to glimpse the God within. I like that idea from the Hassidic tradition about finding the sparks that jump in the space between people through prayer. Prayer leads to a greater awareness of possibilities, it directs and strengthens you. I notice it in ministry, it’s uncanny the way a Friend’s ministry sometimes echoes what you yourself have been thinking. I don’t see it as a coincidence – it represents another dimension - we’re part of a wavelength we don’t understand.

Even as a child I realised that there was more to prayer than the grubby notion of just asking for things. (As a Catholic) it was always responding to the liturgy, there was no time to internalise it. In childhood and as a young adult I found the natural world more conducive to prayer. My mystic experiences were in nature - in woods and by water - which made me aware of the wonders of creation.

Now when I pray I try to support people I know who are bereaved or in pain or difficulty by holding them in the light and by letting them know that I am doing this. I am visualising what I know about them if I’m close to them or the nature of the problem, if I’m not.

I also pray for spiritual guidance as to what more I personally should be doing in the wider world to live out the Quaker testimonies to peace and justice and equality beyond the few small steps I have already taken to put my faith into action.

Paul Burton on Prayer

I would say I don’t pray... certainly not in the sense of asking God to do something. But I know some people find support and consolation, prayer can help them if they are looking to find an answer within themselves. Prayer as a one-way request is something I don’t believe in largely because I think it doesn’t make any difference except to the person praying. I don’t see a God that intervenes in lives in that way.

I don’t recall ever trying praying. My brother and I were sent to Sunday School and we monotonously recited the Lord’s Prayer. My parents went regularly to church. But I’m not conscious of ever sitting at my bedside and praying. I’ve been in situations when others might feel the need to pray, but I haven’t.

But I do feel I can hold someone ‘in the Light’, I do use that expression. It means thinking about that person, hoping it gets better, wanting the situation they’re in to resolve. It’s a way of helping that person whether they know it or not... though I do think they would need to know that you were holding them in the Light for it to help. I have my way of helping someone – using emotional, intellectual resources to help.

I can see that praying could help the person praying feel better. But there are gains in not praying, you’re not having your expectations raised, if there’s no improvement you’re not disappointed.

To do something prayerfully does mean something to me, to do it thoughtfully with consideration and attention to what the situation involves. I heard of a Friend’s mother who spoke of doing the washing ‘religiously’ on a Thursday – she meant ‘This is the day I do these things, I will do them with consideration and there will be implications if I don’t’. That’s doing something prayerfully.

Sheila Semple on Prayer

As a Christian child I was taught to say a prayer every night. After that I just prayed when I was upset or worried about something. But now I see prayer as trying to get into right relationship with God. A traditional phrase would be 'to seek the will of God for me'.

- There are three images I have about prayer. One is of changing the points on a railway line to change direction – to be aligned so that the spirit can travel through me. Another is of a touchstone where I turn and touch the divine, reminding myself. A third is, I think, from an old film, where lovers are parting. One stands on the station platform and the other is inside the carriage. They place their hands together, separated by the glass. 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.'
- All these images have movement in them, about me taking an intentional step towards God. When I'm 'aligned' or 'in touch', then I may name individuals or situations that I'm concerned about, or ask to become kinder, more truthful, to have more courage. I'm now more explicit about prayer, I'll offer to pray for someone (if I think they will understand 'pray') or to hold them 'in the Light', though that's not always clear. I've recently moved to speaking of it as 'holding you in the Light before God'.
- Sometimes I have to use 'arrow' prayers, just a quick 'Help!' in difficult situations. And sometimes it's just like a nod of recognition, a 'Hello, here I am!' And sometimes it is as if I am not the initiator...
- I'm not as faithful in prayer as I'd like to be. It's a mystery to me why, when I know how much better my life is when I pray, I so easily give up.

Liz Anderton on Prayer

As a child at church, prayer was something spoken FOR me, sometimes it felt not very meaningful because it was not necessarily about the things I wanted to pray about. I was starting to question the prescriptive nature of a good deal of organised religion.

When I came to Quakers I found the silence gave me freedom to think and essentially to pray for the things I wanted to pray for, for example situations in my family, a really ill close friend, or something in the community or the world that touched me.

Prayer means to me taking a bit of time out, getting in touch with the spiritual dimension in me, not about a God out there. It's mostly about the spiritual dimension in myself when I pray, in worship it's more about touching that spiritual dimension in all the others worshipping, but they both overlap. It's different from meditation - that seems to me a very lonely path - whereas for Quakers it's more about the corporate community.

Sometimes I think about prayer as putting some difficult thing that I can't cope with into the eternal stream, and the stream will look after it.

What impact does prayer have? Maybe it makes us feel better. Perhaps it impacts on others. People do speak of being helped, supported by the prayer of others. If I was praying for someone, it would depend on the individual what I would say. 'Holding you in the Light' might well need some explanation; perhaps 'In my thoughts and prayers' is my most usual way of expressing it.

Rosemary Morgan on prayer

As my sense of 'the divine' (whatever that might or might not be), has changed over the years, so has my sense of what 'prayer' is. I do not believe there is a 'God' who 'answers'

prayer. This is now very different from the Baptist fundamentalist tradition in which I was brought up.

‘Prayer’ for me is about finding my way to a spiritual place where I sense something deeper within myself which gives me strength.

In this place where I hope for ego to be laid down, I feel a need/wish to hold/encircle those I know who are in need of support and care – friends, family, Friends, Meeting, world situations and crises. I do not believe that (other than for those who know they are being ‘encircled’) my ‘holding in the light’ can directly help those I hold - other than as it relates to ‘prayer’ being used as a springboard to a deeper understanding which leads to action.

But I do know the power of being ‘held in the light’ by F/friends at times in my life when I knew I could not go it alone: When we were at our son’s inquest; when our granddaughter was seriously ill. And at those times it was so much more than just knowing others were thinking about us. There was a real strength given to us that I cannot explain. I interpret that experience as a presence of ‘an other’ within/beside, in the way that I have experienced it also at times of extreme pain and stress, and aloneness. This is how I understand/experience the divine.

I also see ‘prayer’ as a deep meditative place. A means of reaching a divine spark within, which holds strength love and peace as I reach down to its depths. I want to use those depths to guide me towards an understanding of what love requires of me.

That all sounds very grand but to reach that place; to discipline myself to reach for that place, is something which is actually very challenging and difficult. Sometimes it (praying) is an impulse from within, but more often it is prompted by keeping (or trying to keep) in my mind a sense of spiritual depth and openness as I go about normal life. This is what the phrase “doing something prayerfully means to me”. It is easier to do if I keep up the discipline of writing a journal, reading regularly something which challenges me on a spiritual level, talking at a deeper level with a friend. And also attending meeting for worship regularly.

QFP 2.23 talks of prayer being a reaching down to love, a holding of our fellows in love, and an offering of ourselves in love. This encapsulates it for me.

BJ McCormac *Who makes the song to bring the spring
Not the sun or bird on wing
Tis the bravery of little things
A silent struggle through muck and mire
To stand against the winter’s ire
It does not weep like the willow tree
But bows it’s head in humility
To hang steadfast in beauty pure
The winning grace is to endure
To have a faith with all its joy
An angry wind cannot destroy
Petals spread like angels wings
Awake awake the hope of spring
Courage courage give to me
Little snow drop to be like thee*

The Biology of Wonder, **Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science** **Andreas Weber, New Society Publishers, 2016**

This is one of the most powerfully challenging books that I have read in a very long time. I do not imagine it will appeal to everyone but certainly it will affect everyone especially Quakers as it speaks to our concerns of sustainability and spiritual relationships. He challenges Darwin and Dawkins to a different view of the natural world and the place of humans in it.

However, it is not an easy book to read. The science of the first part is addressed in long ponderous sentences that I had to read a few times to make sense of. The psychology was easier as that is my field. And yet, the beauty and flow of his language describing nature is simple and deeply spiritual, though he never at any point in the book speaks of 'spirituality'. There is also a very vivid and explicit description of him watching a rabbit undergoing vivisection that will upset you.

So what is it about?

He challenges the thinking of 'modern' science which he explains underpins our economics and politics, because basically we have separated ourselves from nature. This goes right back to Plato with his figures on the cave wall. Kant further drags us into rationality. *'We lack an argument that can serve as a bridge between the world of scientific observation and the realm of subjective value. Only this can be the steppingstone for a comprehensive environmental ethic. And . . . The role of ethics, which is truly beneficial for life, cannot be control but must be healing.'*

So, to his basic premise: Science looks out on the world objectively. Yet, it never answers, or even asks, the question: what is life? If you have studied the philosophy of Science, you will know the lengths it goes to verify the 'facts' when, going back to Hume, we can know nothing of the world without, only surmise. Our world is within. Life is a subjective experience, and not just for us. Whilst Thermodynamics sees all decaying in the end, Life grows. Simple. He postulates the fourth law of thermodynamics of life as, *diversity shall be*. It is not the survival of the fittest. Life has choices and dabbles, hence some of the weird examples we see. My words are bland here due to space in a review. He takes us into the amazing world of nature to explore with us - a little bit of David Attenborough but with long sentences rather than video. *Subjectivity* is the key and he will take us into the Quantum Physics worlds of *entanglement*. We cannot be separate. *' . . . living being, like humans, are not biological machines, but living creative agents, fuelled by meaning and expression '*. He

speaks of Biosemiotics as considering feeling and value to be the foundations of all life processes.

Have you ever looked into a toad's eyes? They are big and round, like dark waters. But their iris, which centres round the black pupil's opening, has a golden colour.

Don't be afraid. Just come closer. Look right into the toad's eyes. There you will find these tiny jewels expand into space. Their interior consists of myriads of tiny folds, microscopic canyons and mountains, above which sparkle lost stars. The toad responds to our gaze with the night's sky.

You say that isn't important? That a toad is an animal and our view of it is uninteresting? Maybe you even find it ugly? Wait a moment. Look again. Look again, as I have done. You'll see that something responds to your gaze. That something exists on the other side, which is no 'thing', no mere matter. Something that lives.

Sub-sections have titles such as: enacting inwardness,; the rebirth of a plant's soul; the question in the eyes of the wolf; all flesh is sun; disease – an ecological imbalance; an Esperanto of emotions; the spirit of swarms; a choir of egotists. There is a bit where he explains our fascination with animals, especially as children . . . because animals express our emotions more clearly and in an uncomplicated form that we can understand.

The final section is on healing ‘. . . *the schism between us and the natural world is arguably the root cause of most of the environmental catastrophes unravelling around us. Until we come to terms with the depth of our alienation, we will fail to understand that what happens to nature also happens to us. . . . our connection to Earth's complex web of dynamic, interconnected relationships underpins the entire range of human experience, giving rise to a new ecological ethos, and demonstrating that subjectivity and imagination are the prerequisites of biological existence.*’

I feel a bit inadequate to express such a complex work. It is not a book to read from cover to cover and then abandon to the book shelf. To take it down and ponder over sentences again and again is to realise ourselves more fully.

Margaret Roy, Lanark

NEW BOOKS IN GLASGOW MEETING LIBRARY

Johnson, David . Jesus, Christ and servant of God: meditation on the Gospel according to John. Inner Light Books, 2017. B/JOH

Swinson, Jo. Equal power and how you can make it happen. Atlantic Books, 2018. S/SWI
Quaker Social Action. 150 years of Quaker Social Action. Quaker Social Action, 2017. S/QUA

Forces watch. Take action on militarism and challenging militarism: a resources pack. Forces Watch. P/FOR

Huber, Klaus. Mind the Light, the story of a Quaker discipline. Experiment with Light Network, 2018

Librarian, Paul Burton will send books at cost of postage. paulfburton@btinternet.com

Take Action on Militarism

These days the Armed Forces are quite visible in our society, from Remembrance Day Commemorations to Armed Forces Day and their many visits to schools where they are presented as a career option. Also they assist with crowds at large sporting events. The UK Government is putting millions of extra money into School Cadet Units while all UK Local Councils have signed up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant which pledges their support for Armed Forces Day. In response ForcesWatch and Quaker Peace and Social Witness have developed a resource pack called Take Action on Militarism.

It consists of an illustrated booklet and six case studies where individuals tell their stories of encountering and challenging military culture in the everyday life; plus suggestions for action.

The pack provides an overview of recent militarisation in the UK, including in education, at public events, around Remembrance, the increase in cadet forces and recruitment activities, and the arms trade.

Also there are ideas for action, and case studies from groups and individuals who have challenged militarism in their communities.

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/peace/challenging-militarism-1>

Douglas Shaw, Lanark

I Fell

I fell at Culloden, I fell at the Somme,
To the sound of the bugle and beat of the drum,
The proud flags they fluttered, the bagpipes were played,
The Gospel of Jesus forever betrayed.
They told us to march, and this I did do,
But I didn't expect such a hullabaloo!
The foe dressed in hodden, (my tunic was brown),
The Chaplain was puzzled, his heart bore a frown.
The sword it had beckoned our young men to die,
The grass it was trod on, and blue was the sky.
Mars held a banquet, invited his guests,
Jupiter, Eros, - you know all the rest!
They watched it on 'SKY', with popcorn and beer,
They ate nuts and pretzels, - though some shed a tear.
Quakers they called them - opposed to all war,
They sat still in silence, like never before.

.....

Bill Bingham, Glasgow

West Scotland Area Meeting Report for 2017

Achievements and performance

Public Meeting for Worship was held on a regular basis at 17 locations throughout West Scotland. Some local meetings hold worship every Sunday in the same location, some meet once or twice a month sometimes in different locations to enable Friends in geographically dispersed areas to attend. Wigtown Meeting holds a mid-week meeting for worship once a month. Glasgow Meeting holds weekly mid-week lunchtime meeting for worship and a monthly evening meeting for worship. Attendance at Meetings for Worship ranges from 3 - 4 in some of the smaller rural meetings to 20 - 70 in the larger urban meetings. At the end of 2017, there were 220 members, and around 243 people not in membership attended on a regular basis; occasional visitor numbers are not recorded. The membership has increased by 14 since 2016.. One marriage under Friends' auspices was held in 2017. There are children's meetings in Glasgow and Dunblane.

Members met for Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs (our business meetings) seven times during the year, four times in person (at various locations in West Scotland) and three times by telephone conference. The average attendance at these meetings was 24, ranging from 14 for one of the telephone conferences to 39 for a meeting in Glasgow that had a speaker. Smaller meetings continued to value the holding of these meetings in their part of the Area but also had more difficulties, simply by virtue of the small number attending these local worshipping groups, in joining in the other meetings, whether face-to-face or by telephone. We are exploring how best to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the "social media", and so remain attractive to younger members in particular. Our small numbers and the geography of West Scotland continue to be the major challenge for us. Ensuring the Quaker Discipline is adequately maintained throughout the Area remains important for us.

This year our business included once again how best to live our faith and witness to the need for truth and integrity in public affairs. The Area Meeting was well represented at the quarterly sessions of General Meeting for Scotland and Britain Yearly Meeting, held this year in London. The Meeting contributed to the central work of the Society carried out by Britain Yearly Meeting. Members of the Meeting serve on many of its national committees. The Area Meeting has continued to contribute, through its annual giving to General Meeting for Scotland, to the employment in Scotland of a Parliamentary Engagement Officer to help strengthen our advocacy role in public life. Her work is supported in Scotland by a Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, and our representative gave us regular reports on its activities.

Appointments were made for Friends to attend various several conferences and training sessions at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham and elsewhere. We held

once again a well-supported family weekend in Crianlarich in March principally for members in the west and from the islands. Regular attendance was maintained by our representatives at Meeting for Sufferings (London), at the Summer Shindig at Ackworth School, Northern Friends Peace Board, and the Quaker Life Representative Council ; also the annual conference of Quaker treasurers. In support of the Quaker witness to peace, Meeting for Worship continues to be held regularly outside Faslane naval base and Dundrennan army base. The big event of the year was the Yearly Meeting Gathering held at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England. the 23 Friends who attended found it to be an invigorating experience.

Local meetings are the lifeblood of the Society and one, Dunblane, celebrated 50 years of worshipping in the town. Dunblane also became the first Scottish meeting to be recognised as a Sanctuary Meeting. Many meetings continued their reading of “Quaker Faith and Practice, the Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain”, in preparation for its possible revision. Studying this book, our governing document, has done much to deepen members’ understanding and spiritual insights. “Living out our Faith” is the theme of Friends in Britain at the present time, and several meetings have witnessed in their communities to the need for peace and justice, and sustainable living. Most Local Meetings also support a range of charitable good causes.

Property

Glasgow and Wigtown Local Meetings are responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of their Meeting Houses, and report to the Area Meeting Trustees on an annual basis.

Glasgow Local Meeting continues to offer its social witness by letting out its property to many anonymous and other groups which would otherwise find it hard to find premises in which to meet and a growing number of groups are also using Wigtown Meeting House. In Glasgow, the Meeting House Development Group has met to try and discern the way to implement the Local Meeting’s vision for the future of the Quaker witness in the city. Little progress has been made so far as the demolition of the adjacent property is not yet complete and it is unclear how the site will be developed; it is zoned for offices. Various options are being reviewed, ranging from basic repairs to complete rebuilding. Trustees are conscious of the need to protect the Area Meeting’s assets and not commit the meeting to developments if cannot afford.

The Annual Reports of LMs to AM

Argyll

2017 was a year in which we struggled to uphold all in our Meeting, due to illness, the fact that we are not getting any younger, our geographical isolation from each other and the poor state of our roads.

Two of our number, who had fulfilled the roles of both Elder and Overseer, needed to be released. We greatly appreciate and value the contribution they have made to our Meeting over the years (they continue to enrich our meetings with their presence).

We managed to be flexible and adaptive. Holding the Minard Meeting for Worship every month has turned into a success, since four Friends live in the village and it is within reasonable travelling distance from Lochgilphead, where we also have Friends. Tarbert Meeting was more difficult but equidistant between Campbeltown and Minard, and is ideal for our new elder. In Campbeltown, those attending Meetings felt that Quakers needed more publicity and more frequent meetings, so since November 2017 we meet twice a month from January to November and once in December, advertising on Argyll FM in advance and on the day with a kerbside A-board. Meeting size ranges from 2 to 8.

We are hoping that technology might offer a way to implement the "local" in Argyll Local Meeting whilst avoiding excessive road mileage. To this end, two of our number are on the Media Technology group for WSAM and are in the process of setting up a video conference trial.

Friends greatly benefitted from both the Westerly Friends Gathering in Crianlarich (March) and the Arran cluster meeting at Lochranza (September). **Ed Tyler**

Arran

Arran Local Meeting has continued to meet weekly on a Sunday. On the second and fourth Sundays in each month we met in the library in Brodick and on other Sundays we met in Friends' homes. We found that meeting at a central public venue had the advantage that Friends and other interested people visiting the island could find us more easily and are planning to find a central public place where we can meet every Sunday in 2018.

We were very pleased to welcome Helen McLeod into membership and we also have 2 new regular attenders. Following the end of 3 years as an Elder and an Overseer Judith Baines and Tessa Smith have handed over these responsibilities to Catherine Brown and Isobel Thomson. Gus Smith has handed on the Treasurership to Helen MacLean.

We have very much enjoyed having visitors from other meetings, some from West of Scotland Meetings, and we have had visits from the Glasgow Healing Group and the Glasgow Walking Group. We have also been pleased to welcome visiting Friends from further afield who have been holidaying on the island.

Friends from Arran Meeting like to visit other Meetings, weather and boats permitting. We have managed to go to Area Meeting in Glasgow and Tarbert although an attempt to get to Wigtown was frustrated by a car breakdown on the way. We appreciate being able to participate in Telephone Area Meeting.

3 people from Arran enjoyed a weekend at Crianlarich with other Friends from West Coast Meetings. Helen McLeod was able to visit Swarthmore and take part in a group "Following in the Footsteps of George Fox". Isobel Thomson went to Woodbrook for an Elders and Overseers week-end.

Ayrshire

Ayrshire Meeting holds its Meetings for Worship at The Riverside Flats Community Centre, Ayr four times a month on Sunday commencing at 10.30. Meetings are not held on a fifth Sunday. We are a small Meeting with an average attendance of 7 or 8 members and attenders. On third Sundays we have a shared lunch followed by a short video (where possible) and a discussion of a range of Quaker related topics, some taken from QF&P and others suggested in advance by the Meeting.

Members and Attenders contribute to the life of West Scotland AM by attendance at Meetings for Church Affairs both in geographical locations and by telephone, in addition we support WSAM through service in AM roles and through financial contributions. Members have attended BYM. We have involvement with Friends worldwide through the Friends World Committee for Consultation. Members have served as AM Treasurer, Area Nominations Committee and clerk of Area Meeting Elders. Members of the Meeting have further supported the wider Quaker community by representing AM at Meeting for Sufferings and at Quaker Life Representative Council. A member is a Britain Yearly Meeting Trustee. During the past year Members attended a range of courses at Woodbrooke, Glenthorne, Swarthmoor Hall and Woodbrooke Online

The Meeting organised and held a successful open-day meeting in October during Quaker Week. Ellis Brooks from Quaker Peace and Social Witness gave an inspiring session on peace education and introduced us to a range of games that provided us with insights into injustice and inequality. Peter and Hilary Christy spoke about their peace project on Creating Peace Advocates in schools. Alastair Reid discussed the range of peace work Quakers are involved with. We also showed a number of short videos about Quaker beliefs and peace work. Members were available throughout the day and provided information to enquirers as well as refreshments including cake. The day was considered to be very successful.

Castle Douglas

There was no change among members in 2017. Clare Phillips became our elder as Patrick Bealey was released. Clare Devereux became an elder/overseer. Our new clerk will be Penny Lillie. Our attendance figures have been a little uncertain in 2017 however, the quality and depth of our meetings has been good (please see the Spiritual Focus subject below).

Spiritual Focus:

We have been engaged in reading the Quaker Faith and Practice (QF&P) programme. . All who took part found the material helpful. We felt that we had a more rounded understanding – not only of this key Quaker document, but also of each other.

Amongst other activities, two from our meeting attended Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017, and one of our LM joined in online - the Woodbrooke Webinar later in the year. A Woodbrooke on the Road event was attended in Glasgow on 9 December, while earlier in the year there was the enrichment of a Charney Manor poetry course for one of our number. Other significant events were the Arms Fair at Canary Wharf in September – two were present from our LM. And on 1 December two of our LM went as participants to the meeting

in Glasgow on “Women and Power” addressed by Clare Phillips along with Helen Minnis . This was part of the 16 days, Violence Against Women.

Premises:

During this year we have been engaged with the management committee of the local community centre where we meet. At this point the future location of our meeting is very much in question. A management committee-organised feasibility study was announced, now underway but Dumfries and Galloway Council have supplied little or no information on the direction of their decisions. We only know that they are cutting funding for community facilities in their region. We trust God for a future that is known and secure above!

Library and Archiving:

We continue to maintain a library with active updating of the catalogue. (Several of the new entrants have been received as gifts - these are most welcome.) Our librarian has also agreed to take on the role of archivist, where his experience is very welcome.

Other Activities:

1. Dundrennan. We continued to hold MfW at the Dundrennan artillery range in 2017.
2. Militarisation continues to be a focus. We found it valuable to affirm the work of a military-related charity in the area of mine clearing. We look for more ways of seeing the positive side of what is a major source of instability in our world today.
3. Charities We were able to donate regularly through the year, to both Quaker and others.
4. Quaker Outreach Week. We held an outreach event outside Castle Douglas post office as usual this year, The event is under review for 2018.

Cluster Events:

The South-West Cluster meeting (Dumfries, Wigtown and ourselves) again held no cluster meetings this year. We do maintain contact however, and we hope for further increases in strength throughout our spread-out region. We have been able to share lunches with Dumfries LM on occasion.

West Scotland Area Meeting (WSAM):

We agreed in 2017 to host area meeting in 2018. (The meeting is set for Saturday 14 April 2018 in Castle Douglas Community Centre.)

Fair Trade: We continue to purchase fairtrade items when possible.

In Summary:

It was another year of change, and a stimulating one. Our engagement with the Reading (QF&P) programme was a prominent feature of the year.

And as long as we keep an emphasis on seeking spiritual growth, we should remain a meeting that people will want to join.

Patrick Bealey

Dumfries

Dumfries Meeting continues to carry out the requirements set by BYM Trustees as mentioned in our previous State of the Meeting reports. We are a fairly small but loyal Meeting with about 10 people attending regularly & we were delighted to welcome Peter Morton into membership & Jenny Brook who transferred to Dumfries Meeting. We have Elder's & Overseer's meetings, a yearly treasurer's report & a regular newsletter. Every two months we

hold a collection for different charities which this year came to £731. We also collect for our own local Meeting & gave £200 to Area Meeting.

Each fourth Sunday a number of us gather at 9.45am before Meeting to share thoughts & ideas. For the past 40 years we have held our second Sunday Meeting in people's homes when we hold discussions followed by a shared lunch which helps us to know each other better. In 2017 our subjects included Forgiveness – a most interesting couple of Sundays based on Richard Holloway's book; Truth & Integrity; Sustainability; a report from BYM at Warwick University, we watched the environmental film "Domain" together & we discussed the Woodbrooke on the Road "What can we do with what we've got" as 4 of us were able to go to Glasgow for this event.

We have occasionally had joint meetings with Castle Douglas & Wigtown. One Saturday in June we hosted the Northern Friends Peace Board Meeting which we found very interesting. Seven of our Meeting joined over 20 other Friends from northern Britain & it was inspiring to hear of all the peace activities taking place throughout the area. We also learnt how much militarisation is going on within the schools in our region.

Claire MacLeod

Dunblane

Dunblane Quaker meeting continues to meet every Sunday in the Braeport Centre. The doorkeeper usually reads their choice from Advices and Queries. The children normally stay to hear this reading. At the end of 2017 we numbered 17 members, 24 attenders and 10 children, with an average of some 15 at Meeting for Worship each week. We have welcomed two new attenders, and two others have moved out of the area, now attending other Local Meetings. One of the children achieved the age of 16 and is now counted as an adult attender.

We hold a Meeting for Business on a Sunday before each Area Meeting. Elders and Overseers meet approximately every six weeks.

Children's Meeting, held every week, continues to thrive, with several children usually attending. The Children's Committee have some dozen Friends helping to run the programme. Children's Meeting is a significant component of the spiritual life of our Meeting. We have held several all-age worship meetings through the year, including on the day when we celebrated Dunblane LM's 50th anniversary (see below).

A pot-luck lunch was hosted by the Gean family on 24th December.

Two Friends attended Britain Yearly Meeting. The epistle from BYM was read during a subsequent Dunblane Local Meeting for Worship.

As usual we hosted a West Scotland Area Meeting in October 2017.

Outreach, playing a part in the community, fulfilling our Quaker Testimonies

Dunblane LM belongs to Dunblane Churches Together (previously Dunblane Council of Churches), Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Group, Startup in Stirling, the Quaker Disability Equality Group and Quaker Council for European Affairs. In response to an initiative of QPSW, we have registered as a "Sanctuary Meeting", the first LM in Scotland to do so, and we have sent the names of two Friends to be link persons to the project

coordinator. We held a short awareness-raising vigil in Dunblane town centre on the day that ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We continue as a Fair Trade Meeting.

As a Local Meeting, during 2017 we collected donations for Project Ability, Cape Town Quaker Peace Centre, Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Network, Quaker Disability Equality Group, the Howard League for Penal Reform, and Quaker Social Action. We also collected for Shelter during the Dunblane 50th anniversary celebration day (see below). Individual Friends have been actively supporting other good causes, such as the Christian Aid committee, and a number of Friends add their support to various causes prompted by web-based pressure groups like avaaz, Change.com and 38degrees.

Dunblane LM's 50th anniversary

A highlight of the year was our 50th anniversary. Dunblane Local Meeting started life with a Meeting for Worship at the home of Betsy and William Aitken in November 1967. Three generations on, the house is still the home of descendent Friends. We marked the anniversary with events on two days. On Sunday 27th August we revived an early tradition by holding Meeting for Worship in a small kirk in Glen Artney, followed by a picnic by the Water of Ruchill. On October 28th, we met again in what is now Old Churches House, Dunblane, for a day to celebrate the life and community that is Dunblane Local Meeting. Friends whom we had not seen for years came along to join us. We cut a cake and sang Happy Birthday. We produced a Dunblane Book as a souvenir. Young Friends urged us, through the medium of dramatic sketches, to ponder what we feel are necessities in life and what are luxuries. One Young Friend told us of her recent visit to Palestine. Older Friends discovered how far they had come to be there that day, and who had been the first to join the meeting. We spent time reflecting on what was special about our Society and Dunblane Meeting in particular, and what belonging to a meeting means. We read some sections of Chapter 10 of Quaker Faith and Practice and looked forward to many more years of worshipping together. In the evening we adjourned to the Victoria Hall, a local community hall, for a ceilidh. This had been advertised widely in the town and a number of local folks joined us, as did some young Friends who travelled out from Edinburgh and Glasgow. We raised £167.59 for Shelter. We are grateful to Michael Hutchinson for facilitating our meeting in Old Churches House. Friends wrote reports for *The Friend* and *West Scotland Quaker Newsletter*.

Finances

Our income in 2017 was £3,444, up by some £1,000 over the previous year. Our expenditure, £4,516, included two unusual items: just over £1,600 on the 50th anniversary celebrations and £494 on Woodbrooke courses for our new clerks. We spent about £1,070 more than we received because of these items. Our usual expenses are around £100, and so we expect to budget £200 for 2018 to allow for one-off training costs in the next triennium. Our current reserves, including our shared interest deposit account, are of the order of £4,000.

Glasgow

Meetings for Worship were held throughout the year on Sunday mornings and Wednesday lunchtimes. These were well attended and attracted a number of new attenders as well as visitors to the city. Two satellite meetings, in the East End and Southside, continued to be held on a regular basis. Renfrewshire Quakers have met together from time to time for discussion evenings. Following lengthy discernment, Glasgow meeting agreed not to employ

children's workers for the children's meeting and to use appropriately vetted and recruited volunteers to work with the children twice a month. Friends continued to give their support to the Meetings for Worship at the gates of Faslane Naval Base.

As in the previous year, Glasgow Meeting's development and discernment on its future has been limited by the inactivity on the adjacent demolition site throughout 2017. We expect progress to be made in early 2018. However, we are still well-placed to undertake further discernment having looked into funding and planning issues through the work of the Meeting House Development Group and the short-term Funding Group in 2016.

Local Meeting (LM) for Worship for Business took place on eight occasions. A special local meeting was held in the Spring to consider the issue of truth and integrity in public affairs. Minutes are circulated by email, with timely verbal summary reports after Meeting for Worship, and are filed in the Meeting House. While there was less pressure on the LM Clerking team and other Friends in managing and co-ordinating the issues faced over the neighbouring demolition work, managing and supporting LM business still took up a considerable amount of time, particularly for the Clerking Team. There was strong teamwork and shared responsibility with LM Committees and Area Meeting Trustees. LM reviewed safeguarding in Glasgow Meeting at the February LM and sent a report to the WSAM safeguarding coordinators for their information and action. The vision for Glasgow Quaker Meeting was supported and strengthened throughout 2017 despite the difficulties associated over discerning the future of the Meeting House and the Meeting itself. Specific concerns were adopted, for example regarding women and violence and Glasgow as a sanctuary Meeting. Our archivist, Paul Burton deposited LM papers within the National Records of Scotland.

In 2017 the **Elders** in Glasgow meeting have been a stable group and able to meet regularly. Elders aim to uphold all the regular meetings for worship, on Sundays, Wednesdays and in the East End and Southside. We have also maintained links with the children's committee. The group has continued with the practice of reading from Advices & Queries on a monthly basis and regularly reviews the quality of Meeting for Worship, noting the 'gatheredness' of many meetings and depth of quietness. The group took a day away together in August to reflect on their role in the Meeting and found the time valuable. On shared lunch days the Elders have started to take their lunch in the library, offering to have discussions and answer questions from new comers and enquirers. The group is planning a day for an extended meeting for worship, and with the learning group, a retreat day. We note that 5 of the current group are continuing in the new Triennium and look forward to working with the newly appointed Elders.

This year it was agreed with Local Meeting that the **Learning Group** would become a sub-group of Elders, co-opting others from the meeting for additional support, as the original learning group had been set up as part of the visioning process and to support Elders in their responsibility for learning. The learning group organised Nicola Maharg to speak about Jane Gardam in the meeting house and concluded the 18 month *Reading Quaker Faith and*

Practice reading groups with open meetings for reflection. There are now 5 groups (one open) monthly to read Craig Barnett's articles on Quaker Renewal which will run until June 2018. Verene Nicolas facilitated a pilot of a deep listening group.

Overseers began 2017 with 8 in number instead of the previous 10 and welcomed an additional Overseer in May. We met 5 times as a group during 2017. Five of the Glasgow and Milngavie Overseers also spent a day with Overseers and Elders from West of Scotland. At our meetings, and between meetings, we share our own news and news of Friends including matters of health and wellbeing, family and work in order to know when support may be required. We have visited several Friends in ill health, attended the weddings of 4 Members/Attenders and considered financial support for those in need. It has been a challenge to keep up to date with the regular arrival of new Attenders to our Meeting, approximately 20 during 2017. Judging the right time to appoint them an Overseer or to remove someone who has had no contact for a long time is an ongoing task. We are pleased that 4 Attenders were encouraged to attend the Enquirers weekend in September and found it a very positive experience.

At the annual barbeque at Mugdock Country Park held in August, we asked those attending to bring their own or use compostable tableware and cutlery to reduce our environmental impact. Using the "social fund" the Meeting's annual trip to a pantomime took place in December. We have discussed and are still acting upon several issues; sending emails to Members and Attenders as their Overseer to encourage attendance at particular Quaker events and gatherings, working with others to encourage children to attend regularly, identifying those who may need assistance in a fire evacuation and safe practice in visiting Friends. Issues we still wish to act upon include; developing our knowledge in supporting those in mental distress and considering end of life concerns.

The **Children's Committee** has found 2017 a challenging year. Despite trying to re-energise the Children's Meeting and encourage more children to attend numbers remained low, between 0-6, and during the first half of the year there were no children 50% of the time. This was largely due to there being few families at Glasgow Meeting with young children. The Committee felt it was difficult to justify the cost of continuing to employ a children's worker and it was with regret that the employment of the children's worker, Fatemeh Nokhbeth, and the assistant children's worker, Alistair McIver, ended in September/October. We are very grateful to Fatemeh and Alistair for their caring and support over the years in looking after the children. As from November, the Children's Meeting takes place on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month with two volunteer helpers on a rota basis, one of whom will be a member of the PVG scheme. The Committee is exploring ways to provide training for the volunteer helpers.

On a more positive note, the annual tree planting trip to Wiston Lodge was held in March on a lovely sunny day and involved children, parents and Friends/Attenders of Glasgow Meeting in all-Age worship along with Lanark Meeting. The children had an Ice Cream Sunday in June which was a great success and raised monies for the charity Classrooms for Malawi. The

annual barbeque at Murdock Park was enjoyed by the children and they are looking forward to attending the Christmas show 'The Jungle Book' in December at the Royal Conservatoire. In the coming year it is hoped that we can have more engagement with families outside of MfW.

The **Wardenship & Lettings Committee** report that the new warden, Linda Haggerstone, appointed in September 2016, has settled well into her new role. She has proved an effective manager of the wardenship team which now includes two assistant wardens and three depute wardens. She has confirmed that all groups have now signed the Terms and Conditions of Lets and has monitored and recorded the use of the Meeting House by non-Quaker groups to ensure that all of them are now paying the revised room rates as set out by the Wardenship & Lettings Committee in 2016. In line with the requirements of the Charity Commissioners, Local Meeting in Minute 17/13 (February 2017) approved the principle of allowing a discounted rate for charity and voluntary groups using the Meeting House and a further discounted rate for anonymous groups. For a long time, subsidies to these groups have been considered to be an important part of Glasgow Quaker Meeting's witness in the local community. After an extensive review of Income/Cost of Lettings covering the first six months of this year the committee has decided not to change the lettings structure in the meantime but will continue to monitor costs and the usage of the building on a regular basis. Fire procedures for the Meeting House have been reviewed with all groups required to take responsibility for the safe evacuation of their members from the building.

This year major work organised by **Property Committee** has included repairs to one of the boilers which are now very old so spare parts are difficult to source, and repairs to the roof and gable despite which there is still the occasional problem with fresh leaks. The worst of these resulted in the need to replace the carpet tiles and mat in the entrance hall. Property Committee continues to organise necessary minor repairs to the building, and is currently working closely with the Safety Officer to improve fire safety procedures which may occasion a few minor repairs or modifications. However, given the uncertainty about the future of the building, Property Committee has put the rolling schedule of repairs on hold and has become largely reactive, dealing with problems as they arise.

The **Outreach Committee's** main initiative this year was a collaborative event in late June with Scottish Refugee Council and Renfield St Stephens church. Throughout Refugee Festival week we staged the photographic exhibition *This Light that Pushes Me*, focusing on the human capacity to give heart and soul to work for nonviolent change in the hardest circumstances. At the end of the week, outreach welcomed Journeymen Theatre from the Midlands who performed two short plays: "*The Bundle*" about an asylum seeker and "*Feeding the Darkness*" about state-sanctioned torture. Staging these events at a central venue, on Bath Street encouraged extra footfall, and as a result we attracted visitors from all over the world, many of whom asked questions, took leaflets and gave generously to QPSW and SRC. For Quaker week we gave out Quaker postcards to everyone after meeting and encouraged them to send it to a friend. We worked closely throughout the year with Communication Committee on publicity through Facebook, leaflets and posters

This year the **Communications Group** were able to meet twice. We very much welcomed the input from Ruth Bacon, in her capacity as member of General Meetings Website Development Group, as this has been one of our concerns: how our website currently fits into the bigger picture and how it could in the future. Throughout this year we watched and listened to how our website, twitter and facebook accounts worked and didn't work; looked to improve our Meeting House noticeboards and displays; encouraged and supported friends in their archiving of minutes and publishing of materials.

Moving forward, the main challenge continues to be the website and our web presence: how to keep it current and alive, and how to weave into it our Quaker ways of working. In 2018 we will be paying attention to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into force in May 2018, and to recent advice on Fraud and Cyber Crime. Under these lights we will continue to look at our archiving, data retention and data sharing; themes trending within Area Meeting, General Meeting and Yearly Meeting too.

2017 has been a busy year for the **Nominations Committee** as it was the last year of the triennium and in light of this we requested another member for the Nominations Committee and an appointment was duly made. Early in the year we had to find replacements for the Children's, Outreach, and Property Committees. In May we began looking at appointments for the new triennium as there were several posts to be filled, including that of Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The task of finding people to appoint to committees is not an easy one but by Local Meeting in November a list of names for the new triennium was brought forward and accepted. Two members of the committee have served two triennia, for which we thank them, and we look forward to welcoming two new members at the start of the new triennium.

The **Meeting House Development Group** has not met this year as there have been no developments related to a new Meeting House. This has been due to the lack of progress on the demolition of the office block next to the Meeting House. If and when a developer takes over the site we will make contact to investigate the possibility of either selling our property to them or incorporating a new meeting house in the development. Meanwhile, we occasionally monitor property web sites for suitable property but none have been found yet.

We are grateful to our hard-working **Hospitality Committee** which provides simple meals for the monthly Bring and Share lunch and for those attending Local Meeting for Business, as well as other Quaker events such as Area and General Meeting, Quaker Quest and Woodbrooke on the Road. Regular hospitality is also organised by the many Friends who volunteer to serve teas and coffees after Meeting for Worship on Sundays, and to prepare lunch after the midweek Meeting for Worship on Wednesdays.

In the course of the year, we held sixteen special collections, raising £3,094 in total for a variety of Quaker and non-Quaker charities.

Glasgow Meeting held a range of other activities, in addition to those organized by its committees. There was a monthly Spiritual Healing Group and a weekly Light Group (which is open to all). Glasgow Friends against Homelessness continued to take part in regular

Sunday evening tea runs, and a Fair Trade stall was regularly available after Meeting for Worship. Our Hill-walking Group and Strollers Group provided opportunities for social contact and healthy activity. In a very geographically dispersed meeting, there have been a range of opportunities and occasions for Friends and Attenders to come together both in Meetings for Worship and in other ways.

Islay and Jura

Islay and Jura LM continues to meet twice-monthly, on the last Sunday afternoon and 2nd Monday morning of each month in the Baptist Church in Bowmore. These Meetings are advertised on the Islay & Jura page of the GM website and also in the local fortnightly newspaper, together with a contact number. We also held Meeting for Worship at the Jura Care Centre in Jura about 6 or 7 times during the 2017, and continue to do so whenever the opportunity (and weather) presents itself.

Numbers attending Meeting vary between 3 and 5 in Jura, and between 3 and 9 in Islay, and we have welcomed one attender into membership in 2017. We have only one family in the Meeting and the children do not usually attend, although when they did - on a Monday - we shortened Meeting slightly and they stayed in Meeting. We have one Friend PVG registered and prepared to take any children who do attend. We have one Elder (myself) and one Overseer (Andrew Jackson, not in membership). Data permission forms have been completed by all those whose details are held on the GM database, and the forms have been returned to the GM Administrator for storage.

Our Monday meeting takes the form of 40 minutes of worship followed by 20 minutes of led reflection where we look together at a particular topic or passage from QF&P. We maintain a “book box” library.

Two of us have taken part in AM by telephone during the year and two of us attended AM in Tarbert in August. Two of us, plus two children, also much enjoyed the “westerly Friends” gathering in Crianlarich. We have held a local Meeting for Worship for Business on two occasions during the year. We continue to be represented at the monthly ecumenical gathering of church representatives in Islay.

Schedules were distributed to all members and attenders, and we hold a regular collection for local expenses, the surplus of which has been passed to Area Meeting. Accounts are kept in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and returned regularly to the AM Treasurer.

Bronwen Currie

Lanark.

The regular holding of public Meetings for Worship took place on the first and third Sundays of each month at Wiston Lodge. We have welcomed attenders and enquirers who have joined us, in general our numbers at Meeting for Worship remain at the higher level reported in 2016. We have read Advices and Queries regularly during our worship. Area Meetings

have been attended by members of our meeting, and we have taken part in some of the telephone conference Meetings.

Meg Beresford and Malcolm Crosby continue to fulfil the roles of Elder/Overseer and Clerk respectively. Margaret Roy is Assistant Clerk for WSAM and remains Editor of WSAM Newsletter and represents GM on the World Day of Prayer Scottish Committee. Margaret is also on the Experiment with Light Nominations Committee. David Rees continued his service as AM Trustee to December 2017. Douglas Shaw is Clerk to the Executive Committee of Northern Friends Peace Board. Janet Fenton is a co-opted member of NFPB, which gave her funding and a Travelling Minute to present to 15th Street Monthly Meeting in New York, facilitating Janet to talk to Quakers in New York. Funds were also raised in Lanark LM and additional support obtained from AM, which, together with the support from American Friends, enabled Janet to attend as an accredited delegate in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which participated in the United Nations conference to write a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty was successfully concluded on 7th July. Douglas Shaw and Jean Oliver attended the Week of Action to Stop the Arms Fair in London in September. Douglas was arrested for obstruction of the highway and pled guilty at a subsequent trial, was fined £25 and bound over to keep the peace for 6 months. David Rees attended Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick University, Coventry.

A special collection was held to support the participation of Catherine Holmes at QUNO Summer School in Geneva in July. This proved a major influence on her future plans and Catherine provided a full report on her attendance.

The accounts for the Meeting have been kept in the proper manner and incorporated into West Scotland Area Meeting accounts. The opportunity for giving has been discussed within the Meeting. We have struggled to organise Business Meetings regularly.

We have supported the activity of other local Meetings by attendance at some of their Meetings for Worship in Glasgow, Milngavie, Edinburgh, Musselburgh & Portobello, Penicuik and Peebles. Muriel Robertson from Milngavie LM has been a welcome part of our Meeting, although, sadly, towards the end of the year has been increasingly unwell and unable to travel. Friends from other West of Scotland Meetings have joined us periodically and the presence of people from Meetings in Edinburgh and Glasgow at Wiston Lodge allowed us to hold All-age Worship. Tree planting was an enjoyable activity organised by Glasgow Meeting at Wiston in March. We enjoyed Christmas lunch and Carol singing at Wiston Lodge as a shared activity with Edinburgh and Penicuik Meetings.

Malcolm Crosby

Milngavie

Milngavie rents space at The Fraser Centre in central Milngavie, meeting on 2nd and last Sundays of each month. Normally we expect 16-20 for worship. This is a wheelchair accessible space, though there is no hearing loop. We have 25 members and attenders listed

in the Book of Members. We are mostly of an older generation, and have not had a children's meeting during the year. The building we use does not have a separate room to use for a children's meeting. The Meeting has one Elder and one Overseer. During this year our Elder has been unwell, and members of the meeting have been supportive of her.

Each Sunday we meet we collect for a charity as well as our own expenses. The 12 charities we collect for are chosen by us collectively each year. Our Treasurer deals with our expenditure, and volunteers assist with the collections. This year we invited Gisela Creed to convene a meeting to decide how to deal with our accumulated surplus, how much to keep in reserve, and the portions to distribute to BYM, Area Meeting, Glasgow Meeting, and a number of charities.

We collect for the local food bank on the last Sunday of the month. We have been recognised as regular donors. Local need is still rising. We are represented on the local churches group. We also contribute to the "Yours Faithfully" column in the local paper from time to time.

Since the end of the QFP study sessions we have not had any further study. Those new to the meeting are supported to explore Becoming Friends, and encouraged to attend Woodbrooke or other centres.

Some of our members are able to attend Area Meeting from time to time, and some went to BYM in Warwick this year. One member serves on Quaker Housing Trust.

Wigtown

Wigtown Local Meeting has held a Meeting for Worship every Sunday and an afternoon Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month. We have not held a children's meeting during the past year. The Meeting has one Elder and one Overseer.

Attendance at Sunday meetings continues to increase, with several new regular attenders; we have gained two new members from Friends planning to move to Wigtown and transferring membership from their Yorkshire meeting. The Wednesday meetings continue to attract members of other churches in the area.

We have held regular and well attended Meetings for Worship for Business and Wigtown members have also regularly attended Area Meeting, one of which was hosted here.

The Meeting House and our recently refurbished garden continue to be available to the wider public as a community resource; one of our attenders is a professional gardener and is continuing to plan the garden as a Peace Garden with an attached nature-friendly area. To this end we obtained a small grant through the disbursement from the Wigtown Community Shop. The Meeting House is let to local groups on a regular basis, raising both a useful revenue stream and also our profile in the community.

Financial accounts have been kept in compliance with the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and SORPS 2005. The finances are in good order at the end of the year, with general funds of £1481 and £5284 in the building reserve (as at 30 November 2017).

Chris Baldry,

Forthcoming Events

SUMMER SHINDIG

Booking forms for Summer Shindig are now available. If you know any young people ages 11 to 16 who might be interested, please would you let them know.

The information given on

http://www.yospace.org.uk/system/files/content//YQ_Calendar_PDF.pdf is

Northern Young Friends Summer Shindig 28 July–4 August at Ackworth School

Ages 11–16

Contact Jen Hodson: 07826 298 562 or

summershindig@gmail.com

www.summershindig.wordpress.com

Fun summer camp for Quaker young people in Scotland and the North East of England

Quaker United Nations Summer School 2018

8–20 July 2018, Geneva

Please pass on information about the Quaker United Nations Summer School in July 2018 to any young people you know aged between 20 and 26 who may be interested in applying to go. The closing date for applications is 12 March 2018.

Helen Bradford, helenb@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1071

Get the best of Britain Yearly Meeting's digital content

Quake! is the new monthly email update on the work of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and Quakers in Britain. It will include discussion and exploration of Quaker life and worship, insights into faith-based activism, and links to new publications as well as the latest news, events and public statements from BYM. This newsletter replaces the Quaker Life Network monthly email and aims to provide an essential monthly digest of the best of our digital content.

Sign up to *Quake!* at: <http://bit.ly/quakemail>

Quaker Bible Study/ Thomas Group

Will meet on 25th May Glasgow Meeting House, 10.30 through to 4.30pm

Following on from Kenosis, preparing to meet the Divine, this session will be on the dialogue with the Divine.

All are welcome. Please contact

margaret.roy@btinternet.com or lorrainemcfadden59@yahoo.com

WEST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING DATES AND VENUES 2017-18 2018

14 April (Saturday) Castle Douglas
11 June (Monday) by telephone conference
25 August (Saturday) Tarbert, Argyll
13 October (Saturday) Ayr
3 December (Monday) by telephone conference

2019

12 January (Saturday) Glasgow

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND DATES

10th March 2018 South East - Edinburgh
16th June 2018 North CORRECTION – not 9th
15th September 2018 West – Glasgow
17th November 2018 East
9th March 2019 West – Glasgow

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING

4-7 May 2018 Friends House, London

Hold in the Light

Muriel Robertson, Milngavie Meeting – home now but been in hospital.

Marion Fairweather, Glasgow Meeting - home now but been in hospital.

John David Bell some of you may know as a past editor of this newsletter who moved to Edinburgh. David is now in St Margaret's Care Home, EH16 5PH

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PS. Telephone 0141 248 84 93

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 15th July

Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair McIver or Margaret Roy

Someone to write book reviews and dig into our history would relieve you of reading Margaret Roy's efforts!