

West Scotland
Quaker News
January 2015

Clerk's Letter	3
December AM by Telephone	3
Yours Faithfully	4
Erskine - "Where caring matters most"	5
Scottish Quakers at Faslane	7

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

Quakers object to millions in funding for developing military ethos in classrooms

Dear Nicky Morgan,

Quakers in Britain were dismayed to learn this week that almost all of the recently announced £5 million “Character Innovation Fund” for schools has been allocated to providers of a “Military Ethos” such as Challenger Troop and Commando Joe’s. Quakers believe that a military ethos is not what young people need. While it claims to engender altruism, aspiration and teamwork, these are not the exclusive preserve of the military. A military culture is one of blind obedience, not the critical thinking learners need, and is founded on the normalisation of violence.

Quakers have worked for peace for over 350 years. Therefore we understand that helping young people facing life difficulties is undoubtedly crucial for healthy communities. There are many successful programmes in which young people develop character outside a military ethos. Innovative organisations such as Leap Confronting Conflict and Peacemakers effectively support young people to develop essential life skills and resolve conflict without violence. Why therefore have you increased funding primarily for providers of a military ethos? The evidence is at best ambiguous; troubled by “methodological issues”, your department’s own report does not show a military-ethos is more effective than any other alternative provision. The exemplary Outwood Academy, which you cite in your press release of 8 December 2014 offers only one “military ethos” session among over 100 enrichment activities including the Green Power Challenge, Philosophy and Ethics and Rollicking Reads. Will these activities receive additional funding and be eligible for the new “Character Awards”?

Quakers have carefully observed the context in which this fund has been announced. We are aware the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were unpopular and the armed forces are struggling to reach recruitment targets. We are called therefore to question the agenda behind this initiative and to ask about its real purpose.

Quakers believe that this allocation of funding represents ongoing militarisation of education. It is our view that militarism has no place in the classroom.

Paul Parker (Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain)

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Clerk's Letter

I've always liked the word 'flourish'. It is Baroque and cheerful and upwardly mobile. So it was nice to move to a city with the motto 'Let Glasgow flourish'. Though I've learned that St Mungo was supposed to have expanded on this originally: 'Lord let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of thy word and praising thy name.' Which is a bit 'so there' and too long for the crest, but never mind.

Anyway, the word came up again in Suzanne Ismail's talk to the Quaker Conference on inequality and austerity, at Woodbrooke on the 29th November. I read this in what comes to me as clerk and I thought I'd pass it on. Quakers have always believed that practical witness is a requirement from our testimonies, and this may be one of the crucial things to witness about. Suzanne thought we have something to say about the actual, material and practical impact of economic inequality, as it affects whether or not we are able to 'flourish' as human beings, 'live adventurously' or 'fulfil our potential'. In 1917 London Yearly Meeting discerned that there were 'eight foundations of a true social order'. These included the principle that "the development of Man's full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure". (See Quaker faith & practice 23.16). She also thought we have something to say about how high levels of inequality affect our ability to relate to each other as human beings and because of our concern for sustainability and testimony to the Earth. Inequality delays our ability to move towards a just and peaceful society. The minute from the conference included: 'Our concern for equality wells up from inside us. It is human and therefore political, but we do not apologise about that. We believe that we are not powerless, but are tremendously resilient and by persisting as individuals and working together with others we can make a difference'.

Those who want to find out more, or get involved can write to Barbara Forbes at forbesbarbarae@yahoo.co.uk and/or visit the Quakernomics blog at: [wHYPERLINK "http://www.quakerweb.org.uk/blog"ww.quakerweb.org.uk/blog](http://www.quakerweb.org.uk/blog) . If you don't have web access let me know and I can supply information. Look out for Quaker equality week 6th to 15th March 2015 too.

Michael Hutchinson (*Glasgow Meeting*)

December West Scotland AM by telephone conference

Another December evening, and once again West Scotland Friends gathered around their phones for Area Meeting. Not all our Local Meetings were represented this time, but nevertheless Friends from as far apart as Castle Douglas, Wigtown, Dunblane, Ayrshire, Arran and Islay, as well as Glasgow and Milngavie were able to take part. For me, one of the very special things about telephone AM is the period of worship before even picking up the phone – that sense of joining with and reaching out in the silence to Friends right across that area who you know are doing exactly the same thing.

Once again our Clerk had prepared us well with a comprehensive agenda and draft

minutes. There were a number of minutes for record, which were quickly agreed, and we moved on to a thoughtful and interesting report of John Creed and Christine Davis's visit to Maris Armfield of Dunblane Meeting. We were delighted to welcome Maris into membership. We also happily accepted the transfer in of Frances Keenan who has recently arrived from Northamptonshire and now worships with Glasgow Friends.

The major item of business was the proposed 2015 budget which was introduced by our Treasurer, Kate Gulliver. The appointment of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer is the main reason for what appeared to be a deficit budget, but our attention was also drawn to the current costs of sending out West Scotland Quaker News in hard copy, and to the costs of conferences and training for new role-holders at the start of the new triennium. WSQN costs just over 80p per copy to send by post, and we gave some thought of ways of encouraging those Friends who can to receive it electronically (the Clerk and Mary Latham are going to take this forward).

We agreed that participation in training and conferences is an important part of our ministry that we do not want to restrict (and we agreed to ask Nominations committee to find a suitably qualified and concerned Friend to send to a Woodbrooke course on Detention, Destitution and Deportation in February). And we discussed ways of encouraging increased giving from Friends who can - the overwhelming feeling being that if Friends everywhere in Local Meetings actually know about the Parliamentary Engagement Officer and understand the significance of her role then they are likely to be willing to give more. Ultimately we chose not to set a deficit budget, but to work on increasing the level of giving amongst Friends. It is up to each of us to help spread the word.

The last financial item was another look at the Barbara Organ legacy, and we agreed to make no substantial change to the areas in which this legacy is to be used, namely spiritual development, strengthening our Meeting communities, Local Meeting projects including property development, and communication and transport.

There was a short report from Nominations Committee, in which convenorship of Elders and Overseers was established to take us into the new triennium, and the Meeting ended with one or two further minutes for information.

A thoughtful closing touch was our Clerk's good wishes for a safe journey home, reminding us that even by holding AM by phone, some Friends who had gathered locally still had a half-hour or more's drive in the dark ahead of them.

Bronwen Currie (*Islay & Jura Meeting*)

Yours Faithfully - from Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

The most sought after painting in the Hermitage museum, St Petersburg, is Rembrandt's 'The Prodigal Son' which I was lucky enough to see in August. A young woman was sitting near the painting crying quietly; she had been there all afternoon, so moved by the compassion on the father's face and the sorrow of the younger son; also the look of hurt pride on the elder brother's face. It's a story of forgiveness and love and it's a great painting.

Jesus tells the parable of the rich landowner who had two sons; the younger son asked for his inheritance that he may travel the world and he had dissipated it away in riotous living and ended up penniless and starving. Eventually, desperate, he ventured home to his father for help. The father was overjoyed at having his son who ‘was dead and is alive again; and was lost, and is found’ and he ordered his servants to kill the fatted calf and make merry.[Luke Ch.15]. Meanwhile the elder son, who had stayed at home helping his father and working in the fields, was hurt and angry the no feast had ever been made for him – nor any reward. The father told him ‘all that I have is yours.....’ This is a story of greed and profligacy; pride and hurt and compassion. The Mahayana Buddhists have a very similar parable. The father represents the Buddha and the prodigal son is any human being; and their kinship symbolises that any being has Buddha nature. Just as Quakers believe there is that of God in everyone.

We are all in need of forgiveness or forgiving at some time in our lives. There may be a family member or friend by whom we felt have hurt or betrayed in some way and this parable is for us. Injustice and inequity have damaged many family relationships.

Forgiving is not the same as accepting evil; it enables the healing process to start. As Portia said when pleading the case for Antonio’s life in the Merchant of Venice: ‘the quality of mercy is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.’

In the prayer Jesus gave us it says: ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us’. Is God’s forgiveness conditional upon ours?

Diane Bowes (*written on behalf of Milngavie Meeting*)

Erskine : Where “Caring Matters Most”

Since declaring its commitment to peace in 1660 the Religious Society of Friends has opposed all wars. Writing about a charity that cares for veterans may therefore seem a little odd, but it’s the caring side of Erskine’s work on which I want to concentrate.

Erskine, the name by which the charity is known today, began with the recognition that by 1915 the existing hospital and medical facilities were unable to cope with the huge number of seriously wounded service personnel returning from the front. By Autumn of that year it was estimated that 2000 patients couldn’t be properly accommodated and cared for. Many had suffered traumatic amputation of one or more limbs.

At the same time there was a growing feeling that Scotland should have a large, up to date hospital to help care for some the wounded . Sir William McEwen - an eminent Glasgow surgeon – led the campaign to get this off the ground. Thanks to his efforts, the donation of the Erskine Estate and Mansion House for use as a hospital, and a successful public appeal for funding to equip it, the Princess Louise Scottish Hospital for Limbless Sailors and Soldiers opened its doors to the first patients in October 1916.

The hospital treated almost 20% of those disabled in WW1. Since that time Erskine has cared for over 75,000 veterans and has, as you would expect, seen many changes – gone are the operating theatres, x ray rooms, the workshops where the artificial limbs were made and the Nurses' and Matron's accommodation.

One thing has not changed since 1916 and that is Erskine's core function - care. The charity's logo proudly states that Erskine is 'Proud To Care'.

Today that care extends to 376 veterans, and spouses of ex members of the Armed Forces, in 5 care homes : 4 in the West of Scotland and 1 in Edinburgh. Over one third of the 376 beds are allocated specifically for the care of people with dementia – a growing population in our society. The age of residents ranges from 34 to 101, with an average age of 82.

Many of the veterans saw active service between 1939-45. What they talk about, if they do speak of those times, are the friendships they made and the sense of camaraderie. For some, those who served, on the Arctic Convoys for example, the memories are about always being cold, often tired and usually frightened. It is often only at that very privileged time of caring for someone – when they are at the end of their life – that long buried memories surface and carers get some insight into what nightmares some of our residents had endured during the war years.

There are many testaments to the horrors of War, but this year we have been reminded again of the particular horrors of the First World War, described so poignantly in the poetry of Sassoon and Owen for example. "Harry" Patch, best known as 'the last surviving Tommy', died in 2009 at the age of 111. He never spoke about the War and his time in the Trenches until he was over 100 years old.

When he did his question was: "Why?" In his words: 'We were two civilised nations - Britain and Germany - and what were we doing? We were in a lousy, dirty trench fighting for our lives. For what? For eighteen pence a flipping day.'. It wasn't worth it. No war is worth it. No war is worth the loss of a couple of lives let alone millions'. Harry Patch's fear was that his nightmares wouldn't end with his death, but that they would travel with him into his next life.

No one should approach the end of their life with this fear, and that's why it's so important that we continue to do all we can to Promote International Peace and Understanding. As Helen Drewery, General Secretary of Quaker Peace and Social Witness recently said, "Peacebuilding is the only way of preventing violence" : Construction rather than Destruction.

Sue Robertson (*Milngavie Meeting*)

From the Editor:

A number of the email addresses, on my list of Friends who have requested electronic distribution of WSQN, are INVALID. Please ensure that I have your current addresses.

Thank you, Bryan Bowes .

Name of Jesus

*Who was this man? This Christ
Who led the way
That millions strive to follow, and today
Know peace through their belief
In Him who died beside a thief;
Born, He lay in a crib of grass
And so Christianity came to pass.*

*Who was this man? This Christ
Who calmed men's fears;
Whose name has lived two thousand years
Who left behind a simple plan
For the freedom of everyman.
But the greed of a selfish few
Denies the wish of that humble Jew.*

*Who was this man? This Christ
That some men scorn,
How sad the world had He not been born
As if the sun had never shone
No friendly arm to lean upon
No cross on Calvary
No hope for you or me.*

*Who was this man? This Christ
Who brings us hope
Without the pomp of Canterbury or Pope;
Who set the final goal
Who heads the honour roll
Who takes us as he sees us
I know him now, name of Jesus!*

Lancelot Snape

Scottish Quakers at Faslane Sunday 30th November

Another sunny morning at Faslane. Scottish Quakers have been holding Meetings for Workshop since 1997 as a silent witness outside the Faslane Naval Base, the home base of the four UK Trident submarines which carry all of the UK's nuclear weapons.

The Scrap Trident Coalition organised a cultural event on Sunday 30th November at Faslane attracting a throng of 1500 people from all over Scotland. The atmosphere was joyful and hopeful with lots of music, singing, poetry and some one-minute speeches, all adding inspiration. There was a wide range of friends and

acquaintances from various backgrounds: religious, community development and political. I was particularly struck by the number of young people – more than I have ever seen there before. The next generation of activists!

Before the event we Quakers held a Meeting for Worship, our numbers swelled by additional Friends coming for the afternoon. It was a special pleasure to have Ellen Moxley and Helen Steven join us: they have dedicated so much to bring the immorality of nuclear weapons to the attention of Scotland. The Meeting for Worship was deep and centered and helped to set the atmosphere for the later event. It is often surprising how we can have such a deeply gathered worship on the side of a road. If you haven't tried it you can join us in 2015 on the following dates:

8th March, 12th April, 10th May, 14th June, 27th Sept, 8th November (Remembrance Sunday)

Mary Alice Mansell (*Glasgow Meeting*)



Tree Planting and All Age Worship at Wiston Lodge, Biggar. 11am - 3pm, Sunday 22nd February 2015.

Mary-Alice Mansell and Zem Moffat are re-animating Glasgow Meeting's tradition of tree planting at Wiston Lodge and Shared Worship with Lanark Meeting. All are welcome and we hope that many will attend; please do not let finances or logistics be a barrier to attendance. Car sharing and lunch costs can all be covered for you. Our day begins with an All Age Meeting for Worship 11-12pm. We have booked lunch for 30 (£5.50/head) with Wiston Lodge's super kitchen and then we embrace the weather to plant trees, before heading home.

Native trees like hazel, oak, ash and aspen can be dedicated to loved ones and planted in celebration of all occasions. If you would like to do this, we recommend a donation of £10 or whatever you are free to give. Any remainder will be donated to a sympathetic charity of choice. All suggestions gratefully received. If you would like to come, contact Zem zemhoffat@gmail.com 07803332344 and to dedicate a tree, contact Mary Alice mamansell@hotmail.com 01505842380.