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- connecting local meetings



**April 2025**

# ***West Scotland Quaker Newsletter April 2025***

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*Frontispiece Bringer of the Light adapted by Ursula Edge*

## ***SA Gaelic Prayer***

***As the rain hides the stars,  
A the Autumn mist hides the hills,  
As the clouds veil the blue of the sky,  
So the dark happenings of my lot hide  
The shining of Thy face  
from me.***

***Yet if I may hold  
Thy hand in the darkness  
It is enough . . . .  
Since I know, that  
Though I may stumble,  
In my going  
Thou doest not fall.***

# **Report of West of Scotland Area Meeting , held January, 18<sup>th</sup> 2025 at Glasgow Meeting House**

**Gisela Creed, Glasgow**

This was a blended Meeting.

My report can only give some personal impressions of the meeting . Please refer to the formal minutes and the papers issued with the agenda for more information.

It was a pleasure to welcome around 20-25 friends in the meeting house and about 10 on Zoom from 10 of our constituent Local Meetings . The new layout of the meeting room worked very well. The clerk managed wonderfully to work with 3 different computers.

After some routine business, we heard many reports, meticulously prepared by hardworking friends all deserving our attention. which I am listing below :

1 The Tabular Statement, Ruth Bacon

2 Treasurer's report with budget, Bronwen Currie

3 Trustees' report for 2024, Tony Ellis

4 Two LM reports: Glasgow and Milngavie, Zem Moffat and Ruth Bacon

5 Report from the Parliamentary Engagement Officer (PEO), Sarah Komashko

6 Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) report (paper only), Elaine Millar

7 And finally a presentation about the work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness central committee(QPSW) , Suzanne Ismail.

I wonder how many friends managed to read the carefully compiled reports which all reached our inboxes with the agenda?

SO, here are a few personal remarks sparked off by some of the reports:

**1** Tabular Statement: we heard that our numbers remain steady but apparently there are less attenders. I wonder how they are counted, because Glasgow has lots of them! According to this report there are 233 members and 169 attenders.

**2** it was encouraging to hear from the treasurer that there will be funds available to help friends to attend BYM.

**3** the future of Glasgow meeting House still creates a lot of work for Trustees, as well as a reliable Health and Safety strategy.

**4** Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings could not be more different. Milngavie has no formal business meeting and there was a short lively discussion about why business meetings might be important.

**5** PEO report: Sarah, our PEO, reported on the ongoing priorities:

Climate and economic justice , particularly concerning “Loss and Damage” reparations and advocating more funding from the government

Promoting truth and integrity in politics.

Peacebuilding, involving advocacy to expand peace education in Scotland.

There was an interesting open discussion touching on topics not included in the report such as the housing crisis, community justice work and the need to engage with all political parties even with Reform UK. We are all encouraged to communicate with Sarah either through our LMs or personally and consider the questions she posed at the end of her report.

**6** The MfS report raises some very important points about the future of Quakers in the UK and their priorities. I think it would be good to spend some time in depth with our representatives at a future AM to give everyone a chance to engage more fully.

**7** And finally we heard about the work of QPSW one of the central committees of BYM. Their vision is of a peaceful and sustainable future built on relationships between people and with the earth resulting in Faith in Action involving practical projects around climate justice , loss and damage, and peace building activities. It was good to see how much the national issues tie in with our Scottish challenges.

At the end of a full afternoon, I felt sorry and sad and almost guilty that we were not able to give deeper considerations to many of the challenges we heard about, through lack of time and, for me and maybe others too, through my own lack of attention span.

## **Report on Area Meeting – 3 March 2025**

**Bronwen Currie, Islay & Jura**

23 Friends gathered by Zoom for Area Meeting, from all LMs other than Mull & Iona, for what looked at first glance like a short agenda. (Friends should beware of making assumptions). During our opening worship we heard paragraph 23.52 from QF&P, in which we were reminded that we are not necessarily all called to great missions that will change the world, but that we need to listen for the “gentle whispers which will tell us how we can bring our lives into greater harmony with heaven”.

There was no membership business on the Agenda, so we began with hearing of the recent death of Muriel Robertson of Milngavie Meeting, and a number of fond recollections of her as a “character” and “a real inspiration”. Previous to her membership of Milngavie she had been a Glasgow Friend, but also in later years regularly attended Lanark Meeting on the Sundays when Milngavie did not meet. She was well-loved and respected everywhere, and her advice to “just be who you are” had been of immense support to at least one Friend in a role in which he felt out of his depth.

Nominations business brought a short list of Friends wishing to lay down roles, for which service they were thanked, but also a list of new appointments: a much-needed trustee from Glasgow Meeting, two new elders for Glasgow and Arran, and a number of pastoral care Friends for Dunblane, Arran, Lanark and Mull & Iona. We were also grateful to be able to appoint Robin Davis of Dunblane to serve on Nominations Committee once again. Friends are still needed for Nominations Committee, particularly from Glasgow Meeting, and Friends were encouraged to look around their Meetings for possible candidates.

Nominations had brought back to AM the request to find a couple of Friends to work on an introductory leaflet for newcomers. After a bit of reflection it was realised that the introductory leaflet produced by Friends House actually serves very well as an introduction to Quakers, but that what is really needed is a short list of what is available locally and online by way of opportunities for worship, so that the newcomer does not feel confined or bound to the first Meeting they have encountered. As our clerk had already started the process of collecting an updated list of such information, she was asked to continue to produce a simple A4 poster which can be pinned up together with a folding leaflet which can be given to newcomers. These are now available in Local Meetings.

A goodly number of Friends were appointed to attend General Meeting for Scotland in Edinburgh and online on 8 March, and then we heard a short report from the treasurer and agreed to give financial support from the Spiritual Nurture, Community & Witness fund to help Mary Woodward attend Finland Yearly Meeting.

There followed a short report from Elaine Millar on Meeting for Sufferings which had been held the previous Saturday. Elaine began by reiterating the clerk, Adwoa Burnley's, request both to encourage Friends to register for Yearly Meeting at the end of May, and also for Local Meetings to do some preparatory work to help Friends fully understand Quaker business method and the spiritual discipline required by it. Friends can still register until April 24<sup>th</sup>, and there is financial support available from both BYM and our own Area Meeting. It was noted that Meeting for Sufferings is now undertaking the role for which it was first established, as names of Friends coming to court and being convicted for their witness are being registered by Sufferings. These names need to be discerned at AM level and sent to Sufferings for registration. Although much of the concern centres on England and Wales, the situation is not perfect in Scotland and may well deteriorate if Scotland follows England's lead on legislation against peaceful protest. There was mention of QCCIR and Quaker Housing Trust, which is receiving more requests for help than it can fund. Elaine's report ended with an outline of how representation will work in the new structure of "continuing Yearly Meeting", of which we will hear more in due course.

Reports from Local Meetings focused on new arrangements being tried out in Castle Douglas, and a request from Islay & Jura Meeting to lay down their Meeting and

become a worshipping group under the care of Ayrshire Meeting, as Islay & Jura no longer have either an elder or a pastoral care Friend. Guidance from Michael Hutchinson helped us to understand that a worshipping group cannot be open to the public, but also that a Meeting which is advertised to the public (as Islay & Jura wish, as they still want to be open to enquirers, and very much want visitors to their islands to be able to join them for worship) will still be recognized by BYM as a Local Meeting, even if it has no role holders. It was agreed therefore that Islay & Jura Meeting would continue, but under the care of Ayrshire Meeting for eldership and pastoral care.

Finally, we received a short update from the Quakers in Scotland Coordinating Group, who have now submitted to OSCR the application to register Quakers in Scotland as a SCIO. And after the annual listing of trustees as a minute of record, the Meeting closed just on the dot of 9.00pm – quite a challenging but stimulating agenda in the end, for the careful steering of which our clerk was warmly thanked.

## **Meeting for Sufferings Report, 1 March 2025.**

**Elaine Millar, Representative.**

(minutes and papers can be found on the Quakers in Britain website [Meeting for Sufferings papers and minutes | Quakers in Britain](#))

- **YEARLY MEETING (YM):** Friday 23 – Monday 26 May 2025  
The peace testimony will be at the heart of the all age programme and our discernment, viewed in three main ways:
  - Conflict and violence in our local communities across Britain.
  - Radical peacemakers.
  - Aspects of international peace work done on our behalf.
- We were urged to encourage Friends to attend at Friends House or online and to let Friends know we can support in many ways - as ‘buddies’, with tech, financially– so please don’t allow anything to stop you!
- There will be preparation sessions online from Sunday 27 April to Saturday 3 May (sign on by 6 April) and these are so valuable in enhancing your YM experience. Understanding the Quaker business method and the reasons for its underlying discipline also assist the process hugely, so do join in [yearly-meeting-2025-preparing-for-yearly-meeting](#). There’s still time to register, until 24 April.
- 
- **POLICE POWERS & PROTEST:**  
The original purpose of Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) is increasingly being enacted some 350 years later as we record the names in the Prison & Court Register of Friends arrested, going through court proceedings, fined or

imprisoned for witnessing to their faith through public protest. Their names, both members and attenders are recorded regardless of whether they are discharged or acquitted.

- Scotland is not subject to the same new policing laws in England and Wales but worrying police tactics at protests and harsher sentencing are just as evident here.
- Area meetings (AM) are responsible for establishing the facts about Friends who are arrested when acting under concern – local meetings (LM) should bring names (with the permission of the Friends) to AM who, following discernment, forward to MfS.
- Direct action is not for all, but there are other ways to support, such as writing to MPs, and providing hospitality and refreshment to those appearing in court and to their supporters. We heard that for activist Friends, knowing they are being held in the light makes a significant difference, so do not undervalue this way of supporting.

- - **QCCIR (Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations)**

This committee is all about working together with other denominations and faiths, creating and maintaining opportunities for on-going dialogue to build peace, rather than dwelling on differences which might drive us apart.

- A restructuring of the committee into 3 working groups: Inter-church, interfaith and spirituality/theology means involving a wider group of Friends who can be co-opted to a specific group of interest.
- QCCIR ask AMs to seek the names of Friends with an interest in any of these groups, so please let it be known if any of these strands catches your interest.

- - **CONTINUING YEARLY MEETING (CYM)**

A big change is afoot with the laying down of MfS in March 2026 and moving to CYM. It was suggested it might help Friends to reframe this change as YM held across 4 meetings a year, instead of one and open to all to participate.

- Representation for AMs and General Meeting (GM) and other Quaker bodies will be through one rep who BYM fund, but with no official alternate – because, if the rep cannot attend another Friend can deputise as CYM is open to all.
- It is hoped continuity of rep attendance will optimise the right-holding of meetings, where the business method and discernment process become more familiar to more Friends.
- Without the alternate system, support for the role can come in whatever way works best for the rep and the body they represent.
- The rep does not need to be a member but bear in mind in rare circumstances attenders would be excluded from a closed session, such as for discernment about changes to church governance.



- With the potential for more Friends attending CYM, increased financial support may need to be budgeted for.
- A residential will be held every 3 years and 1 meeting a year will be held outwith London.
- Nothing is set in stone yet – come to Yearly Meeting to be part of the discernment.

- **QUAKER HOUSING TRUST (QHT)**

The Trust's report reminded us to:

- Challenge the prevailing attitude that regards housing as a financial asset rather than a home, where those without a place to call home grow increasingly marginalised.
- Be aware of QHT Quaker Asset Fund which helps LMs and AMs investigate if their properties might be converted in full or in part to provide social housing.
- Consider donating, as individuals or AMs, because demand outstrips funds.
- Consider passing to QHT any unearned increase in value on properties owned, when liquidated.

- **SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE**

An overview of sustainability work across BYM, including central work, the work of specific Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRB) and work with GM, AMs and LMs was overseen by The Sustainability Monitoring Group and will now be passed to the new Agenda Planning Committee for CYM, to bear in mind and keep in sight the need for:

- A new method of reporting on sustainability that takes into account ways to feedback from all the above areas into our decision-making structures.
- A recognition that resilience and community building might be more important work now than measuring carbon emissions.
- The setting of targets to moving this work forward.

And I cried to the Lord, saying, 'Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils? And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.

George Fox 1648 *QF&P 19.04*

## Book of Discipline Revision Committee – update January 2025

It was good to gather again after so many months apart, even if only online. Wednesday evening's session was mainly concerned with receiving progress reports from many of our topic groups, noting that some sizeable papers would be being discussed over the weekend. We heard reports from Friends who'd been at the *Future of Quakerism in Britain* conference, and from our Clerks' December update to Meeting for Sufferings. Our 'tree' image for the structure of the new book was well received, and we hope to be able to share this more widely soon. We need to consult with Crynwyr Cymru Friends in Wales to ensure that Welsh language content meets the needs of Friends in Wales. The weekend was packed full - three zoom sessions on Saturday, and one long one on Sunday morning. In our opening worship we heard again the advice from Aotearoa New Zealand to *use as few words as possible but as many as are necessary* - both in our work over the weekend and as we move into the next stage of our work as a committee.

**Dates to note: Monday 28 April 7pm** - one online session by the BDRC as part of the preparation sessions for Yearly Meeting. We have been invited to be a part of the BYM 'work fair' at Friends House [**23-26 May**], and our clerks will contribute to YM's Friday evening session. Looking beyond Yearly Meeting 2025, the Communicating with Friends [CwF] group will consider how we start engaging with Friends in advance of the release of our completed draft text at Yearly Meeting 2027. Meeting for Sufferings has suggested that Friends in Britain engage with looking at our current Advices & Queries, thinking about their purpose and how we use them [see MfS's December 2024 minutes for more information].

BYM has decided to disengage from X [formerly Twitter]. We considered our current use of social media. We will ask Friends House staff to post our key messages on their social media, which will reach a wider audience than our BDRC media channels. YM staff post 'highlights of committees' on the BYM website, and the BDRC will contribute.

We have just had our sixth birthday as a committee, and celebrate this by preparing to move into the next stage of our work. We had discerned that writing Advices & Queries and the introduction to the whole book would be done towards the end of the writing process. We will now begin this work while also completing those topic drafts that are still unfinished. At the same time, we will get all our 'banked' text out of storage, review it, and begin putting it all together. We'll also be considering the use of non-text material - pictures and audio/ video material.

Just a little extra work, then??!!

Friends, we need your loving support as we move into this new part of our work.

Our key messages from this weekend:

*Friends are reminded that our 5th report to Meeting for Sufferings in December 2024 is available now on the Revising Quaker Faith & Practice page of the BYM website*

*We have been using suggestions sent through our submissions system and thank everyone who has helped us in this way. We also continue to look for text, images, music, and other non-text materials which express a wide range of Quaker experience of all aspects of life, today and in previous generations. Please keep sending ideas via our submission tool or padlet.[see links below]*

*We plan to consult with Crynwyr Cymru-Quakers in Wales as how we can best work together to ensure that content in Welsh in our new book will meet the needs of Welsh-speaking Friends.*

*We have reviewed the use of social media for the current phase of our work and will be communicating updates via BYM channels. Follow Quakers in Britain on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Bluesky.*

*We are on track to present a first full draft of the new book for consideration at Yearly Meeting 2027. We are starting work on the final topics in our list; this includes looking at Advices and Queries, and we have shared different approaches to drafting a revised A&Q. We have also started looking at the big task of reviewing all of our work so far to bring together this first full draft.*

***Friends will be able to register to join our Special Interest Group at Britain Yearly Meeting online at 7pm on Monday evening 28 April 2025. We will offer both an update on our work and the chance to explore the purpose and impact of the current Advices& Queries with us.***

**Links to the BYM submissions tool and the Open To New Light padlet site**

**<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/>**

**[www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonewlight](http://www.padlet.com/bdrc/opentonewlight)**

## **Peace Building at GM from the minutes 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **Peace building with other churches.**

In addition, our Parliamentary Engagement Group, with Sarah Komashko, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, work closely with other bodies, such as Christian Aid, in furthering their work. We had a speaker from Christian Aid with us last year. The GM clerks also attend a variety of ecumenical and Interfaith events, through direct invitation, such as the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and through Christian Aid.

A key purpose of General Meeting for Scotland is to build relationships with other churches and faiths, and hence peacebuilding through building community and in sharing activities in which we have common testimony.

Some representatives with us today have told us, here and in earlier spoken ministry, of an aspect of their work that relates Peacebuilding through ecumenical and interfaith engagement. We are grateful for all stories that are emerging from this.

Nigel Dower has informed us that the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) has set up three working groups, on Interfaith, Inter-church and theological commissioning. QCCIR would welcome any Friend in Scotland who would like to join one of these groups. There is also to be a Woodbrooke-held conference over the 13th -15th March 2026, at the Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire, with the theme being 'Hope for the future in dark and difficult times'. We encourage Area Meetings to find Friends to attend.

### **Peacebuilding in dark times – Paul Parker**

We welcome our Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, who reflected on peacebuilding and social cohesion in these dark times, drawing on Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) experience and what he sees going on around the Yearly Meeting. Paul sketched out a picture of our current world situation, which feels even more destabilised owing to the recent political changes that have shown up starkly the change in the world order.

It is a dark picture but we shouldn't give in to it. Paul showed clearly all which goes on in our name that works towards peacebuilding with social justice. He went back to George Fox (Quaker faith & practice 19.32) who reminds us to:

Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God and go through the world and be valiant for the Truth upon Earth. Tread and trample all that is contrary under!

How do we work to that? Above all, we must remain grounded, as a people of faith. In our Meetings we can be upholding of each other and be active in participation. We know that peace making starts with ourselves and then in our communities. Only then are we able to be effective in action and true to our insights and experience in trying to make for a peace based on justice. So we all have a role to play in making for this stronger community and stronger voice in the world.

We are grateful to all that goes on in our name, in Scotland and through our Yearly Meeting, linking up with valiant others. In searching out that which in our own lives contains the seeds of war, we can more justly point to those seeds more widely.

We have had time before and after lunch to comment and ask questions, of Paul and each other. We have also had time in worship sharing.

We have heard from a Friend who observed first-hand how the teachers at Brummana, the Quaker school in Lebanon, used their everyday lives in commitment to their students to show there are different values to those causing the destruction and war that is their context. Everyone can use their lives in acts of resistance to the darkness we find all around us.

Paul told us how Britain Yearly Meeting reacted quickly by producing a video in

which Caroline Nursey, a Friend with a background in overseas aid work, speaks of the really drastic effects that the recent cutting of the UK aid budget, whilst increasing that of defence, will have. Another act of resistance. In maintaining our Society we have a stronger voice.

In our time together in open worship sharing, we have been grateful for the sounds of laughter in the street outside, reminding us to be grateful for what we've been given. We all have stories that remind us to remember what to live by.

We have reflected on the meaning of the changing times on us and what we stand for. We will be challenged. Isaac Pennington is helpful in reminding us (Quaker faith & practice 24.21) that the 'power of the Gospel' begins within us as individuals in finding the 'better state' we aim for.

It has been notable how again and again we come back to seeds of peace being within ourselves as individuals, from which we can seek ways to transform our communities and through them the world. This involves being able to offer the hand of friendship where it is needed.

A Friend has asked us if we have opportunity together to cultivate acts of resistance when American President Donald Trump visits the King in Scotland. The clerk will arrange for an online informal meeting for those interested in taking this idea further.

We have been reminded that it is beholden on us to listen to others and understand where they come from. Listening is crucial in peacebuilding, even when it is one of the hardest of things to do. We need to hear each other in order to find ways forward that work.

## **Peace rooted in our community**

### **General Meeting for Scotland, 8 March 2025.**

#### **Zoe Prosser, Local Development Worker for Quakers in Scotland**

\*\*\*\*\* Caveat

I've been asked to speak about Quakers as peacemakers rooted in our community or communities. In my work I have heard from those of you who have experienced times when Quakers have fallen short of our peacemaking ideals. This can be very painful, even many years on.

I apologise if I inadvertently press on tender spots. If you feel that you need further support arising from anything that's said today, I hope that you feel comfortable reaching out to me, or others in our Quaker communities for help and support.

\*\*\*\*\*

As Quakers we are known as peacemakers, builders, advocates in the world. Yet peacemaking has to start with the self and with our communities. We must seek to

remove the beam out of our own eyes before we seek to remove the speck from another's. Indeed, Quaker Faith and Practice asks us to "search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war". Quaker Faith and Practice 1.31.

So what are we currently doing, or what structures are in place to help us with this challenge?

## **Worship**

In our increasingly busy world our worship offers us the opportunity to know ourselves and sit with ourselves. In worship we are held in love by the Spirit and those who we worship alongside.

The silent nature of much of our worship allows for opportunity for disagreements to deescalate. There is an escalating pattern to an argument, a pace that builds towards danger, from a disagreement to an argument. Bringing the calm silence of worship into a disagreement provides a disruption, helping arguments to lose that dangerous rhythm.

Our business method, also part of worship, helps us as well. We know we have to wait before speaking and wait after we have heard someone speak. We know we need to give each person due respect. There is equality inherent in the Quaker business method. Allowing for differences of opinions to be heard in a respectful way within worship. We are asked to:

- "seek out the unpalatable truths we are evading" Quaker Faith and Practice 1.11
- "Consider difficult questions with an informed mind and generous and loving spirit" Quaker Faith and Practice 1.15
- "Listen carefully and seek the truth, which other people's opinions may show for you" Quaker Faith and Practice 1.17

We all know that I could go on. What other tools do we have that help us with peace building?

## **Community**

Our worship is sustained by loving communities. Building and maintaining these loving communities is a sacred task that so many of you undertake. Every ceilidh you organise, pan of soup you cooked, workshop you facilitated or friendly word you gave to another provided an opportunity for us to know one another better, enabling us to hold our differences with grace.

## **Structure**

Our structures support us when challenges arise. We recognise we are human. Humans moreover who hold many divergent views. We will not always agree, even if we meet in a worshipful Meeting for Worship for Business.

We have structures and roles to help us with this. Our elders and pastoral care Friends are here to support us when we cannot reach agreement, or when our

relationships breakdown. There are other organisations and Quakers outwith our local communities that are also available to help us when we need further support full stop

We have tools that friends have tested and offered to us to support us with this difference. Meetings for Clearness, Threshing Meetings, worship and Worship Sharing all have their place.

### **Action**

We have heard about some of this already from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group. When we act on our commitment to change the world for the better, to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, we can be brought closer together in many ways. Marching in a protest, organising support for a refugee family, or challenging an MSP can bond you with others who have had the same experiences.

As we were so ably reminded by our friend Susan this morning, action does not always have to be direct. Cooking meals for those protesting on a March, collecting those who were arrested for civil disobedience from a police station, praying for those working tirelessly for peace is all part of peacemaking.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I think about “seeking the seeds of war” in my own life, it can seem an overwhelming challenge. It's not just about being a peacemaker in our Quaker community and world. I did a reconciliation pilgrimage last year and I have used the tools I gained most as a parent to two preteens. Seeking out the seeds of war sounds like it will take up an awful lot of my life.

To simplify things, I try to remember that if you follow these principles you can and will build more peaceful communities, you will make the world a better place:

- **Name** the challenge or the difference of opinion. Take it out and look at it.
- **Listen** deeply and generously.
- **Seek to know one another**, with all our very human flaws.

Finally, try to love each other and ourselves anyway. Where you can.

## **Quakers in Scotland**

We are glad that it falls on us to let you know that Quakers in Scotland, is now recognised as a new Charitable Incorporated Body. From submission of the application to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) to registration took only three and a half weeks instead of the anticipated three months or so, which we think is quite a record!

There is still much work to be done to shape Quakers in Scotland to meet our needs, but we can all take a moment to celebrate the completion of stage one before going on to plan the next steps.

## Quakers in Scotland – SSEAM Threshing Meeting , 1<sup>st</sup> March Copied from Sesame, Number 259: March 2025

*The term ‘Threshing Meeting’, according to Quaker Faith & Practice, “currently denotes a meeting at which a variety of different, and sometimes controversial opinions can be openly, and sometimes forcefully, expressed, often in order to defuse a situation before a later meeting for worship for business. Originally the term was used to describe large and noisy meetings for convincement of ‘the world’s people’ in order to thresh them away from the world.” (This explanation, at 12.26, first appeared in the 1994 edition of Q.F.& P. – there is no equivalent passage in the previous Book of Discipline, but there is a description of how the original threshing meetings operated in the 1650s in John Punshon’s Portrait in Grey (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006, p.71.)*

*On the first Saturday in March, all were invited to a meeting to consider the future structure of the Religious Society of Friends as it exists in Scotland. The questions before the meeting were the following:*

In the early days of the Society of Friends, Monthly Meetings (now Area Meetings) were planned so the constituent local meetings were within a day’s travel on horseback. Horse travel is no longer relevant and more widely scattered AMs have gladly embraced the possibilities of online meetings, but Area Meetings remain geographically based. Do the boundaries of these groupings reflect current patterns of travel?

All Area Meetings within the General Meeting have agreed to the formation of a new body for Quakers in Scotland, to be registered as a SCIO (*Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation*). Are we ready to agree that membership of the Religious Society of Friends for Quakers living or worshipping in Scotland will in future reside with the body to be known as Quakers in Scotland (QiS)?

Some Area Meetings may be ready to hand over all legal and administrative responsibilities to QiS as soon as possible and to lay down that AM. Others may not have reached that stage. Should these AMs formally hand over all responsibilities to QiS which then delegates some tasks back, through a process as yet to be established?

Should we propose instead that the new arrangements should allow for some AMs to continue? Are we prepared to move forward without the destination being clear?

Others articles in the current Sesame that readers may find interesting can be accessed on SESAM website. These include **Stop EACOPScot, Climate Justice and the Rule of Law, the full text of Paul Parker’s talk to GM Building Peace in Dark Times**, and a report on **Northern Friends Peace Board meeting in Nottingham on 1<sup>st</sup> March.**



## **A personal impression of the first Westminster MfW following forceful entry and arrests**

Edie Phoenix Castle Douglas

Westminster Meeting for Worship this Sunday morning was a welcome oasis after the shock and upset among the Quaker community over the past two days. Reports of the forced police entry and arrests in a place of worship appearing not just on social media, but even making it into the Guardian newspaper and the front page of the Sunday Times.

I had previously attended Westminster's online book-club from the comfort of my own home (through my connection with Southern Africa Quakers, and back to the UK again). Being aware of the anxiety and upset at Westminster, I was glad to be able to attend their first meeting following the police incident to show solidarity.

Although I joined online some 20 minutes early before their 11am start, I was not the first online participant to arrive. Walthamstow LM was already online, part way through their regular Sunday MfW. This was confusing at first, but lovely to see them. I imagine that presumably Walthamstow's usual start time is 10.30, and it was at that time they had joined Westminster online.

Even though it was online, having a MfW already in progress set the tone as people arrived in person at Westminster MH over the next several minutes. Westminster's worship merged seamlessly into Walthamstow's. Up to 40 online, and above 70 in the room.

The first ministry was a reading from Acts chapter 4, 1-22 where Peter and John are arrested and tried for teaching about Jesus, but they boldly proclaim their faith and refuse to stop preaching, leading to their release and the believers praying for courage.

A Westminster elder on duty then read from QF&P 19.46 about our peace testimony, where in 1660 Margaret Fell delivered a paper to Charles II and both houses of parliament making it clear that Friends are "against all strife and wars".

The ministry and the quality of the silence was amazing. Much of the rest of the ministry was about not being consumed by hatred and about holding love in our hearts. And how they are now more aware of the need to uphold others having similar experiences, often much worse, around the world.

One man, however, silently held up a placard to those on-line, before showing it to the people in the room. It read: "I am not silent. I am too outraged to speak".

After the MfW ended, those online were invited to introduce ourselves. Someone from Glasgow had spoken early on. When I was called, unaccustomed to speaking in large groups, I was very nervous. I explained where I'm from and my tenuous connection with Westminster. I offered them greetings, love, and solidarity from

West Scotland Area Meeting. I hope this is acceptable, Friends. The Westminster elder sends greetings to us.

Yet again I am uplifted by the Quaker way of dealing with difficult situations, and the ministry given. I hope there is less anxiety and upset in Westminster meeting now. I'm so glad I was there.

## **Europe, A Changing Landscape** *from Quaker Council for European Affairs*

The political landscape in the EU has shifted dramatically, making advocacy for peace, climate justice, and migration increasingly difficult. A growing trend toward financing war and defense at the expense of these priorities threatens long term stability and security. As policymakers focus on military investments, the crucial work of peacebuilding and addressing social and environmental justice is being deprioritized. This shift is not only a political challenge but also an ethical one, as it undermines the EU's commitment to a just and peaceful world. In the last year of the previous Commission and the first few months of this one, the European political climate has become more hostile to progressive climate and social policies.

The Green Deal, once a flagship initiative, has faced increasing resistance. The European People's Party (EPP), once a pillar of the political consensus around the Deal, shifted its stance in the context of elections, leveraging economic fears to position climate action as a burden, rather than a necessary and urgent response to the climate crisis. Similarly, migration policies are becoming more restrictive, with securitization taking precedence over human rights and integration efforts.

Meanwhile, the push for increased defense spending has overshadowed investments in long term peacebuilding. We are witnessing a narrative shift, with an increased emphasis on competitiveness, securitization and simplification rather than on promoting justice, equality and peace. The prioritization of military spending comes at a high cost. In the previous EU budget, the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), far more funds were allocated to the European Peace Facility, primarily funding military operations, than to the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability, and Conflict Prevention. This imbalance reflects a broader trend: funding prevention and peacebuilding has not been at the top of the agenda.

Furthermore, there is a growing concern over the lack of transparency in how these funds are allocated and spent, with limited public scrutiny or accountability. Civil society organizations, which play a crucial role in advocating for peacebuilding solutions and ensuring that peace and justice remain central to policymaking, are often excluded from key decision-making processes. In this challenging political environment, upholding truth and integrity in advocacy work is more important than ever. At the Quaker Council for European Affairs, we continue to push for policies that prioritize human dignity, environmental sustainability, and conflict prevention.

*See their newsletter, Around Europe, on line for more information on Quaker work in Europe.*

# Four Questions About Violence

Dr Gwen Adshead

The Reith Lectures BBC Radio 4, November/ December 2024

Reviewed Mike Nellis, Glasgow

We all know about criminal violence, don't we? We hear about it all the time on news programmes, when it can seem like not a week goes by without the trial of a man – it is usually a man – accused of killing, or slaughtering, a partner, former partner, his whole family or someone else's whole family on what to most of us would seem like the most banal of pretexts. It is impossible not to recoil with horror at the thought of such crimes – the terrified last hours of the victim(s), the unspeakable anguish of their surviving friends and relatives, the collateral mental consequences for the police officers, medics and forensic experts who “attended the scene” – and it is not unreasonable, for most people, not to care much about what happens to the killer, or even to wish the worst on him.

Nor is it mistaken to consider such crimes evil – if by evil we mean the deliberate destruction or despoilation of something good for no other reason than that it good - and it is not at all wrong to want sadistic killers to be removed from society for a very long time. Not primarily because they might do it again if they were not imprisoned (although that is sometimes true), but because their actions are so heinous that some part of us needs to shun them, and to want them to suffer deeply. Most of us do not want the emotional labour of trying to relate to them compassionately, as if that would help, as if they were redeemable. Even the more frequently used whole life sentences don't seem out of place for some of the killings that have been in the news recently.

And yet..... what do most of us really know about criminal violence? Most news stories frame murders in terms of the individual responsibility of the perpetrator, and the taint of evil – understood as something *other* and near-demonic – is never far away. Incarceration is always the answer to violent crime, mostly prison but sometimes secure psychiatric facilities. Few of either are adequately resourced to do what is needful with violent offenders, although HMP Grendon stands out, and other small, therapeutic community units are scattered across the prison system. Ever longer sentences are remain popular, even though lengthening sentences for so many types of offence is what most drives the prison system into a crisis of overcrowding, under-resourcing and understaffing.

It's becoming accepted that internet-based radicalisation plays a part in engendering and shaping motivations to kill, maim and degrade people, that not all violent acts arise in isolation. But political responses to that insight are varied. Every effort is made to suppress Islamic state videos, not always successfully, but when it comes to curtailing the presence of misogynistic material on the internet, our regulatory

responses remain woefully inadequate. Young people – boys and girls are growing up in media-saturated cultures of violence. We can tell ourselves to keep a sense of proportion, that the kind of violent acts which make the news are “mercifully rare” - which is true - but that is less of a consolation than it used to be. Femicide is not mercifully rare, so commonplace that not all murders of women would make the news unless feminist activists try to make it otherwise.

Dr Gwen Adshead’s 2024 Reith lectures on violence were one of the sanest things to have been said recently in the “mainstream media” about the reality of criminal violence, though I am not sure how widely they were listened to. Adshead is a psychologist who has worked with violent people in prisons and special hospitals, knows of what she speaks, and likes to engage informatively, on radio and in books, with non-professional audiences. She is a person of faith too. The psychotherapeutic tradition she works in is far from new, and it has some affinities with Friend/psychiatrist Bob Johnson’s work in HMP Parkhurst on the roots of allegedly “psychotic” violence and childhood trauma in the 1980s, though she ranges more widely and speaks with more subtlety. Outside of a small professional/academic network psychotherapeutic language has become a deeply unfashionable way of holding public conversations about the individual and cultural mainsprings of criminal violence, even misogynistic violence, even though it is the closest we have to “the truth” about such behaviour, and therein, I hope, lies its appeal to Friends.

She gave four, three-quarter hour long lectures in different venues, to different audiences, and took questions for fifteen minutes. The first was “Is violence normal?”, to set the scene and addressed questions of “nature” and “culture”. The second was “Aren’t they all evil?” which invited us to think not of innate evil in “bad people” but of “an evil state of mind” to which, under certain circumstances, many ordinary people might succumb, notably in war time conditions when soldiers are ordered to commit atrocities. The third, recorded in HMP Grendon, with a thoughtful audience of prisoners and staff, asked “Does trauma cause violence?”, and explained a complicated question with great lucidity. The final one was recorded in Norway and answered the question “Can we change violent minds?” with cautious optimism, grounded in evidence, although whether governments choose to act on reliable evidence-bases is moot. In Norway they do, and resource services accordingly. Norwegian prisons thus have significantly lower reconviction rates than England or Scotland, although they too have one killer, a notorious mass murderer, who may never be released.

My summary of the lectures here is brief because I want you to listen and talk about them. Coincidentally, Ben Jarman’s 2024 Swarthmore lecture was also focussed around an incident of savage violence to which he was a witness and he himself is now well placed to speak of the trauma of victimhood. I was less convinced by his suggestions about ways forward for Quakers, but I still commend his thoughts. Gwen Adshead does not have “the answers” either but she creates the kind of

understanding which modern Friends can use to ask themselves if our very punitive society is actually doing the right thing in its response to violent crime, and if not, what a response more equal to the challenge would be.

## **Churchill's Famous Speech**

### **Mike Nellis**

At our recent Quakers in Criminal Justice conference at Ammerdown, Ann Horton used a famous quote from Winston Churchill in her very moving workshop -“hearing from the family member of a prisoner”- about being the adopted grandma of a young man serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (in England). The quote that always resonated with older generations of Friends – usually by way of contrast with prevailing penal realities, as Ann herself used it - and I thought modern Friends might like to know the background to it. This is the quote:

**The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of any country.** A calm and dispassionate recognition of the rights of the accused against the state and even of convicted criminals against the state, a constant heart-searching by all charged with the duty of punishment, a desire and eagerness to rehabilitate in the world of industry of all those who have paid their dues in the hard coinage of punishment, tireless efforts towards the discovery of curative and regenerating processes and an unfaltering faith that there is a treasure, if only you can find it in the heart of every person – these are the symbols which in the treatment of crime and criminals mark and measure the stored up strength of a nation, and are the sign and proof of the living virtue in it.

Winston Churchill, aged 35 at the time, said this as part of his House of Commons maiden speech as *Liberal* Home Secretary, July 20, 1910. Although no mean writer and orator himself, Churchill was almost certainly influenced by the then very famous playwright John Galsworthy (1867-1933). He began corresponding with Galsworthy, another Liberal, after seeing, and being influenced by *Justice*, the latter's play about the ills of solitary confinement. This was a powerful piece of Edwardian theatre which had attracted much attention earlier in the year when it had played in London. It recreated a typical prison cell on stage, in which a young male prisoner – middle class so that theatre audiences would identify with him – agonisingly loses his mind. Churchill felt enabled by the public reaction to compel the reluctant head of the Prison Commission to reduce the period of time that all new prisoners spent in solitary at the beginning of their sentences.

Churchill had originally been a Conservative and was only briefly a Liberal, later “crossing the floor” in Parliament back to the Conservatives. His time as Liberal Home Secretary (1910-11) lasted only 20 months: he was sacked by Asquith, the then prime minister. His incumbency of this great office of state was uneven. He covered up police brutality at a suffragette demonstration by insisting that all charges against the arrested women were dropped, so that no evidence could be given in the magistrates’ court by either side. He antagonised striking miners in Tonypany, Wales by sending 300 London “bobbies”, and later soldiers, to break the strike. He was briefly a eugenicist – as were many liberals and socialists in this era - favouring compulsory sterilisation of “the feeble minded” for the good of the British “race”, though in later life he regretted endorsing this. Ironically, however, “he was a major pioneer of prison reform:

Thanks to Churchill, prisoners spent fewer hours in solitary confinement. Fewer offenders went to prison at all. Churchill reduced the total prison population, something that has eluded most of his successors. (Lord Lexden, reviewing Charles Stephenson’s 2023 book, below)

Some put Churchill’s critical, “liberal” attitude towards imprisonment down to his own experience of imprisonment for a month (after which he escaped, as duty required) during the Boer War in 1899. Most certainly, he did not have the temperament for confinement, but I like to think that the insight, eloquence and compassion of the now neglected John Galsworthy, a deeply committed social and penal reformer, and later the founder of International PEN - which among other things came to support imprisoned writers and intellectuals – was of equal influence on Churchill’s outlook in 1910.

To learn more, please see:

Mike Nellis (1996) John Galsworthy’s ‘Justice’. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 36 (1) Winter pp 61–84

Charles Stephenson(2023) ***Churchill as Home Secretary: Suffragettes, Strikes and Social Reform 1910-11***. Barnsley: Pen & Sword History

The inner Light does not lead men to do that which is right in their own eyes, but that which is right in God’s eyes. As the Light is One, so its teaching is ultimately (though not superficially) harmonious. In actual experience, it is not found that souls truly looking to the Inner Light as their authority will break away from each other in anarchy.

Ellen S. Bosanquet 19927      QF&P 26.68

# Truth and Integrity Group

## Sharing Uncertainty Fears and Hopes - Global Meeting for Worship

To: Quaker Truth and Integrity Group <[quakertruth@gmail.com](mailto:quakertruth@gmail.com)>

[Tuesday 22 April 09:00](#)

[Thursday 24 April 19:00](#)

Dear Friends,

You are invited to participate in a global online meeting for worship to share uncertainties, fears and hopes and to uphold each other.

The radical and swift changes to the political landscape across the world that have taken place over the last few months have left many Friends concerned, fearful and disturbed.

In Britain, the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group (QTIG) have been concerned at the decline in truth and integrity in public affairs, primarily because of its deleterious effect on democracy. We now see Democracy around the world being undermined.

In this changed landscape, we are asking "What are Quakers called to do?"

We will hold two online meetings for worship to share our uncertainties, fears and hopes. We are inviting Friends worldwide to join us in discerning a way forward. We feel that it is important for us to hear a broader, more global perspective because although our (QTIG's) work is focused on Britain, the global order is shifting and we are aware that the way that looks from other corners of the world will be different to how it looks to us. We do not consider the global order as it was in any way perfect (far from it). And there may be opportunities for the global community in the changes we see, even if (or because) they are so very uncomfortable and frightening. We also offer this opportunity as a contribution to wider discernment in the Quaker world.

To ensure that we capture concerns and ideas correctly, we will record the sessions. These recordings will only be used to help the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group's Steering Group document correctly the fears, hopes and ideas shared within the meeting and to help us plan our work. They will be destroyed once that exercise is completed.

If there are outcomes from these two Meetings for Worship which might inform future actions, we will summarise and share them with those Friends who participate in the meetings and with the clerks of the 4 FWCC sections and FWCC.

These meetings will be held on Tuesday 22 April at 09:00 and on Thursday 24 April at 19:00. To register, click on the relevant date below.

## Is Misogyny a Quaker concern?

Margaret Roy

Yes, this question has been asked. The answer may depend on your definition of misogyny. Would it still be a question if applied to race?

It must refer to inequality applied to roughly half the population of our country, of our world. In this state, the UK, much has been done to level the ground re equal pay, equal opportunities, and many areas of 'citizenship'. The statistics in other areas are loaded.

There are 107 deaths last year in the United Kingdom, i.e. almost 2 each week on average. 24 of those are in Scotland, almost 25% although the population of Scotland is less than 12 % of UK. In terms of the world it is in minutes. In health they have discovered many heart attacks amongst women are missed as the symptoms do not copy those generally experienced and accepted in men. The media is full of reports on gender-based violence, a nice term that hides the epidemic of violence against women. This weekend the front page and several pages inside a popular Scottish Sunday newspaper was devoted to the headline that almost half of the female teachers in Scotland had faced violence in the classroom. The stories can be shocking. Consider that brave women in France set up by her husband to be raped by 70+ strangers, and the multiple health issues that arose. And consider the research that shows 700,000 women in Scotland are afraid to go out alone. Our mothers teach us to be on our guard so many are wary.

Where do Quakers stand with this?

What do our testimonies say?

Our Violence against Women Group spent its first three years 'informing'. We drew attention to FGM (Female Genital Mutilation that has increased in Britain, but the greatest increase of late is in the southern states of USA amongst the fundamentalist Christian population) and underage marriage ( we have to be careful what we say as this is mostly amongst the non-Christian population). We stood outside the stations and went to the universities to hand out leaflets re Thursdays in Black. We even updated the leaflet to give advice on where to go for help in Scotland. We were joined by a couple of women from the Women's World Day of Prayer, but no Quakers. We collected bras and panties to send to women in Africa having been told they were less likely to be raped if wearing them as it meant that they were being looked after, i.e. that they belonged to someone, usually male. We told the men in our meeting that they could drop a packet of knickers in their shopping at the supermarket and could always say they were for the wife. Giggles but only half a bag when each weekend I was collecting two black bags full from the women at my Qi Gong class. We had a seminar during COP25 to put across a woman's perspective. Over 60 registered, mostly on Zoom but we went over budget



when Edinburgh Meeting House charged us for rent and use of their zoom equipment. *The booklet we produced is still available in small numbers.* So we changed tact, following the Quaker interest in war, we produced a leaflet on rape as a weapon of war and sent it to all the LM clerks in Scotland. No response.

Where do Quakers stand? We did a questionnaire that revealed that most Quakers thought violence against women was a domestic affair (and the returns to the questionnaire were higher than usually expected). Yet, see this comment:

I think the problem is that a general concern about something is not enough to create a collective Quaker concern - for that there needs to be a more focussed purpose or aim that Friends can actively engage with. E.G. we are all generally concerned about nuclear war, but our specific concern leads some of us (not many!) to sit outside the gates of Faslane once per month.

You need to find something achievable that others want to join you in working on....

So we go back to the Lamb's War.

James Nayler and Margaret Fell spoke of this as double sided. As well as the war without in society at large, there was also the inner struggle with desires and urges. To early Christians this was the Spirit working inwardly on morality, the seven deadly sins. Yes it was seen as sin, and still is. Nowadays, it is no longer the province of the Elders to chase people up. The self-help industry has taken it over as exploring our maximum capacity. Being happy!

Yet greed exists and thrives within our Patriarchal Economic System of hierarchy, of exploitation and oppression that creates a hierarchy of have and have nots and where our 'clean' communities with their electric cars and internet servers (with their 20.000 satellites) come at the expense of pollution and poverty elsewhere in the world. We live a lie. And of course women are at the bottom of that pile.

So where do we Quakers go from here? Do our core values stand up? NO

What is core to the sickness in our societies but the individual crawling up the greasy pole of want and expressing frustration at his/her limitations. Who gets kicked if the cat is out?

The rot is most clearly seen as violence and in our society that is escalating so much that it is commonly called an epidemic. The war is now more troublesome within.

How do we change without being moralistic? Or by simply putting down men?

The inward Light can lead us. We can share and support. We can be aware. What does love require of us? How do we see the Light of God in each of us?

A wee bit of help?

I recommend the men's White Ribbon Campaign and the book by Alan Bissett, Lads, Lads, Lads, a guide to respect and Consent.

And deeper spirituality.

# Femicide

Margaret Roy

*Gleaned from a Radio 4 interview with Prof. Jane Monkton Smith on Women's Hour .*

**Abstract:** the killing of women by their intimate, or former intimate, partners is a serious social, criminal justice, and public health issue. There are significant pressures on public services in the United Kingdom and other places to reduce the number of deaths, and a need for more information to aid in assessing risk. The aim of this article (*see internet*) is to develop understanding of nonclinical risk assessment by organizing the perpetrator journey to homicide using temporal sequencing and drawing from coercive control discourse.

The stages were developed from work done in USA See Adams D. (2007). *Why do they kill? Men who murder their intimate partners*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

***One woman is killed every 10 minutes in the world, 2 every week in UK on average. In 90% of cases the perpetrator is male.***

This type of homicide does not occur randomly and there are many myths including that it is a crime of passion. *Prof. Jane Monkton Smith showed a pattern.*

**Stage One** Coercive control. Usually there is a history of offense. Clare's Law 2009 is a disclosure system that can be referred to and is run by the Department of Justice.

**Stage Two** often involves a whirlwind romance. He may say 'I've never felt like this before'. She may feel special, and flattered. Is there a history of violence?

**Stage Three** the control begins so there are rules and possibly even consequences and punishment if these are broken. The victim may doubt her sanity or reasoning. She may become isolated from friends and family as he dominates her time. If jealous, the perpetrator may say 'I've never been jealous before. You are special'. The victim may change their clothes or make-up to please. The abuse may be psychological and nonviolent so the victim may feel too embarrassed to call it out. If she speaks, she may be shown as 'erratic'. One help scheme is to dial 55 on the mobile phone which will then be tracked.

**Stage Four** if the victim tries to separate there are threats. He may threaten to kill himself. There is difficulty if children are involved. It is not easy to leave. It is not so easy to change the locks. Women's Aid becomes a safe place where there may be understanding of such situations.

**Stage Five** Behaviour escalates. Control and abuse now form a pattern. The biggest threat is the thought of leaving because then the perpetrator has no control. He may move from crying to threats to violence. If she leaves he may turn to stalking. There are different levels of seriousness here. He may put a tracker on her phone send flowers to her work. He comes across as a nice guy, to others.

**Stage Six** There is a change in thinking that is difficult to identify. The victim adapts her behaviour for fear of upsetting him. Here, she is advised to go and not look back. It is the stage of domestic violence. 'He may buy a specific knife for the job'.

**Stage Seven** He starts to plan even if not yet ready to carry out the homicide. He may do google searches in how to strangle, how to poison, how to bury a body. There may be thoughts or even words of suicide. 'I will kill myself if you leave'. And he may threaten to kill her.

**Stage Eight Homicide** The victim may go missing, or he may say it was an accident – he doesn't know how it happened. She just fell out the window, or it was a sex game that went wrong. He may kill himself to keep control. Does he really know what happened?

*I may not have done this justice but alas I have seen stages of it and I worry in Quaker meetings how much we abuse our power in our anxiety to help other's get it right. You would need to read this with Dr Gwen Adshead' work expressed in the Reith Lectures to start to ask questions.*



**Gardening time!**

## REVIEWS **Lads, Lads, Lads, a Guide to Respect and Consent** by Alan Bissett, Wren & Rook 2023 **Margaret Roy**

This book is raw and hilarious as it calls out some of the most awful, frightening, embarrassing and violence behaviour. He targets it at young men but it is equally easy to read and relevant to anyone who is not a hermit.

The back cover says it all:

*Have you ever been in a situation where there's a loud guy making dodgy comments, cracking jokes that only he thinks are funny or leering at the girls in the room? You can feel the tension, right? **That guy** is the worst, but no one is saying anything, because the whole situation is intimidating and awkward.*

*This toolkit will help you **call out bad behaviour** and understand the serious issues facing girls today. And it will make you feel **confident** navigating relationships, so that everyone feels happy, heard and respected, **while being the best version of yourself.***

The chapters include: Flirting with Disaster, Porn on the Rocks, Locker Room Talk, The 'Nice' Guys, the Worst Guys, the Good Guys. And there are pages of resources that will help parents, teachers, youth workers, and guys and dolls.

'Your's is a generation that can make it right.' He aims high. He doesn't avoid the cringe factor. He laughs with you but reassures it is OK. 'Be self-deprecating. Showing that you can laugh at yourself proves that you are confident and self-assured. We are all ridiculous human beings. **Embrace that.**'

I love his words and his scenarios. It takes me back to those awkward teens with a smile, now. Each chapter ends with hints on how to . . .

And he doesn't avoid the porn. 'Pornography is like fast food: processed, factory made, with no nutritional benefit.' 'It's not real' 'Porn takes the human element out of sex but doesn't replace it with anything more valuable'.

Locker room talk: 'or at least that is what he would like you to believe'. Beware the stories of the alpha male and his double talk. He unpacks so many scenarios with acute observations and questions that penetrate. 'And also, if they really knew the first thing about women, why is their entire audience male?'

Enjoy!

**Alan Bissett** is a playwright, novelist and former secondary school teach from Falkirk.

*In 2022, he was one of the writers of the Police Scotland video "Don't Be That Guy", which looked at toxic male behaviours towards women and which went viral, garnering much praise and winning a PRCA Dare award (for UK-wide PR campaigns) in the Public Sector category.*

## **Review: SQCJN Booklet on Prison Abolition**

**Derick Nelson, Advocate**

I found the publication excellent and fascinating. The artwork on the front cover is a stark portrayal of the plight of the prisoner, where even nature itself is forbidden (surely the cruellest of deprivations, with obvious consequences for the mental and physical health of the inmate). The Prisoner Voices and poetry provide striking personal experiences of the effect of imprisonment.

The Introduction sets out clearly how the meeting in April 2024 took the “exploratory and challenging” bold step of imagining the abolition of prisons and started what is a compelling discussion.

The collection of powerful images, poetry, quotes and articles provide varying perspectives on the problem, overlapping and adding subtle layers to the conversation which is both worthy and, I would suggest, essential in a civilised society. The sheer scale of the issue and the difficulties in resolving it are acknowledged, but the overarching feeling is one of hope that this discussion at least constitutes a first step in doing so.

I was particularly struck by Kirstin Anderson’s observations upon prison reform (notably, the idea that they have already been substantially reformed and that, by doing so, we may simply be perpetuating the need for them). It is also striking and somewhat sobering to note that the three main goals identified back in 1976 would appear to be no closer to being achieved.

Her final paragraph encapsulates the underlying conundrum which must be addressed in order to avoid the suggestion that such thinking is that of “utopians and idealists”. Her article highlights the issue of whether those inside are inherently bad, or (as is known by anyone with experience of the system) are largely those affected by trauma, and/or who have mental health issues, and/or who have lives blighted by drugs and alcohol.

She alludes to these factors once again in her final paragraph, when she poses the question of whether we can care for people without subjecting them to imprisonment.

This is echoed in Pete Clark’s article, offering hope of a way forward via the Therapeutic Community. I was interested in the principles outlined in the bullet points, which made me recall the principles of the Norwegian prison system (on which there are many articles and which is seen as particularly successful and progressive). This system is, of course, still reform rather than abolition, operating

an open prison system where the prison officers are seen as mentors and trainers, joining the prisoners in activities, with an emphasis on the holistic needs of the prisoners (addressing drug problems, yoga, meditation, prayer, skills, sports, etc.). It is certainly a different way of treating inmates; however, as previously discussed, it is still reform rather than abolition.

Nevertheless, it is surely worth discussing whether, in a society such as ours, where there appears to be no loss of appetite for draconian punishment, such a reform may present as a more palatable first step? I am left wondering whether such a system in Scotland may convince the public that care and rehabilitation of offenders is the ultimate goal of our system rather than punishment.

I can certainly report a move towards recognition of trauma and its part in the criminal justice system. As prosecutors, we are all now given trauma-informed training and encouraged to use that training when dealing with those involved in the system (principally victims of crime, but also those accused and their families). There is a growing acknowledgement that trauma is the basis for much behaviour which extends into the justice system at all levels; and steps are being taken to address this issue; however, the wheels of justice turn frustratingly slowly.

By way of providing further information on the subject, I would like to recommend the work of a fellow lawyer (Iain Smith, partner, Keegan and Smith in West Lothian). He does an enormous amount of work in trying to educate people generally (and judges particularly!) about the effects of childhood trauma upon offenders, and his tireless work is certainly a step in the right direction. The contributors to your excellent publication (and those who are interested in the subject) would no doubt benefit from considering his perspective on the issue, if they have not already.

## **CONCLUSION**

This is a very worthwhile and compelling publication, which dares to discuss solutions which may seem unrealistic or scary to many; however, it is a discussion which is surely necessary unless we want to continue to find ourselves in a society where prisons exist simply because it has 'aye been'. The fact that the impending closure of the Victorian Barlinnie Prison will only be facilitated by the building of a newer, larger prison is surely a sign that we should be discussing whether there is another way forward. This booklet continues a discussion which appears to have been ongoing for many years. However, the fact that until now there has been no solution to this problem should only serve as a catalyst to engage in the discussion even more. At least with the passing of the years there is a growing recognition that the causes of offending are manifold and, as such, the discussion should be continued in a spirit of hope

## QF&P 26.65

The central affirmation, that the Light of the Christ-like God shines in every person, implies that our knowledge of God is both subjective and objective. It is easy to misconstrue the 'Inner Light' as an invitation to individualism and anarchy if one concentrates on the subjective experience known to each one. But it is an equally important part of our faith and practice to recognise that we are not affirming the existence and priority of your light and my light, but the Light of God, and of the God who is made known to us supremely in Jesus. The inward experience must be checked by accordance with the mind of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, the character of that willed caring which in the New Testament is called Love. It is further checked by the fact that if God is known in measure by every person, our knowledge of him will be largely gained through the experience of others who reverently and humbly seek him. In the last resort we must be guided by our own conscientiously held conviction – but it is the last resort. First we must seek carefully and prayerfully through the insights of others, both in the past and among our contemporaries, and only in the light of this search do we come to our affirmation.

I.Hugh Doncaster, 1972

*Ed: I have left in the 'God' language as each translates it differently.*



**At least Basil has  
come to help us.**

## Ferry Wood and us, nine years on

Ed Tyler and Carina Spink

Since Carina and I began working with our patch of temperate rainforest in 2016 we've become more and more aware that restoration (in our case at least) involves a hands-on approach. If tomorrow we stopped work and did nothing from then you wouldn't notice anything for a year or so, but from then on a cascade of changes would begin, and after a couple of decades the *Rhododendron ponticum* we'd so painstakingly cleared over a seven year period would all be back again. And without repair and maintenance the deer fence would soon be breached by deer and sheep.

However, we're still at it (though I have broken my hip so am out of action for a couple of months) and the trajectory of change is really positive: thousands of saplings are coming away, plus the areas we've cleared of rhododendron are now evolving back into their former habitats, be it birch or oak woodland or heath (with either bracken or heather dominant). They have also revealed a varied topography of gullies, terraces, fissures and slopes that had been completely obscured under the impenetrable rhododendron thickets.



The work we do in the wood is far from merely physical. As Joanna Macy puts it, it's all part of "The Work that Reconnects". We are living out the title of her most well-known work: Coming back to Life – practices to reconnect our lives, our world.

Everything is blessed when we work in the wood. For example, when we stoop to pull up a rhododendron seedling we notice as if for the first time the micro habitat around our feet. The seedling invariably is growing in a patch of moss, but in the immediate neighbourhood there are so many things we've never looked at properly before: a patch of dried oak leaf litter with tiny galls on it, a Birch or Rowan Sapling, a crustose lichen with jam-tart-like fruits, a stonecrop, a hunting spider, a sparrow hawk feather, a speckled wood butterfly...the list goes on and on.



Being in the wood is a totally different experience to being in the fields surrounding it. Immediately you feel sheltered and folded wrapped around as it were by a blanket, nourished and cared for. Everything is more equitable here and everywhere you look a den-building



opportunity can be spotted: in a rock shelter, or a tree that's naturally growing in front of a rock face, or a Phoenix tree (one which has fallen onto the ground whose side shoots are now growing vertically and turning into a line of new trunks). You become aware of the wood as a single organism, for whilst there are hundreds if not thousands of individual oaks in the wood, they're all connected by underground mychorrhizal fungal networks (we actually see one of these networks in the form of earth balls which look like small puff balls and these balls are to be found everywhere in the wood).

We began this article by talking about needing to have a hands-on approach, but it is important to recognise that our practice involves a lot of "not-doing" or "withholding *from* action." For example we do not gather dead oak timber even though there's loads of it about; consequently, we get a lot of dead standing and dead fallen timber which is food for beetles and woodpeckers as well as for a whole other range of fungi which do not touch the soil but feed directly on the deadwood itself (these have lovely common names like "Witches' Butter," "Black Bulgar" and "Turkey Tail".)

We also "not-do" in that we allow various tree species to naturally regenerate from their own seeds rather than carry out tree planting programs (the only exception being alder ,as there was only one tree left in the whole wood).

When we brought the wood in 2016 we also, largely unconsciously, set an intention, an intention which we have come to realise aligns with Joanna Macy's reconnecting work. She talks about working in three dimensions, the first of which are holding action in defence of Life on Earth. We brought the wood with the intention of protecting it: in other words, this was a holding action.

However, over the years we have become more and more involved in the other two dimensions. The second is understanding the structural causes of our intermeshing Global crises and creating alternative institutions to counteract. To this end we co-founded Action West Loch and Kintyre Rainforest Alliance, joined the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest and Ed began working for South Kintyre Development Trust, thus joining forces with many other people who are as passionate and committed as we are to the same work. The result is that we are reconnecting not only ourselves with our own single little pocket of woodland, but we are actually beginning to connect these scattered pockets of woodland and – crucially – the communities associated with them.

The third dimension is that of shifting one's perceptions of reality. To this end we've created a labyrinth beside the entrance to the wood so that visitors, volunteers,



neighbours, friends and family alike can all experience the journey of walking through on an intentional path with the woodland behind them and the sea in front of them. In doing so we make a deep-ecology perspective accessible to people of no religion and no faith, who nevertheless love being outside in nature.

Finally let's return to our daily practice of wandering through the wood and gently looking down at a patch of ground in order to pull up a rhododendron seedling. It is meditative work and fits well with the Buddha's invitation to:

“contemplate the interdependent co-arising in every moment”.

## The Learning Group

So far this year, there have been two successful day events.

The first on 15<sup>th</sup> February brought **Ben Pink Dandelion** north to expand on his Swarthmoor lecture. This was a Woodbrooke course.

He covered four elements of the Quaker Worship:

- 1) Everyone has access directly to the Divine. We are all equal.
- 2) Worship is an encounter with the Divine. Quakerism is an experiential religion. In this, ministry is not our's. It is a communal experience.
- 3) Discernment – we go into worship to listen and we will be given what we need. The process is to set self aside, to be together as a community.
- 4) Our's is a spirit led life.

It was good to hear all the nuances and to contemplate together with someone whose activism had led him deeper and deeper into a spirit-led life.

Our second seminar on 22<sup>nd</sup> March was with the Kindler's on **what does love require of us?** The pace was sturdy as we were let to contemplate question after question to take us gradually deeper to feel an encounter with our soul, our innermost being (I have been studying with the Sufis hence the language). We worked in larger and smaller groups of three shaking off the platitudes and the usual to explore different aspects of our encounter with love. It was a fresh experience. In the last session we spent time alone asking when God or some higher help had intervened in our lives. What was the result of this? I found this quite an eye-opener and the results unexpected.

And, working so closely in small groups it became a group experience that enriched our own and gave it fuller meaning.

On both occasions, we were nourished by the hospitality group proving soup and bread for lunch, and cake at tea and coffee break. Thank you Glasgow Meeting for making it possible and Sheila Semple for all her hard work organising it.

## **Kindler's course Listening Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30 Glasgow Meeting House**

This is the next course in the 2025 programme of learning, organized by West Scotland Area Meeting Learning Group. It leads on from the previous course from 'What Does Love Require of Us?'

Friends who attended the most recent course found that the Kindlers were able to help us share our experiences and grow closer to each other as part of the Beloved Community. Using the same techniques (sharing in pairs and small groups, and with the group as a whole), the Kindlers will help us to consider how we listen to each other, to the community of Friends in worship and in meetings for worship for business, to God/the spirit/ Light within.

West Scotland Area Meeting is covering the costs of this course, so there is no cost to you; Soup and bread will be provided at Glasgow Quaker Meeting House (thanks again to the Hospitality committee).

Apply to:

**Michael Hutchinson [mjhriddrie@btinternet.com](mailto:mjhriddrie@btinternet.com) preferably by Monday 7 April.**

### **MEETING FOR WORSHIP AT FASLANE**

**Sunday 20 April** This is Easter Sunday. We hope that a good number of Friends will join us. Meeting for Worship is held outside the North Gate of Faslane Naval Base. Bring suitable clothing and something to sit on. There are some large boulders as well. Provisional dates for the rest of 2025 are: **18 May, 29 June, 21 September, 9 November**. For further details and to offer or request a lift, please contact Mary Alice Mansell, [mamansell54@gmail.com](mailto:mamansell54@gmail.com)

## **The Bill Taylor Trust**

As of summer 2024 new Trustees are looking after the Bill Taylor Trust: Janey Andrews, Kate Mooney and Alistair Trainor. Former member of Glasgow Meeting Bill Taylor made a trust in favour of "Supporting work for the training, education, well being or advancement of young people living in Glasgow". In the past requests have usually been to support Young Friends to attend Shindig. However, Trustees would welcome creative requests from young Friends to support activities like social outings, teaching materials, visits to the theatre, whatever the Young People would like the Trust would like to support.

Trustees would welcome financial requests from the children, parents and guardians up until 31st of May 2025. All requests should be sent to Kate Mooney at [37rowallan@gmail.com](mailto:37rowallan@gmail.com).

## Crianlarich Gathering 14-16 March, 2025

Twenty-two participating adults and three primary-school girls enjoyed the weekend in the Youth Hostel, ably facilitated by Wendy from Woodbrooke on the topic of "Strengthening our Quaker community". Wendy had travelled by train from her home in Lancashire. The weather was good with excellent views, though it was cold at night, and there was a smattering of snow to be seen on the north side of the summit of Ben More.

We had brought food, but the highlight of the catering was the meal on Saturday evening prepared by Rob from Mull. Bronwen from Islay looked after the girls. They were high-spirited and we saw them being witches and wolves. I think they much enjoyed each other's company.

*Daffodils and moss at the hostel (c. 170 m above the sea)*



Kate from Ayrshire and Bronwen managed household things for us, though most of us helped.

In the first activity on Saturday morning, Wendy had set out tables for up to six people, and she asked us to make a point of sitting with others whom we didn't know so well for some planning of a Quaker community on an island. We drew some of our ideas on white plates. This worked very well, I thought; it got us mixed up a bit. In later sessions we explored strength and resilience.



*Some of the participants*

On Saturday afternoon Michael from Glasgow took some of us to look for liverworts, mosses and lichens, and others went for a longer walk or took some free time. In the evening we had an enjoyable ceilidh with songs and poems and other readings.

There was also some late night conversation, which your correspondent missed through lack of stamina!

We finished with worship on Sunday morning, after which the above photo was taken. We went our separate ways, those of us who mainly see each other in Zoom refreshed



## **WISTON WEEKEND Fri 5 - Sun 7 Sept 2025: First Call**

The Quaker Wiston Weekend organising group invites all Friends and attenders across Scotland for a weekend for **Building Community** in the year that Quakers in Scotland is incorporated.

We will have a mix of activities, fellowship and worship for Friends of all ages. Simplicity and Sufficiency are to be the values we explore.

**5.00pm for 6.00pm Friday 5th to 2.00pm Sunday 7th September 2025 at Wiston Lodge, Millrigg Road, Wiston, near Biggar, South Lanarkshire ML12 6HT.**

Please Register / Booking Form: <https://bit.ly/wiston25>

This year we've once again hired the whole place - all [facilities in the Victorian Lodge, the Cabins and the camping field](#). We will be the only group there. Take a look at Wiston website, which has a plan of the buildings so you can get an idea where you would like to stay.

## News of Local Meetings

### Ayrshire

**Brenda Dalton, clerk.**

Following the request from the Book of Discipline Revision Group for views on Advices and Queries, we decided to make this our March Discussion Group topic. Eight Friends joined the discussion where we had input around the origins and historical context of Advices and Queries and looked at how their content can differ in other parts of the world. We discussed how we can make them accessible to young people and those who may need alternative communication methods. We wondered whether the current format with the plain red cover may be rather staid in today's world where visual impact is often important to the reader. Advices and Queries is the often the first booklet we give to enquirers and visitors so perhaps it would be helpful if its cover gave some visual insight into its content. We considered the difficult task of ensuring they can both speak to us now whilst remaining relevant for a future which will change in ways we cannot know. The discussion was a timely prompt for us to review our use of Advices and Queries in our Meeting. We had previously read one each week during Meeting but stopped doing so a few years ago. Friends felt we missed this and so we have decided to read from them again on each first Sunday.

Our appreciation was also expressed regarding the difficult but valuable work being carried out on our behalf by the Book of Discipline Revision Group and we thank them for this.

We had planned to join with Arran Friends again for our March fifth Sunday. Heather Lodge on Arran was booked for the Meeting and some Ayrshire Friends had their ferry sailings booked. But alas late on the Saturday the ferry was cancelled due to the strong winds. However as we had already arranged for the meeting to be blended we were able to get together on Zoom with Ayrshire Friends joining from home and three Arran Friends braving the weather to join from Heather Lodge. Although disappointing that we couldn't meet in person it was good to continue to build our connection with Arran Friends and we look forward to getting across to worship together in person at a future date.

**Dumfries Meeting** is flourishing just now! Several new faces over the past few months, including some of working age, which lowers our average somewhat. Not only do these folk attend, but they enter freely into our discussions over coffee after worship. Recent topics have included Advices & Queries, and the Peace Testimony: how does it fit into the 2025 world situation? New friends have also been quick to contribute in practical ways to the smooth running of the Meeting. Long may it continue!

**Jan Lethbridge**

## Muriel Robertson

21/5/1929-17/2 2025

### Light Through the Trees - For Muriel

And our cherished older Friends,  
Have planted and watered the trees I now  
sit under,  
Amazed at the dappled beauty which  
their silhouettes  
display for us,

And whilst they are yet here,  
I who am no longer young will learn from  
them,  
How to plant and water,  
How to stretch out horizons,  
And provide shade before I leave my  
silhouette.

And when like Muriel, they have become  
like Light,  
Their silhouettes will sing to us,  
And tell stories to our hearts,  
And gladden our spirits.

**Laura McMurtrie:**  
**From the Meetings for Worship Series.**

### Aunty Em.

She was the best of us,  
Matriarch of healers,  
Great Granma of the Robertson Clan,  
Aunty Em to all who cried her thus, far and  
wide,  
Friend to the ordinary, the extraordinary, the  
profound,  
Found the best in folk. Seeking answers to  
difficult questions,  
Knowing what she knew,  
Curious, loyal, steadfast, humorous and witty,  
A bonny fecher 'gainst injustice,  
Scottish and true,  
The rock in Dumbarton, Edinburgh hewn.



Shading us in the harshness of the noon  
sun,  
Protecting us from the rain,  
And standing firm in the storm,  
A promise of unfolding horizons.

No time for fools,  
But patient and kind to all that she loved,  
Wise and joyous with an agile mind,  
Voracious reader, lover of books and ideas,  
A whizz at scrabble, crosswords and puzzles,  
University challenge,  
A collector and connector of people and  
places

Poems and quotations held in her memory  
and versified,  
The old Nun of Norwich run through with  
wisdom,  
All shall be well and all will be well, and all  
manner of things shall be well,  
Elder and organiser, cook and provider,  
A listening ear and pastoral carer,  
Representative in other faith gatherings,  
constant companion at our healing groups.

Excursions, enthusiastic enabler, entertainer,  
Well-travelled and trained in her long life,  
Nauru Africa and Australia,  
Helpmate to Angus,  
But not 'the little woman,  
Her Aura was huge!!

We'll greatly miss her,  
But she's more than done her bit,  
In the love that she's left us,  
Her place is in the stars,  
In whatever is beyond,  
Lie her twinkling eyes. **Derek Read, Glasgow**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

26 <sup>th</sup> April	Area Meeting	Dumfries,
2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Area Meeting	by Zoom
23 <sup>rd</sup> August	Area Meeting	Argyll
11 <sup>th</sup> October	Area Meeting	Ayrshire
1 <sup>st</sup> December	Area Meeting	by Zoom

### Proposed dates and host meetings for GM in 2026/27

7 March 2026 - West Scotland AM (already agreed)

6 June - East Scotland AM

19 September - North Scotland AM

7 November – South East Scotland AM

6 March 2027 West Scotland AM

We expect these will be blended (hybrid) meetings.



## Hold in the Light

Judith Baines of Arran is waiting to move to a care home near her family in England

Bob Williamson is in a care home in Glasgow.

*There is a meeting of Friends Fellowship of Healing on first Monday of each month.*

*Contact Nicola on <nicola.james53@gmail.com>*

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**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 or the next issue of WSQN is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025.**

**Contributions are welcome. Articles no more than 1000 words should be send in Word format only to the editor at [margaret.roy@btinternet.com](mailto:margaret.roy@btinternet.com).**

**Helps for this issue are Laura McMurtie and Edie Phoenix, and of course our proof reader Ruth Bacon.**

**We are still looking for a distribution editor who will deal with sending out the hard copies.**