

West of Scotland Quaker News

August 2011

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

From the Editor

This is quite a full issue of the Newsletter with a variety of stimulating articles: but most still lack the additional interest which would be supplied by an accompanying photo. So please - you don't need to have an expensive camera or be a dedicated photographer - supply a picture to supplement the text, whenever this is possible. It would help in outreach - and also, no doubt, in familiarising us with other Friends - if your articles and reports could be accompanied with a head-and-shoulders photo of yourselves.



This specimen of a male Coelacanth (preserved in a museum in Concarneau, Brittany) measures some 1m.38cm long and was dredged up from the Ocean, near Madagascar. Before 1938 - when a live specimen was first found - this fish was thought to have become extinct some 60 million years ago. But they still survive at great depths and this specimen was recovered, hidden from human gaze, at a depth of 150m. Does this fish have any lessons for present-day Quakers?

The deadline for the next issue of West of Scotland Quaker News is 17th September.

**Copy should be sent to the editor Bryan Bowes preferably in word or plain text email to: botany64@waitrose.com or by post on paper or disc to:
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Clerk's Letter

The clerk on holiday: Three days after Area Meeting in Castle Douglas, I abandoned all clerking responsibilities and escaped to British Columbia for a couple of weeks. I went for part of the time to Whistler in the Coast Mountains, hoping to find tranquility through walking in the great wilderness. I resisted the zip-lining, the bungy jumping, the jet-boating and stuck to the valley trails, which I shared with the mountain bikers. I would have preferred the mountain trails but they were closed, as there was still a great deal of snow. The wildlife was abundant and I was fortunate to see black bears, ground squirrels, mule deer, ospreys and a Stellar's jay. However, despite enjoying my walks, I found I had a growing frustration with this place. The commercial exploitation and creation of a well-maintained playground for outdoor activities didn't sit well with me.

Just before I left, I visited the Cultural Centre of the indigenous people - the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations. A young ambassador of the Squamish People showed a small group of visitors round and spoke about the traditions and current life of her people. These two nations have coexisted respectfully as neighbours since time immemorial. They have thrived by living in harmony with each other and with the world around them, taking no more than they needed from the land and showing gratitude for what the land gave them. In the past the cedar tree was a vital resource for their way of life and the women used the bark to make baskets, ropes, hats and other head gear. To ensure no harm was done to the tree, the strip of bark removed was no more than two hands width. Canoes were carved out of fallen trunks, not from felled trees. In contrast to business developers, the Squamish and Lil'wat people do not exploit the land but are its stewards and their relationship with it is a spiritual one. They are not relics of the past but are still grounded in their rich, ancient traditions, which continue to grow and evolve in a modern world. They are politically active and campaign against proposed harmful developments.

It was a good experience to come into contact with these people, their values and peaceful traditions, which are similar to our Quaker ways. Of course in the UK we have come from a very different background, where our lives have not been in a right relationship with the earth, but many Quakers are changing their way of life to lessen its impact on the environment and Meetings are doing likewise. Nevertheless, for most of us it's an uphill struggle to change old habits and ways of thinking; but in striving to do this, we are putting our faith into practice.

When I returned home, among my mail was a letter from *Living Witness, Quakers for Sustainability*. It suggested that Local or Area Meetings might consider inviting Living Witness to run a workshop for them. Some interesting themes are offered, including:

- o Triple crunch: climate, commodities and credit
- o The work that reconnects: experiential connectedness to the earth
- o How change happens and what gets in the way
- o Children's spiritual connection with creation

More information about these workshops and about the ways in which Living Witness can support Friends in developing a sustainable lifestyle is available on their website www.livingwitness.org.uk

Report on AM by Telephone Conference, 28 May 2011

It was good to be able to attend an Area Meeting without having to drive for 3.5 hours or more to and from it! I think many, probably all, Friends attending thought similarly. Not only was the expensive and environmentally damaging road mileage saved, but pre-Meeting thought could be concentrated on the impending Meeting items and not directed towards travelling issues.

The care that had gone into the telephone conference guidance/instructions showed straight away, as participating Friends all dialled in within the 5 minutes planned, being welcomed by our Clerk before the roll call. The reading of *QFP 3.03*, on being open to new ways of holding meetings, set the tone for the session. Discussion on the Clerk's Report centred on linked events coming this autumn, debating Economic Justice and the Sustainable Global Society. As these were a follow-up to 2009's Zero Growth Economy events, the Meeting felt that we should indeed be represented again, and Nominations Committee would be asked to name a Friend who could attend, expenses paid. Noting the names of Friends serving as University Chaplains in the West Scotland area, the Meeting had a short discussion about other workplaces that could also have Quaker chaplains.

The Trustees Report for January 2010 to May 2011, which had been circulated prior to the Meeting, was spoken to by Daphne Wasserman, Clerk of Trustees. Daphne emphasised the assisting role that the Trustees played in helping Local Meetings carry out their duties. As set out in *QFP 4.33*, the production of Annual reports was particularly important. The Meeting discussed the deadline for Local Meeting reports. It was felt that the end of May in 2011 was too tight, but we did need a positive deadline. In the end, an extension to June was agreed, with a reminder that next year it will be March.

There was a lively discussion on the dissemination of Local Meetings' annual reports to other Local Meetings, recognising that it was for the Trustees and Newsletter editors to discern how best to accomplish this. After gladly approving Luisa Piluso's application for Membership, the discussion moved on to the availability and accessibility to Area Minutes and Gold Minutes. It became clear that we need an Area Meeting Archivist, and when appointed that person would look into it.

As the telephone conference was an experimental method of meeting, the Clerk facilitated an opportunity to feed back "What Went Well" and "What Didn't Go Well". Favourable comments were made regarding illness and distance which prevented regular attendance at locational meetings. These difficulties were obviated by tele-conferencing. It was also noted that there was a cacaphony of yes's in agreement to a minute, so why not ask for dissenters instead?

Numbers attending were less than expected, so perhaps there was some unease at an unfamiliar method of meeting, but all things considered, I for one thought it went well and any misgivings would be salved with practice.

Trevor Oxborrow (Argyll Meeting)

Report on AM in Castle Douglas 18th June

Widening participation

Part of the Reading during our opening worship was from *Quaker Faith & Practice 10.06*: "But the privilege of membership implies that every Friend should feel concerned to attend" [i.e. meetings for church affairs]. There were just 19 people, but who represented all except two of the local meetings, were gathered in Castle Douglas in a splendid new hall (belonging to St Ninian's Church) on a day that was damp and cool.

We heard about the recent funeral of Neville Parker (aged 55) of Dumfries; the hearse was taken to the crematorium in a motor bike procession. As often happens, those present learnt a lot more about the person who had died; Neville was a man of many parts with great courage and humour.

There was considerable discussion about the two AMs that had been held by telephone conference, last December because of snow disrupting travel, and in May as a planned experiment. It was very interesting how discernment progressed on this and we took the revolutionary step of proposing that no fewer than three of the meetings in 2012 should be by telephone conference, and that these should be on Monday evenings. The advantages are that it will allow Friends who cannot travel to take part and the considerable environmental benefit of saving on travelling. It is expected that items that are likely to be of a routine nature will be on the agenda for these, whilst the four whole-day face-to-face meetings should be used mainly for matters that require more discernment and perhaps for spiritual development. The working party which drew up the guidelines used in May was asked to continue reviewing how this develops. F(f)riends from Castle Douglas and Dumfries felt sure that their meetings would be represented on future telephone conferences.

Related to this was a short time spent on how the AM might be strengthened. Friends were encouraged, where possible, to try to visit a different local meeting at least once a year. Experienced Friends might be able to put over the need for volunteers to fill the AM's many posts. Training is available for some of these. It is of vital importance to the future of the Society to be able to call on the talents of more young and middle-aged people. Castle Douglas meeting's hospitality was excellent, and one of the "home team" said also how much she had enjoyed this AM.

Jane Mitchell (Argyll Meeting)

*Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree*, and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.*

2011 Treasurers' Conference at Friends House in July

Perhaps it was a little naïve of me to think that I would pick up some practical tips to unlock accounting mysteries. At least I could find out that I hadn't missed any? I had rather got the idea that this was just not the purpose of the conference even before the day's program had arrived – and rightly so. It turned out to be a two-ways offering of experience and ideas by very capable Friends around the issue of Quaker funding, and how to get more of it: Friends are not giving enough to allow Quaker work to continue.

Surrounding and supporting issues were given a good airing, like the need to inform Members of the breadth of Quaker work; that involving as many as possible in LM and AM activities should engender commitment and responsibility; that widening the community use of Meeting Houses and their involvement in local Quaker activities should broaden Friends' interest as well as affording others in the community a contact with Quakerism. Yet no attempt to develop a sociology of the problem could hide its starkness: Friends need to give more money to keep the Society's work going. Perhaps treasurers need to consider being more proactive in their Meetings; and new Members could be made aware of a financial obligation. The figure of £150 per member had a few mentions, although that was thought to be a minimum amount.

And we were advised that the healthy surplus for 2010 had resulted from two very large legacies. So proceeds from investments are subsidising Quaker operations, and that is to be considered an inappropriate/ unstable/unproductive state to be in. In 1997, 87% of funding arrived by subscription: today it is 38%. Is that difference arising simply because we are not 'getting the message across' to friends? Suspicions that Friends' giving, goes into schemes like improving FMH facilities are unfounded. Such projects are financed out of investments, whereas all Friends' giving goes to Quaker work.

Our own AM friend Christine Davis began the morning's work with an address (*I*) in which she took for her 'text' Matthew 6; 34: "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself." She had considered that the morrow would, necessarily, be facilitated by a solid foundation of involved, trained and committed friends in our Meetings. She asked us to consider answers to three questions:

- 1 What can we as treasurers/trustees do to assess and nurture the individual and the community?
- 2 How do you use all the resources of the Meeting to build its whole community?
- 3 How do we ensure our LM or AM is not unduly dependent upon a cluster of key individuals?

A number in my group felt that involving friends in Meeting tasks, sponsoring individuals at courses, improving connectedness between AM and LM, and organising 'learning sessions' would all help to mitigate the tendency in question 3. And I was reminded of just how many of these suggestions are well-established practice in our own LM and in West Scotland AM. And yet money is still short!

Indeed, I was surprised to hear from one friend (an AM treasurer and BYM trustee) that he felt most friends were neither interested in matters beyond their own LM nor were much aware of the broader aspects of Quaker work. I said to him that my own LM friends were aware of many aspects of Quaker work and were deeply concerned about matters beyond our own Meeting's walls; and that they give within that knowledge and also in that faith. He was quite surprised. Has he been a treasurer for too long?

The morning session was concluded, amusingly, by John Marsh of West Weald AM, by considering the stewardship of our properties (2). He, too, advocated involvement as part of the solution and wished to avoid notions of 'membership' (being too much like joining a club): rather it should be 'belonging'. A sea of heads nodded. He recalled a conversation with his father, a Congregationalist minister, who had one day remarked that "You Quakers are so lucky. You don't have ministers to pay, their manses to provide, their retirement to fund, and you have - very simple buildings to maintain. It follows that you can spend all the money on Quaker work." That we do not distresses John Marsh.

It had seemed to me throughout these considerations that the matter was no more to do with treasurers and trustees than with any other friend in our Meetings. Earmarking some particular friend for the task is, perhaps, more expedient: I think it is a mark of desperation, too.

I found the most practical of the sessions to be the afternoon workshops, mine being 'How can we use the money?', capably facilitated by Tom Heydemann and our own Kate Gulliver. Some clarity was provided for AM treasurers, especially over the matter of reserves vs budget. So, for example, sponsoring a friend's attendance at a conference can be budgeted for, whereas an unexpected Quaker activity can be financed from reserves. A non-Quaker concern should be met by, say, a separate collection; but, in any case, this would be a 'tested concern' of the Meeting. The last of the afternoon sessions was a presentation of the Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements, and a commentary by some of its authors.

I have still got a lot to think about after my experience at the conference, so this is no more than a fresh record of my encounters there and a few personal impressions. I am sure, anyway, that its value will remain difficult to gauge; and though such a gathering in the capital city may seem an extravagant way of not being able to gauge something, it might just be a necessary one. My two nights at The Penn Club were pleasant and useful, too, as I was able to meet many friends from all corners of the country and quite a few others from abroad. It also gave me a little time between events to wander around the Bloomsbury streets and remind myself of the wonders of this city.

1. Christine Davis had, thoughtfully, arranged for copies of 'Taking Thought for the Morrow' to be available for delegates. It covers five pages.
2. John Marsh had, also, made copies of his article in the Friend of 1 January 2010. His address was based on this. I have a copy of this, also.

June Conference in Brodick on Facing up to Conflict

On 11th June, Arran Quakers arranged a day on *Facing up to Conflict*. Friends came from Ayr, Glasgow and Argyll Meetings to Brodick where Jeny Faulkner hosted the event in the sheltered housing complex where she lives. This proved to be very satisfactory as we were able to use the meeting room and kitchen and the two speakers and their husbands stayed in the guest rooms there.

Margaret Elphinstone was our first speaker and she gave a fascinating talk based on her novel, *Voyageurs*. It is set in the early years of the nineteenth century. A young Quaker, Mark, leaves his quiet, rural home in Cumbria to venture to North America to seek his sister; she had gone out there with their aunt some years before and had not been heard of since. It was at a time when the borders of Michigan and what would soon become Canada were in dispute as well as the on-going troubles with the First People, so there are many occasions on the journey when Mark has to face up to different forms of conflict. Margaret read three passages from the book and discussed both her own and Mark's dilemmas as they embraced each new challenge. This was a very interesting approach and had us all deeply involved.

For instance, Mark's encounter with the press gang, before he sets out on his great adventure, sees him fighting tooth and nail to avoid what he knows would be a life of violence in the Royal Navy. When he eventually escapes he is distressed at having violated the Peace Testimony, but neither he, nor we could see what else he could have done in the heat of the moment.

After lunch Liz Anderton told us of her involvement with the *Alternatives to Violence Project*. This is a charity whose volunteers arrange short courses for various groups to present different ways of coping with conflict. Sometimes they work with groups in local communities where there are differences between neighbours and they also run courses in prisons.

Liz described how the participants are encouraged from the beginning to look at themselves positively and to interact with other members of the group. She had us telling our partners what we liked about ourselves and what we loved doing, strongly emphasising the listening role of the silent partner. She also described how imaginary confrontations were acted out in alternative ways, which were then discussed.

It was a very thought provoking, stimulating day and lovely for us Islanders to meet up with Friends from the Mainland.

As our two speakers and their partners had stayed over and there were two visiting Friends from Yorkshire on the Island our numbers at Meeting for Worship the next day were considerably larger than usual! Arran Friends had certainly enjoyed a memorable weekend.

Judith Baines (Arran Meeting)

Residential Meeting in May of Friends at Oban

It was a wild, wet day when Friends from Lorne and Lochaber, Tobermory, Aberdeen, Argyll and Edinburgh gathered for a short residential weekend at Glencruitten House Oban, the home of David James. A Quaker warm welcome awaited us and we were soon enjoying tea and cakes and catching up with old and new Friends.

After a shared meal, much of which was grown in the gardens of Glencruitten, we met for a 'getting-to-know-you-session' led by Bob Hay and David James. The Epilogue and a bedtime drink brought an end to the first day. Following breakfast next day, we came together for Meeting for Worship; after which Phil and Pat Lucas guided an exploration of 'What it means to be a Quaker in the UK today.'

An afternoon stroll around the walled garden was next on the agenda. So, armed with umbrellas (not needed!), we sallied forth to enjoy viewing the profusion of herbs, vegetables, fruits and flowers. Not to be missed was the garden Cathedral designed as a plan replica of Dunblane Cathedral - complete with greenery 'pews' and 'choir stalls', along with several head stones of the family who built the house.

After closing this thought-provoking and delightful weekend with an informal summing up, it was time to go our separate ways, refreshed and ready to share our warm memories of it with F/friends in our own Meetings for Worship. It was a time of relaxation, reflection and fellowship: much appreciated. Many, many thanks to all who made it possible, so special and delightful.

Edna Locke (Argyll Meeting)



The Quaker Community in Monteverde, Costa Rica

I had long wanted to visit Costa Rica for its rainforests and cloud forests; the exotic wildlife; its beautiful beaches and the Spanish language, which I'd been struggling to master. But now my daughter, Rowan, lives in Monteverde we had a good excuse. That there was a vibrant Quaker community there was also appealing. Rowan is part of this community; she attends Meeting and shares our principles, especially those of non-violence. She particularly enjoys the communal singing in the half hour before the silence begins.

Costa Rica is a pacifist country and has no army. I noticed the police were armed but a border dispute with Nicaragua was settled peacefully by negotiation while we were there. A Costa Rican member of San Jose Meeting took part in this and we heard his report first hand! The river, San Juan, which separates Nicaragua and Costa Rica, belongs solely to Nicaragua; this is unusual as country borders are usually mid-river.

The Quaker community are mostly ex-pat Americans and some have been resident since the early 1950s when their community was named Monteverde (green mountain). Many had left Alabama to escape the Korean draft. Some of the early Quakers were beef and dairy farmers and they established the Monteverde Dairy, which is still producing cheese for a wide market. They also grew flax and garlic. They had and still have a friendly and mutually helpful relationship with local *Ticos* (the name Costa Ricans call themselves).

The present Costa Ricans are mainly descendants of the Spanish and have lived there since the Spanish conquest in the early 16C, following Columbus. Of the original indigenous Indians only 10% survived the Spanish invasion; most died in slavery or from diseases such as smallpox, typhoid and measles.

The Quakers needed a school for their children and the Monteverde Friends' School was founded soon after their arrival. The school was completed in 1957 and is still running. It is also the Meeting House. Wolfe and Lucky Guindon were founder members at that time and they were in Meeting when we were there. Wolfe, now 80 and in a wheelchair, was greeted with great affection. School lessons are given in Spanish and English and the notices in Meeting were also given bilingually. Monteverde Meeting is large and has many visitors and we were warmly received and invited into Friends' homes. It was good to sit in silent meditation with them.

Ecotourism plays an important role in the Costa Rican economy; the main exports being coffee, pineapples and bananas.

The highlights of our visit were the wonderful birds (tiny, brilliant humming birds; a tree full of resting toucans; scarlet macaws) and exotic animals (sloths; tiny brightly coloured frogs; howler, spider and capuchin monkeys; iguanas and 'dragons'; and large crocodiles!); the beautiful flowers and trees; the walks in the mystical cloud forests and the hanging bridges over the canopy; the aerial trams; the tour of a coffee plantation (I'm surprised coffee doesn't cost more when one sees the intensive and skilled labour needed); and Spanish lessons with Daniel, a delightful *Tico* student. But best of all was meeting with this warm, caring community and sharing these rich new experiences with my daughter.

From Episcopalianism to Quakerism via Paganism

The reader may well be wondering "why paganism - surely the Religious Society of Friends is Christian-based"? Well, yes it is, but my story goes like this:

I was brought up well-immersed in Anglican Episcopal doctrine, taken or sent to church by my mother three times a Sunday (Matins, Sunday School and Evensong). Add to that a strong Plymouth Brethren influence from my father's side of the family, and a primary school teacher who taught that Charles Darwin was dangerously misguided in "denying the Creation". At some point, I had to rebel.

Leaving boarding school towards the end of my fifth secondary year, forever I hoped, I returned home and shunned all religion. At the same time I also shunned war and lies of any kind. In retrospect this was probably a reaction to two things: the jingoism peddled in the press and by school teachers; and the deceitful hypocrisy I saw in most of the religious teaching I had received to date.

Some doctrines really stretched credibility beyond its limits: virginbirth; three-in-one godhead; rising from the dead. And yet, having taken Religious Instruction at GCE level at school, I remained impressed at the sayings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth.

All this was at the time when coffee bars were the places that teenagers hung out. At night, *The Bohemian* and *The Milk Bar* were different places than in the day. The *Mods* used one set of cafes, and the *Rockers* another. I loved real motorcycles and so was automatically a *Rocker*. (Before I even understood the question, when asked at school *Mod or Rocker?*, I had answered *Rocker* as that sounded more appropriate to avoid a beating!).

But I digress. The point about coffee bars is that the local Elim Pentecostal church had set up a free coffee bar in the Red Cross Hall adjacent to their church. I was attracted first to the coffee bar, then to the church services, then to the people themselves. Eventually I saw the need for full-immersion baptism as a symbol of spiritual re-birth and was baptised for a second time, the first being my infant entry and later Confirmation into the Church of England.

It was around this time that I totally rejected gambling at any level. I cannot recall exactly when or why, but my view was consolidated forever when I learned of the psychological addiction and social malaise that results from it. To this day, I will not take part in any draw or raffle however well-intentioned, let alone place overt bets at a bookmaker's.

For a while I attended the local Anglican church once more, as well as the Elim Pentecostal. Inspired by the town's free coffee bar and noting there was no youth club in my home village, I even set one up in our garage. Eventually this led to more official ventures in conjunction with both churches, and on one holiday away with a youth group I met the lovely lady whom I was to marry.

Again, though, I drifted away from organised religion, both Episcopalian and Presbyterian. All I could see were the splits, factionalisations, occurring in the

congregations of both disciplines. "Have two denominations ever amalgamated?", I thought to myself, "they're always splitting up". And I could never get my head around those incomprehensible doctrines. Or the mumbo-jumbo that seemed to permeate religious services everywhere.

Years went by and the twenty-first century arrived. Now I'm a grandfather, and my daughter took up an interest in Paganism. I needed to research this, and although impressed by the underlying natural philosophy, still saw too much applied mumbo-jumbo. Then I remembered years ago using a room at a Friends Meeting House and meeting the Quaker who held the keys. I had found out a little about the Quakers then, but set it aside in my thoughts. Maybe I'm using the wrong word, but I saw a link between the lack of mumbo-jumbo in Quaker thinking and the reverence for nature and the laws of the universe in Pagan thinking.

Next, I found myself surfing the Internet gathering information about various Pagan sects, atheism, agnosticism and the Quakers. Having attempted to distill all this, and in conversation with a couple of acquaintances (Clive and Ken), I came out with "It's a pity there's not a Quaker Meeting around here". Of course, Ken said "Oh yes there is", or words to that effect. It turned out that Ken was a Quaker who was running an introductory meeting within a week or two. I went along and was impressed and thankful. I had found my spiritual home.

Trevor Oxborrow (Argyll Meeting)

Journeys North

When I retired from teaching in Cambridgeshire in 2003 and moved to Yorkshire, I was aware of a huge spiritual gap in my life. It took several years, and a visit to Brigflatts Meeting house and Fox's Pulpit on a hot August Wednesday, to realise where my journey lay. Soon after I was nervously attending my first Meeting at Ackworth School. I was obviously comfortable in a school environment, though it took some time to turn off 'teacher mode', to stop monitoring the inevitable teenage fidgets of the older boarders during Meeting and to come with 'heart and mind prepared'. Before long I was Assistant Treasurer, organising Children's Meeting and regularly taking the school Meeting for younger boarders early on Sunday morning. My village was only five miles from Ackworth and so it was easy to be there every week and to be involved in the wider life of Meeting. When we moved to Scotland eighteen months ago to be full-time rather than visiting grandparents, leaving my first Quaker family was a wrench. In particular I have missed being with the young people.

I transferred my membership to Arran and Ayr as I had a personal connection there. I soon realised that I needed to attend a Meeting each week and, as I preferred a smaller Meeting, I began to attend Milngavie Meeting. It has been interesting comparing the three Meetings.

Large enough to accommodate a whole school and very old, Ackworth Meeting

House can be cold and draughty in winter but like Brigflatts its aura of Quaker history helps one to centre down. In school holidays we met in either the old library, again steeped in history, or more often in a classroom. In Ayr we meet in the Citadel Leisure Centre and in Milngavie in the Fraser Centre in the very middle of the shopping centre. These venues initially posed a variety of problems for me. In Ackworth there were few distractions, once I had mastered my teacher instincts.

At the Citadel the first distraction is the chlorine smell of the pool and a momentary desire to go for a swim. The main distractions during Meeting are the occasional floor cleaner and the ever-present seagulls. Seagulls always remind me of my father who used to tell us as children that they were laughing at him in his swimming trunks.

In Milngavie the distractions were also the real world outside Meeting. Immediately outside the centre is a children's playground (the children's noise reminding me of my grandson) and a Costa coffee bar as I'm a self-confessed coffee-addict.. Often hikers, dwarfed by large rucksacks, can be seen striding towards the start of the West Highland Way which also lies just outside and my thoughts wander to my husband - a seasoned long-distance walker.

At first I found this intrusion of the real world problematic. How could I filter it out? The solution was simple. I wouldn't. Isn't the real world at the core of Quakerism? My family and my experience, my strengths and weaknesses, my joys and sorrows are what make me who I am and are known by God. Why try to be other than who I am for an hour on Sunday morning? Now the children's squeals and the floor cleaner form the framework to my contemplations. I am both outside and inside – and I might even get up early enough one Sunday for a swim or a coffee!

The Meetings themselves are quite different from Ackworth. Our Meeting there was not busy with ministry but there was some in most weeks. Ministry was always delivered traditionally with members standing and usually opening with "Friends..." Local business meetings were also more traditional. I have found Ayr and Milngavie much quieter with any ministry given sitting. The silence can be useful in allowing one to focus inward, but initially I did find it harder to feel part of the spiritual Meeting. This was, of course, not the case in the social time afterwards where I was met with the same welcome as I had in Ackworth. Milngavie has an interesting and helpful arrangement. Directly Meeting concludes, time is given before notices for anyone to raise issues of concern, thus allowing discussion about wider social issues, e.g. recently the decriminalisation of drugs.

I do have some concerns for the future of the Meetings I now attend. Although in Ackworth most of the young people in Meeting were not Quakers, there was the hope that their experience of Meeting and Quaker values would have a lifelong effect and even lead some to Quakerism. Equally their youth provided another dimension to Meeting. Essentially in Ayr and Milngavie we are an ageing group and, wide though our experiences may be, I feel that this can narrow our focus as well as providing no future membership.

My other concern is more practical - the financial and environmental cost of petrol. Meetings in Yorkshire involved a ten mile round trip. In Scotland this has become a

a sixty mile round trip – manageable now but who knows what these days of stringency will bring? Should I limit to two Meetings a month? With the cost of the Arran ferry it certainly has meant that I have not yet met the other half of the Arran and Ayr Meeting. My struggle with the ecological issues is not so easily resolved.

Do I regret the move to Scotland? Never! Apart from being nearer to my own family, I now have three Quaker families who have welcomed and accepted me. That makes even the rain tolerable!

Joan Yeadell (Milngavie and Ayrshire & Arran Meetings)

Quaker Stitches

A course on *How to do and how we used the stitches in the Quaker Tapestry* will be held (from the evening of October 21st to Saturday 22nd) at 7 Victoria Terrace in Edinburgh. If only eight people participate the cost (including catering) would be £50 each; but with 12 participants the fee would reduce to £40 and Meg Murray would be able to join me in teaching the course.

It will be necessary for everyone to get a kit from Quaker Tapestry beforehand. Please contact me for further details as soon as possible at 0131 229 4481.

Alison Burnley (South Edinburgh Meeting)

The Gospel of Thomas Seminars.

The Gospel of Thomas is full of pithy sayings from Jesus - some familiar and some not. The sayings speak directly to us and probing the truths behind them is a wonderful introduction to early Christian spiritual self-help. The Scottish seminars have been running for a number of years now, and yet studying the sayings still continues to be refreshing, with new insights brought out by sharing these together. The seminars are regular events held twice yearly at Wiston Lodge, Near Biggar, Lanarkshire. Previous knowledge of the Gospel is not necessary - only a spiritually inquisitive mind.

For a friendly chat and further details, or a request for a programme on the next seminar, which is always available one month in advance please contact:-
Rosemary Gascoyne, Tel 01644-430468
Address: 57 Main Street, Dalry, Castle Douglas. DG7 3UP
Or Jack Squires by email Cummertrees@btinternet.com

Our next seminar is Saturday 1st October 2011

Area meeting in Argyll August 27th

Area Meeting venue will be the Templars Arts & Leisure Centre, Harbour Street, Tarbert. The approach by road is the A83 which follows the coast along the North-West side of Loch Fyne, going through Inveraray and Lochgilphead, where the road turns South for the last 14 miles. There is a bus service from Buchanan Bus Station, leaving at 7am to arrive in Tarbert at 9.44am; or at 9.30am, arriving at Tarbert at 12.28pm. It is advisable to book to ensure a seat. Return from Tarbert is due at 4.09pm or at 6.09pm. Journey time for the 98 miles is just under three hours by bus from Glasgow.

Note to all Hearing Aid users at Glasgow Meeting House

Some of you may already be aware that the Property Committee are currently reviewing the use and effectiveness of the loop system in the meeting room. From a recent consultation we are aware that there are parts of the meeting room in which the loop system is not very effective. There is also a problem occasionally with some hearing aid users experiencing feedback when switching to the T loop position on their hearing aid. The installer of the system will be contacted soon to reassess the situation and consider any necessary improvements.

In order that all hearing aid users get the best use of the loop system it is important that hearing aids are serviced and calibrated regularly and we ask all users to ensure that their aids are operating as efficiently as possible. If anyone would like further information or advice, please feel free to speak to Alistair Trainor (MH Property Committee).

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