

# *West Scotland Quaker News*

*January 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).**

***The deadline for the next issue of West of Scotland Quaker News is February 12th.***

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### ***From the Editor:***

My best wishes for the New Year which I send with the hope - perhaps forlorn - that 2011 can prove a happier one, both for us in Britain and in the outside world. I have now been in this post for a year and, despite having to learn so much on the job and the last minute crises, I am enjoying the task greatly. So thank you to all Friends and other readers who have contributed over the past year with your articles/reports/photos. But please keep them rolling in to maintain the life blood of our Newsletter.

Below you will see a corrected Locations and Dates for this year's AMs. Sorry for any confusion caused by my out of date version printed in the last WSQN.

### ***Locations and dates for AMs in West of Scotland in 2011***

<b>29 January</b>	<b>Glasgow</b>
<b>12 March</b>	<b>Dunblane</b>
<b>16 April</b>	<b>Wigton</b>
<b>18 June</b>	<b>Castle Douglas</b>
<b>27 August</b>	<b>Argyll</b>
<b>15 October</b>	<b>Lanark</b>
<b>3 December</b>	<b>Glasgow</b>

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## Clerk's Letter: Reflection on Area Meetings in 2010

I'm looking out at a snow scene, which is becoming a very familiar view. Like many people, I've been stuck in the house over the past few weeks. I've profited from this in several ways, including reflecting on Area Meetings in 2010.

On 4th December, 2010 we welcomed Tobermory Quaker Meeting into West Scotland Area Meeting. Our Friends in Tobermory who have been worshipping together since February, were ready to formalise the existence of their Meeting and to begin to play a more active part in the wider Society of Friends. With this addition, our scattered, largely rural Area Meeting now consists of ten Local Meetings. Our places of worship are varied and range from a building resembling a lighthouse in Tobermory to the Meeting House in central Glasgow. They are mostly rented but, now that we own a second Meeting House in Wigtown, we have had to put in place a workable system for maintaining and financing our Meeting Houses. It took some time to sort this out – I can hear everyone yawn – but it is our responsibility to be good housekeepers.

Thanks to the sixty eight Friends who have taken on one or more positions of responsibility within Area Meeting, we do keep our house in order. Throughout the year we take up the training opportunities offered by Britain Yearly Meeting by sending Friends to courses for Trustees, Treasurers, Elders and Overseers. In November we held a Local Meeting Treasurers' Day, which was much appreciated by those doing this task.

Flicking through previous minutes reminded me that in the past it was our practice to ask Local Meetings to report on their spiritual health. There was no pre-set formula and each meeting tackled the task in its own way. We no longer ask for reports but it is still valuable for Friends to reflect on the state of their Meeting. In September we sent two Friends to a course at Woodbrooke on "Inspiring Small Meetings" and they intend in the New Year to give practical feedback on what they learned to our smaller Meetings. Perhaps this will be a catalyst for spiritual reflection and renewal.

We spent time considering the questions posed by Meeting for Sufferings on the Stewardship of our Resources. The final section was on Communication and Ways of Working and we were asked to consider new practices which might benefit our meeting. Little did we realise at that time that necessity would push us into finding a new way of working. Rather than cancel Area Meeting at the beginning of December because of the severe weather, we decided to hold it by telephone conference. Eleven Friends, from seven Local Meetings took part. It was held as a Meeting for Worship for Business and we succeeded in dealing with the main items of business on the agenda in just over one hour. It was a positive experience for the Friends taking part and it may be helpful to repeat it in the future, in certain circumstances.

We start 2011 strengthened by our new Local Meeting and by those new Members who joined us in 2010. I hope we will use the opportunities we are given and that we will meet our challenges with a spirit of adventure. **Happy New Year Friends.**

**Elizabeth Allen** (*Lanark Meeting*)

## Area Meeting by Tele-Conference 4th December 2010

The early days of December brought heavy snow to most of Scotland and it was decided that the planned Area Meeting for the 4th of December would be best cancelled, as Friends might have found it extremely difficult to get to Glasgow Meeting House from any distance. On the 2nd of December Elizabeth Allen our clerk consulted Friends: it was generally agreed to try and co-ordinate a Tele-Conference instead, so that urgent business items would not be held over without decisions being made until January 2011.

After lots of contact with Local Clerks, the Tele-Conference was arranged to take place at 11 o'clock (the exact time the normal Area Meeting was to be held). At the appointed hour we called in using the special instructions sent out by Elizabeth and to our joy we were all connected. The system used was POWWOWNOW and 50 Friends could have gathered by telephone this way. At the outset 7 of our 9 Local Meetings had representation on the conference line, so that was very encouraging.

The Meeting began with Worship and, as new Assistant Clerk at my first session helping Elizabeth, I read from QFP (2.84) which was quite daunting on the telephone. It reminded me a bit of the old humorous thought of having a one hour silent Quaker Meeting broadcast as a religious programme on the radio!

Business items were dealt with in order and guided by draft minutes which our worthy Clerk had prepared in advance and circulated by email. I think we were all quite surprised how many topics were addressed in the space of 1 hour 8 minutes.

The highlight for me was the recognition and acceptance of Friends on the Isle of Mull into our Area Meeting as Tobermory Local Meeting. I am sure we are all so pleased to welcome these Friends and hope to see them represented at our first Area Meeting in January in Glasgow.

There were three larger discussion items that could not realistically be dealt with by telephone and it was agreed that they be sent out to all local meetings for consideration and feedback for the near future.

The tele-conference was very interesting and gave an insight into how we can actually do Quaker business (albeit in limited fashion) without the need for lots of difficult travel in bad weather months. I came off the phone thinking that we might consider having future December/January Area Meetings conducted this way. It certainly proved that it can be a good emergency method of attending to urgent matters if Area Meeting has to be suddenly cancelled.

It is interesting to note that the cost of the telephone conference was about £3 to each participant. If I had come by car from Wigtown, it would have cost me over £40 for fuel and parking.

Tele-Conference has, I think a place in Friends diverse and exploratory ways of working but it will never replace the personal contact of the traditional gathered Meeting; Downsides ... no lovely AM Soup to warm me up and no smiling faces of welcome.

Thanks to all who took part in this trial. From the initial feedback to date of participants, I am sensing that we might have to explore the various issues of attending to business in this manner during the coming months. Exciting times!

**Ian MacDonald** (*Newton Stewart Meeting*)

*Why Tele- Conference?: BGB December 2010*



## Quaker Life Representative Council: 15-17 October 2010

The theme of this Quaker Life Representative Council was *Reclaiming and Supporting Eldership*. Jenny Routledge gave the main address and her talk is printed in *Quaker Voices Vol. 1, No.6*. Whilst studying at Pendle Hill in the States in 2008 and talking to Friends from across the world, Jenny became aware of a common hunger for spiritual renewal and felt led to explore eldership which she believes has a vital role to play in this process as it is 'at the root of our spiritual life and our work in the world'.

In our home groups, prompted by a series of questions, we explored aspects of the topic from our own experience and meetings. Similar challenges were identified by many. How best to foster spirit-led ministry? How to impart and preserve the precious parts of our history and practice when a majority in the Society are Quakers by conviction? How to provide spiritual leadership when finding the right language in which to discuss spiritual and religious matters can be such a minefield? How to exercise discipline in balancing the needs of the meeting as a whole with those of individuals within it?

In the course of her talk Jenny identified some *new shoots* which she thinks can assist in this spiritual renewal. The first was the practice of accompaniment. Historically Friends travelling in the ministry were accompanied by an Elder to provide spiritual support. This practice is being revived in a variety of contexts e.g. when new work is being developed, where a Friend is acting under concern or in the delivery of workshops/meetings for learning. Jenny spoke movingly of the opportunity such accompaniment offers those involved to develop a deep spiritual connection and friendship.

The second *new shoot* related to nurture including spiritual direction – a practice used in other faith traditions and increasingly amongst F(f)riends. The power of 'true listening' was illustrated with a quote from Douglas Steere (1955) 'to listen another soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be the greatest service a human being can do for another'.

The third *new shoot* she identified was a part of discipline which she called accountability, defined as a way of trying to live faithfully, a life in the spirit. Following a course run by Ben Pink Dandelion and Alex Wildwood a group of Friends have written their own set of rules to live by and provide mutual support and accountability for one another.

How to support eldership? By acknowledging our need for spiritual leadership; by recognising our own and others gifts; by using plain speaking - but only lovingly - and by making time for our own learning/growth in the spirit.

Hearing about the central work undertaken by Quaker Life staff is always inspiring. Their talent, energy and commitment are impressive and were amply demonstrated by several speakers.

Katie Frost, our new Community Fundraising Officer spoke brilliantly on the *Ministry of Giving*, though it was sobering to hear of rising costs and falling contributions. Between 2001-2009 the percentage of the Society's funding raised **6**

by what you and I give fell by 15%.

Alastair Fuller, the new Outreach Development Officer highlighted the success of Quaker Week's advertising in the press and other media in 2010, including Facebook for the first time, which generated high levels of response. He is keen for F(f)riends with a passion for, and some experience of Outreach to contact him on [alistair@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alistair@quaker.org.uk) or on **020 7663 1016**.

Chris Nikolai updated us on resources and opportunities for children and young people including the Quaker Youth Work Conference, a day on Young People and Mental Health, further developments in the children's and youth editions of *Journey's in the Spirit* available on-line and of *Quakers and Me*, a new booklet for the under 5s.

From others we heard of the growing use of *Becoming Friends* as a flexible learning tool for Friends at all stages not just attenders and recently joined Friends and of Quaker Life's planned revision of both the content and format of the current handbooks on Eldership and Oversight.

The *News from the Meetings* session highlighted experiments with all age worship, light groups, telephone conferencing, a *conversation wall* in a meeting house for posting thoughts and of a meeting house grounds used as a campsite. Jenny Perinpanayagam of Central Edinburgh Meeting spoke of the dialogue she and others have had with the military.

Business matters were dealt with and appointments made and much reflection and discussion initiated and enjoyed. I left Woodbrooke enthused (as always) and thankful for our fellowship and life together as a Society.

**Sarah Brown (Glasgow Meeting)**

## Inspiring Small Meetings

In Scotland there are many small Meetings: In WSAM, Glasgow Meeting fills 16 pages in the Book of Members and Attenders but the remaining Meetings only occupy between two (Argyll, Milngavie and Wigtown) and four (Dunblane) pages each. We also know that few Meetings have full attendance at Meeting for Worship.

In 2010 an Anonymous Trust funded two courses at Woodbrooke on *Inspiring Small Meetings*. Each AM was invited to send two representatives from small LMs where attendance at Meeting for Worship is usually below 10. In September we (Martha Hatch and Clare Devereux) attended the second of these short courses along with 24 other Friends.

Both were led by Lizz Roe and Michael Booth.

We started by expressing the hopes and fears for our Meetings. In the warmth and

friendly environment that Woodbrooke provides, Friends were at ease and eager to talk. Many of us expressed an appreciation for the warmth of a small Meeting and the importance of nurturing their essential nature. However, many told of fears for the future of their Meetings, which had ageing memberships and too many jobs to be done by too few Friends. We were all hoping to find ways to inspire changes in our Meetings.

When exploring how to achieve changes, we were given a firm warning not to try too much too fast. Lizz lead us through the *four* dimensions which need nurturing:

**Spiritual:** MfW, discussion groups . . .

**Physical:** library, Meeting House . . .

**Infrastructure:** Quaker Business Method, Elders, Overseers, Clerks . . .

**Human:** age, race, disability . . .

and *five* things to make a community work:

**Celebration:** bring and share lunches, weddings, funerals . . .

**Expressing friendship:** requires discernment to get appropriate levels

**Working together on something meaningful:** hosting AM, Meeting House . . .

**Sharing spiritual practice & journeys:** MfW, discussion groups ...

**Learning together:** Outside speakers (need not be Quaker), trips, discussion groups

and the *four* steps for forming and achieving a Vision:

**Observe - Reflect - Plan - Act**

*Repeat this cycle as many times as required.*

When divided into smaller groups, we spoke openly of the most urgent changes we might try to achieve. Towards the end of the course we were reminded that if very troubled by the state of our Meeting possible sources of help might be:

**A Spiritual review** (see QF&P 12.16)

**The Memorandum of Understanding**

**Woodbrooke on the Road** day courses

**Quaker Life** can be contacted for help

Meeting with other Friends from small meetings concentrated our thinking in more depth and breadth than would have happened otherwise. Lizz and Michael were skilled facilitators who brought out the best in us all. There were anguished moments as some Friends wondered whether their Meetings would and/or should survive but also moments of joyful celebration of our small but sometimes vibrant Meetings. We were not given any easy answers but were given practice in thinking about where our Meetings are, what changes we might wish to make and how to set about achieving change. Many of us felt that, despite their problems, our small Meetings are an irreplaceable source of strength and encouragement. One thing that we can all do is simple, realistic outreach which does not compromise the qualities and strengths of our small Meetings.

**Martha Hatch (Wigton Meeting); Clare Devereux (Castle Douglas Meeting)**

# Am I a Pacifist?

## Thoughts on *A Non-violent Challenge to Conflict* by Alastair McIntosh

I have often wondered whether I am truly a pacifist and what it really involves. Alastair McIntosh's article based a talk he regularly gives to senior military officers was an opportunity for me to reflect on the issues involved.

Pacifism and violence lie on a continuous spectrum. At one end is passivity where there is no response to violence apart from running away. This was dismissed by Ghandi with the observation 'It is better to be violent, if there is violence in our hearts, than to put on the cloak of nonviolence to cover our impotence.' Pacifism on the other hand involves an active response to violence, which may include causing damage such as breaking the perimeter fence of a military base or throwing computers into the sea, but avoids causing injury or harm. Moving along the spectrum, there are those who advocate the use of violence only under certain conditions such as self-defence (the just war).

Pacifists may reject self-defence as a justification, but we should remember the familiar challenge of what would you do if you and your family were threatened by a man with a gun. Speaking honestly, I have to say I don't know what I would do. Pacifists may also be challenged by the justification of many military people for the use of violence, that it is keeping or achieving peace. We should remember that many senior military people see violence as a last resort or the lesser of two evils, and are critical of politicians who see it as a political tactic. Such military figures may be closer to pacifism than we realise and I think there is an urgent need for dialogue between us.

The arguments for or against the use of violence can be made at various levels. There is a rational or *consequentialist* argument about whether it avoids further violence. As Alastair says, 'So far, nobody has managed to rid the world of war using non-violence. But, neither have they done so using violence.' A violent response may appear to stop a conflict but historical evidence shows that wars rarely resolve conflicts in the long term. WW1 resulted partly from unresolved issues from the Franco-Prussian War just as WW2 largely resulted from the way Germany was treated after WW1 and the Balkan wars were partly due to unresolved conflicts from WW2.

Even a conflict such as the Falklands War which may appear to be over, is certainly not resolved from the Argentinean perspective. In recent years the growth of relatively small non-governmental groups such as the IRA, Al Qaida etc has changed the nature of warfare. They have found that they can cause a greatly disproportionate amount of suffering in industrialised societies by, for example, planting small amounts of explosive in sensitive locations such as airports. This is inevitable, given the dependence of our societies on sophisticated communications and transport technology. Experience in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and currently Afghanistan has shown that such groups cannot be defeated militarily. Alastair McIntosh quotes the IRA saying 'We only have to get lucky once. You have to be lucky all the time'.

Many pacifists simply oppose war on moral grounds. As Alastair says 'While both the soldier and the pacifist share in a common willingness to die for their values, the pacifist refuses to kill for them. Superficially, this may appear ineffectual. In practice, it sometimes yields a tremendous hidden power to transform a conflict'. It is worth noting that Christianity started as an openly pacifist religion. However, within a few centuries Augustine subverted the pacifist roots of Christianity by introducing the idea of the *Just War* and Pope Urban then used this to justify the horrific Crusades. Moslem Leaders including the Taliban and other fringe groups have done the same for Islam.

Most political leaders assume that God is on their side in any war but it is interesting to speculate, for example, what Christ would have said about the Iraq war. One of the reasons why there is not more moral outrage against the use of war by the British Government is that we are not aware of the true nature of war. David Lloyd George was reported to have said during the WW1 'If people really knew the truth the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know and can't know'.

The morality of war is now more challenging because of the changes in the nature of warfare over the last two centuries. Early wars were fought on foot or on horseback with swords and lances and therefore there was an intimate physical clash between the adversaries, which in some ways made the violence more *honest*. As the swords and lances were replaced by guns and then by bombs dropped from aircraft, the remoteness of the perpetrator from the victim increased exponentially, as did the amount of suffering which could be inflicted by one person. Pilotless aircraft known as Drones are the latest development in warfare. Here the distance between the operators and the enemy is still huge, although the perpetrators are now able to see the victims on computer monitors but without having any real sense of the suffering caused to them.

Alastair also argues there is a spiritual basis of nonviolence. Pacifists have to accept that they are not shielded from dying but with nonviolence we are protected from spiritual death and are even given a spiritual power which can achieve surprising results. Violence can affect our capacity to feel and to love and be loved. It also reduces the possibility of redemption for our enemies: the responsibility for causing the deaths of human beings is often so great that we have to project the guilt on to the enemy.

During a war we suspend our normal moral rules and ask people to do things which they would normally find completely repulsive. It is not surprising that when soldiers return from a war they are often traumatised and don't want to talk about their experiences. If they come back alive we idolise them and give them medals – if not we give them a hero's funeral. Either way, we don't really make an effort to understand what they have gone through.

Responding to violence is not black and white. Even if we are pacifist, every time we fill up our car or even travel by bus we are still complicit, to a certain degree, in the violence in the Middle East. We also need to recognise the sincerity of those who accept that violence may be necessary in certain cases. The way we respond to violence matters to all of us.

**Martin Mansell (*Glasgow Meeting*)**

*Iona Abbey: BGB 2007*



## Quaker Giving 2011

Like every organisation, the Religious Society of Friends needs financial support. The annual Contribution Schedule gives you an opportunity to think about your giving in the year ahead and to let us know how much we can expect in contributions over the coming year. The 2011 Area Meeting Schedules are now printed and are being distributed by your Local Meeting Treasurers. A copy of the schedule can also be down loaded from [www.quakerscotland.org/west](http://www.quakerscotland.org/west). Please note that Glasgow Meeting treasurers will be giving out a modified version of the Schedule again this year. This will enable them to include information for Glasgow Friends which would not be relevant for smaller Meetings.

If you do not wish to make any changes to your contributions and/or allocations, it is not necessary to return a schedule as we will continue to use your most recent instructions. The letters I send out in January will give an indication of the instructions we have used in distributing your 2010 contribution.

The guidelines, given in the Schedule, for how much is needed are calculated as an average per member but we do not expect every member to give this exact amount. We hope attenders will contribute as well. If you are not contributing to Area Meeting, even a small annual donation of £5 would help cover the cost of WSQN which is sent to all members and attenders in the Area Meeting.

We do not yet know the full extent of changes to tax and Gift Aid rules for April 2011. The Quaker Treasurers Newsletter has warned us that the government is reviewing the Gift Aid regulations. They will try to simplify the system to save on administration costs and may scrap Gift Aid altogether. If the Gift Aid scheme is ended, this would reduce our income by about 1/5. With interest rates remaining **11**

low, this will put further pressure on our finances. We will alert Local Meeting treasurers and put a message in the Newsletter as soon as we have more definite information.

If you would like more advice about your Quaker giving, please feel free to contact me (*tel: 01465 841 277 or email: hatch.glenburnie@btinternet.com*). You may also wish to talk to your Local Meeting treasurer.

With best wishes for the New Year.

**Martha Hatch, Assistant Treasurer**

## Flick Thorpe Memorial

Lanark Meeting held a memorial for Flick Thorpe on Sunday 16th November. Friends and family gathered together to share the sadness for the passing of her life and to reflect upon our happy memories of her.

Flick attended the Lanark Meeting with her husband, Henry and their two sons, Jamie and Thomas; they placed great value on attending as a family. Flick, herself, enriched the Lanark Meeting; she was caring, considerate and insightful.

Prior to her illness, Flick worked at Stevenson College in Edinburgh, first as Head of Community Based English for Speakers of Other Languages and then as Associate Principal of the Faculty of Language and Tourism. In 2007 she was honoured with a Fellowship in recognition of her commitment, energy, vision, and leadership. Her strong belief in social justice framed her opinions and informed her valued work with and for English as a Second Language speakers in the UK. This was particularly so in Scotland, where she was prominent in a successful campaign for equitable access to post-school education for refugees and asylum seekers.

Flick lived life enthusiastically and turned adversity into opportunity. She had fought a valiant battle against cancer and in between treatment had sought to live her life as fully as possible. She was born and brought up in South Africa and returned there for a year, giving her family the wonderful opportunity of experiencing and contributing to a different culture. After leaving work she used her time to enrol in a creative writing course, composing poetry and maintaining a blog. As always her family were central to her life. She most certainly believed in living life adventurously.

**Elisabeth Hodson (Lanark Meeting)**



*Flick Thorpe*

# Partick Burial Ground

When writing recently about the Glasgow Meeting House benches, I realised that 2011 marks the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the Burial Ground at Partick. In the early days burial was an important source of dispute between Quakers and the authorities which insisted on burial in consecrated ground and in some places like Aberdeen gave rise to events which we would now see as ludicrous. By the mid 1670s the creation of specific Quaker Burial Grounds was generally accepted and those at Shawtonhill (East Kilbride) and Gartshore (Kirkintilloch) were created then. It seems, however, that Glasgow Meeting did not have a specific Ground either because of urban overcrowding or the opposition of the authorities. Possibly for the latter reason, John Purdon in 1711 gave a site in The Goat at Partick to the Meeting (Partick was then quite a distinct rural settlement beyond the River Kelvin).

Throughout the next century and a half Glasgow Meeting used this Burial Ground: one of the first burials was of John Purdon's wife and the last was recorded in 1857. It was obviously much more extensive than it is now because in 1815 the meeting was able to sell the timber from the trees there for £20 to help pay for the new Meeting House in North Portland Street. By the end of the 19th century the now disused Ground had become part of an urban area and the local authority (Partick was then an independent burgh) wanted to widen the road, now called Kelvin Street, and make a footpath.

Thus in 1899 the Meeting and the burgh came to an agreement that a strip of land at the front of the Ground be released for the street works and the burgh would in return provide a wall with iron railings, take over maintenance of the Ground and pay the Meeting a rent of one shilling per year. When Partick was absorbed by Glasgow in 1912, the City Council took over this responsibility: I remember that in the 1970s Margaret (then the Treasurer) used to receive an annual cheque which paid no hundred thousands, no ten thousands, no thousands, no hundreds, no tens and no pounds, five pence - I wonder how much that cheque cost to prepare!

In 1974 the City Council caused consternation in the Meeting by promoting a Compulsory Purchase Order for the whole of what was now called Keith Street, including the Burial Ground, for urban redevelopment. After extensive correspondence it was established that the Ground was to be preserved as an open space and the Council would take it over completely (i.e. not pay "rent") but it would pay compensation (finally £124) and supply the Meeting with a key and make a plastic copy of the metal notice which stated the origin of the Ground. For some time the children who lived in the new housing development, called Keith Court, looked after the site, planting spring bulbs there but more recently only the City Parks Dept. has kept it tidy.

There are no longer any gravestones or trees, but it is a green space in a street probably best known by the Comet shop on the corner of Dumbarton Road: curiously the name of John Purdon is commemorated in the name of the next street

**Norman Peacock (*Milngavie Meeting*)**

# Scottish Clergy against Nuclear Arms

*Faslane Meeting on 16th April at 11.30*

Both Cardinal O'Brien and Alan Macdonald (former Moderator Church of Scotland) will be participating.

*Let's give this important Meeting our full support!*

*(Dates of other Faslane Meetings given in December WSQN)*

## Meetings for Worship at *Dundrennan* Military Base

There will be five Meetings for Worship in 2011 at the Dundrennan Military Base. These will take place between 11am and noon on: 24th April, 12th June, 21st August, 18th September and 13th November.

### ***Correction***

In my recent article in WSQN (*A God Perspective?*), I stated that Herod Antipas had murdered the children of Bethlehem. This was an error; it was his father, the old King Herod, who did that. Herod Antipas, we're told, only beheaded John the Baptist. One thing we do know for certain, neither of them were Quakers !

**Bill Bingham** (*Glasgow Meeting*)



*Spring is still to come: BGB 2008*