



October
2008

Scottish Friend

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Bronwen Currie, General Meeting's new Administrator,
with GM Clerk, Robin Waterston,
at our last GM in Glasgow.

Andrew Farrar took the cover photograph.

The next *Scottish Friend* will be constructed early in the New Year, as soon as the agenda for March GM is known. Please send material to me, Margaret Peacock, at 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk.

Many thanks to all who have made suggestions. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain Yearly Meeting or elsewhere.

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The Church of Scotland General Assembly 2008

Eva Deręgowska

Do you know the difference between a report, deliverance, motion, counter-motion, amendment, addendum, overture, and petition? It was fascinating to try to get to grips with the procedure of this, the Kirk's "Yearly Meeting". All the terms and the procedure were well and light-heartedly explained at the pre-Assembly gathering of first time Commissioners, i.e. Elders and Ministers appointed by their local congregations to attend, and Delegates, i.e. representatives from other churches, Quakers included, and from overseas affiliated churches.

I shall endeavour to give some of my impressions of the week, which are those of a naïve outsider, although I was brought up in an Evangelical Lutheran church, so I am familiar with some of the language. I was naturally making comparisons with our Quaker business method and concerns. The day started with worship: hymns, Bible reading, reflection by the Moderator - a mini-sermon - and prayers. We even had "all-age" worship one day, when children from the Children's Assembly did the readings. Then the convener of the Council or Committee speaks to their report, which is printed in the "Blue Book", a massive tome which is related to our Documents in Advance. He or she then "moves the deliverances", i.e. formally makes the proposals, which are then debated and voted on. Anyone is free to speak and an electronic system ensures that they speak in turn. Thus, unlike in a Quaker business meeting, where it is up to the Clerk to call one to speak, and which relies on the Clerk's discernment, and can therefore be biased in favour of "weighty" Friends, everyone gets a chance, although sometimes the Moderator, acting as chairperson, would say that he would only take a few more. Voting is according to "personal conscience". There are three stages: if the matter is routine and no one wants to speak, a stamping of feet indicates approval. If it is less clear, those in favour and those against are asked to stand in turn. Only if this does not settle the

matter do they vote using the swipe card we were all given. After a particularly moving reading by the Moderator of the Southern African Church of letters from church members in Zimbabwe it was even suggested that we took time out for prayer, where Quakers might have called for a period of silence.

My overall impression was one of unfailing courtesy and good humour, and an endeavour to serve God. While respect is shown to the office of Moderator, in the form of a slight nod from the audience in return to his nod to us on entering, there is an underlying sense of equality, which someone suggested to me was as much a Scottish cultural trait as a theological one.

I can't do justice to the wealth of interesting material in the "Blue Book", which I had received in advance, so I shall just list a few. Those that interested me most were contained in the report of The Church and Society Council, the equivalent to our QPSW: "The Responding to Climate Change Project"; Migration; Euthanasia; Homelessness; The Death Penalty (a well argued paper asked the Assembly to "affirm that capital punishment is ... wholly unacceptable ... and encourage promotion of the cause of abolition worldwide"); Gambling (which led someone to point to the contradiction that the Church is against gambling, yet uses National Lottery funding - a debate which echoes with Quakers); and Iran. Two Iranian Embassy officials were present at the latter debate, which led the Assembly to enthusiastically endorse the call to "urge the UK government to make credible its opposition to any Iranian moves to acquire nuclear weapons by removing those held by the UK".

The Ministries Council, roughly equivalent to Quaker Life perhaps, celebrated 40 years of the ordained Ministry of "Word and Sacrament" of women - a lot happened in 1968! A most interesting paper dealt with "congregational conflict" and urged a review of practices to "avoid destructive conflict and deal more effectively with and resolve conflict situations". This was a very frank acknowledgement of difficulties that can arise in a non-hierarchical

church. Quakers can learn from the proposals for improvement, such as recognising the need for properly trained mediators. It concludes: "The challenge is to resource the church with peacemakers, women and men of spiritual stature who can lead the church from the troubleshooting model to the healing model of ministry."

Most of the projects come under the Social Care Council, or CrossReach. Their provision of dementia care is especially well recognised. Other services include those to the homeless, substance misusers, those caring for children of addicted parents, and prisoners. We can all look forward to Summer 2009, when the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 comes into force. This introduces a new electronic record system, comprising a list of people who are barred. People apply to become scheme members and their records are kept constantly up to date, so that they will no longer need to undergo a disclosure procedure each time they change posts. The World Mission Council's report includes a section on "The Scandal of Poverty". Speakers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Israel/Palestine, and Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, spoke on the various problems the churches in these countries face, where they are often in a minority and facing persecution. We also heard about the Kirk's ties with Malawi which go back to David Livingstone's times.

The Mission and Discipleship Council supports an Inter-Faith Support Worker. Interfaith relations should be based, "not on manipulative proselytism and evangelism by inflexible slogan", but "a dialogue which puts evangelism into an authentically human context" - clearly a topic an evangelising church has struggled with. In this context it is also worth mentioning the debate on whether the Kirk is the "National Church in Scotland." Some want the "3rd Declaratory Article" to be abolished so that the Church can be fully ecumenical. It may be that "the time has come humbly to lay down the title of "National Church", and accept a new title such as "A Church for the Nation", and that it may be more meaningful for the Church to

"represent to" the Scottish people the Christian faith rather than to assume that the Church of Scotland is "representative of the Christian faith of the Scottish people". This must seem quite explosive stuff to some, for example the successors of Jack Glass who were demonstrating outside the Assembly!

My final observation, in view of our debate on the "Long-term Framework", must relate to the Committee report on "Vision and Change". Someone complained that there was too much organisation and too little "Kingdom of God". Sounds familiar?! The different pulls of the local and the central were felt - something we too are well aware of.

This has been an immensely enriching experience for me, which has increased my respect for the Kirk, yet also confirmed why I chose to become a Quaker.



Trouble at the Airport

Peter Kennedy

My uncle was seriously ill in a Colchester hospital and was asking for my father.

From Aberdeen, a flight to Norwich, thence a train to Colchester seemed the quickest way of getting there.

It was some years since my father had last flown anywhere. He was looking forward to the journey, if somewhat apprehensive about its cause.

Packing was easy. A change of underwear, medication and essential toiletry, all into a small case and he was off with mixed feelings of expectation and dread.

Check-in was easy. Only a small piece of hand luggage and his

walking stick to aid him whenever he had to stand for too long. The airline staff were charming: he just had to pass by the ticket desk, on through security clearance, and then make his way to the company's lounge to relax and wait for flight instructions.

It was all very civilised.

This being Aberdeen, the airport was full of oil workers, either coming from or going to the oilfields, full of camaraderie and with all the nonchalance of experienced travellers. The airport was their meeting place, rather like a large social club having shops, bars and eating-places. Like any social club it was full of friendly chatter, the smell of coffee and beer, and the comings and goings of travellers, punctuated only by the echoing loudspeaker announcements of arrivals and departures.

He made his way through the throng to the ticket desk - everything was fine - and from there to the security check. Here again there was a build-up of passengers, taking off shoes and shedding their upper layers of clothing, before putting everything into small trays that were clearly not designed for the use to which they were now being put. It was an endless conveyor belt of trays, slowly passing though the x-ray machine for scrutiny by four or five pairs of eyes.

He thought nothing of it. He had nothing of consequence. According to common belief if you have nothing to hide you have nothing to fear. He wasn't worried. It was all a formality to re-assure passengers of airport vigilance and government concern for our safety in these troubled times.

It brought a taste of reality to the 'war on terror' and reflected on the apparently profoundly greater risk of travelling by air compared with rail, tube, or on Britain's heavily congested roads.

On going through the metal-detecting frame he was asked if he had a wallet. He confirmed that he had. It contained only fifty pounds in banknotes and a bank debit card. He was told to put it on a tray. His walking stick was inspected. It was the sort that folded into four parts held together by a stout elastic cord. He dismantled it to show how innocuous it was.

No matter, it had to be put on a tray. That was four trays with his belongings, plus the small case, making their way through x-ray, all jumbled with trays of belongings of other passengers.

He was called aside. He had to strip off his outer clothing - jacket and jumper - and place them on trays, and then back to the gauleiter to be thoroughly frisked from head to foot, including all of the most private parts of one's body. Following this degradation he described how he staggered to retrieve his belongings that by now were strewn around the area at the exit of the x-ray machine. But his ordeal wasn't over. His case had been put aside and its contents were spread out on a table in front of a second gauleiter who curtly asked him if these were his things.

First, the gauleiter picked up a tube of toothpaste and asked my father what it was.

Was this some fiendish variant of the eleven-plus? As civilly as possible my father told him it was a tube of toothpaste just as the lettering on the tube indicated. He then proceeded to squeeze out the toothpaste onto what appeared to be some sort of chemical detector strip. He looked disappointed that there appeared to be no reaction. Then it was the turn of my father's medication for 'dry eye': simple eye ointment - yes, in a tube! - and small plastic tubes of allergan, each containing 1 millilitre of liquid eye drops as prescribed by the local medical practice. The eye ointment was tested in the same way as the toothpaste, with the same result, including his look of disappointment. The eye drops looked more promising. "What are these," came the inquisitorial growl. My father again explained

they were medication for his eyes.

He said nothing. Was my father to be sent to Guantanamo, or rendered to some equally dreadful hellhole for torture and prolonged interrogation? And all because he wanted to visit his sick and dying brother?

Finally, all of the medication was placed on a tray and passed once again through the x-ray machine.

Only then was my father left to pick up his things and re-pack them as best he could in the circumstances.

He left the security clearance in the full knowledge of what it was like to live in a police state where such extreme measures were taken to protect 'innocent citizens' from those who wanted to destroy 'our way of life'.

Our 'way of life' has certainly been destroyed. This WAS terrorism: terrorism directed by the state against its own citizens!

By this time my father was physically exhausted, mentally battered, and in no state to make his way to the airline's lounge. He had strength only to sit on the steps of the crowded departure lounge. He thought back to the dark days of 1939 - 45, his early childhood, and wondered why so many had suffered and died, many from his own family and relatives, and whether they had died in vain. This was August 2008.

It is often said that life is a cycle: what goes round comes round. It seems that Britain has entered a cycle of acquiescence by its citizens that Germany experienced in the Nineteen Thirties. Why this should be, I cannot tell.

How will it end and will we ever again be free? I'm afraid it won't be in my lifetime.

Kindrogan Weekend 13-15 June

Jane Mitchell

After the summery weather that we (at least those from the west) had had earlier about 30 people spent a rather fresh weekend together at Kindrogan, a Field Studies Centre near Pitlochry, on the theme of Time. The leader was Michael Hutchinson from Friends House, a former biology teacher. He's been fascinated by geology for years and he began with a talk about recent ideas on the age of the earth.

The adults were invited to bring something to share to do with the idea of time. There were poems, a poster including (among other things) family photographs, there were stones and carvings. It was illuminating how different people approached this task.

We had a brain-storming session on things that changed how everyone lives; all the way from printing & general literacy to photography and the Internet; the wheel, harnessing of energy, cities, sewage management.

Perhaps Quaker listening and waiting helps us to cope with change.

On the Saturday afternoon some went on a botany walk and even managed to get to the top of Kindrogan Hill, while others rested.

There were half a dozen young people who appeared to have a good time. There was excellent vegetarian food, particularly the assortment of salads on the Friday evening.

The organisers did an excellent job, and provided transport from the station 10 miles away. Saturday evening featured a ceilidh with everything from serious poems to clowning and silly games.

This was my first time at this event; it was a most enjoyable and friendly event. I heard that there used to be a much larger attendance; the organisers could have managed twice as many.

Meg Gustaves offers a testimony to the pleasure obtained from her grant from the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust.

"TRUST IS ALL IT TAKES."

I was filled with anxiety and fear over my decision to take up motorcycle training at the age of 56. So, I felt a bit of a fraud applying for the 'Enjoyment' trust grant! However, the sense that I would have yet another unfulfilled dream to add to my list of regrets spurred me on. To have been awarded such a great sum of money (the entire cost of the course) left me with no excuse not to go for it.

Once I got the hang of go and stop which many times was not as smooth as it could have been, I realised I was born to ride! Even if it did not appear so to the instructor. My experience of the week of full-on training was something like being thrown in the deep end. Apart from the major stress of having to pass an exam at the end and knowing I am exam phobic, the experience of running out of petrol on my first entry onto the dual carriageway with lorries thundering down behind me was extremely terrifying! With the instructor's voice shouting in my earpiece to go faster as my bike slowed down from 60 mph to zilch and me with no idea what was happening except imminent death coming up the rear, I did manage to keep my cool and get to the hard shoulder. I then learned an important fact, that motorbikes have a reserve petrol tank. Just as well. Although I would have preferred NOT to discover that under the circumstances I did.

As well as other practical riding experiences causing major adrenalin surges, I had to take a theory test and rapid response test on a computer. Never having played video games, learning to click the mouse at the right time while watching the screen caused me great anxiety. But after much practice I did manage to pass that part of the test easily. Unfortunately the practical riding test was in the rain

and rush hour traffic and my nerves got the better of me so I need to resit the test.

Meanwhile I am riding with L plates, getting my confidence and having a wonderful time going over hills and beautiful country roads, and feeling very happy that I took the plunge to learn a new trick. And totally enjoying the fact that I now feel part of a gang who have been very helpful and kind and are great fun to be with.

So it is with much appreciation that I was given help financially to make this possible. Thank you.



Mel Richards' appreciation of her grant from the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust

Thanks to a combination of grants including one from the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust I was able to purchase an 18" MacBook Pro laptop with extra memory during a ScotSys open day - this meant that not only was the usual 12 month warranty doubled, the computer came free with a 4GB iPod.

It has been fabulous being back on line. My best friend came over from Australia during summer prior to starting postgraduate study in this country. Having the computer meant free teleconferencing via Skype to hack out all the details and being able to book discounted advance tickets for events at the International Festival and Military Tattoo during her stay.

Recently I was invited to speak at the Royal Bank of Scotland

headquarters on behalf of Dogs for the Disabled and used the computer to prepare a short PowerPoint presentation based on original research I was able to do about the potential demand for Assistance Dogs in Scotland (at the moment, Ryan and I are the only partnership in the country, we hope to help the charity raise enough funds to open a Scottish division). I've also given Ryan a Facebook page as "Behinder Hund" which not only helps publicise the work of Dogs for the Disabled and Assistance Dogs in general, but also has allowed me to establish social networks with working partnerships all over the world. I receive daily emails using Google alerts to collect news stories about working dogs, which I then use to update the news feed of Ryan's Facebook page every morning.

As well as Facebook, I have joined or re-joined several message boards/online communities for people who share my interests in everything from cult television to personal finance. It may be a 'virtual' social life but it IS a social life. I am also in the process of writing and designing a personal weblog (or "blog") and resurrecting some of my prior work-related skills in graphics and editing. The only downside is that it is distracting me from writing the novel I've had planned for the last three years (though research has been made much easier now that I'm able to locate and buy out-of-print textbooks from international sources online).

The most exciting thing is that having a laptop has made it possible for me to return to college. Once my mother has visited from Australia at Christmas (we've been using email to finalise all her travel arrangements) I will be returning to full time study at Stevenson College in January. This is something I have been unable to do for the last several years due to nerve damage in my hands that prevents me writing and has caused immense frustration and impatience. As well as the enjoyment of getting my brain back into academic gear, soon I hope to have a real social life to rival my 'virtual' one.

Christian Aid and Quakers in Scotland Peter McCaffery

Since the early 1990s I've been a representative on behalf of General Meeting on a committee intended to provide feedback from Christian Aid's Scottish sponsoring churches and religious bodies. Other representatives on the same committee come from the Church of Scotland, the Episcopalians, the Methodists, the Baptists and the Unitarians, the United Reformed Church, the Salvation Army and the United Free Church of Scotland. Meetings are held three times a year, usually in Edinburgh or Glasgow. (More information can be found at

http://www.christianaidscotland.org/aboutus/who/christianaidinscotland/ca_scotland.aspx) By the time of September's General Meeting, I hope that a new representative will have been found, so that comments on the work and plans of Christian Aid can continue to be voiced from a Scottish Quaker perspective.

The distinctive features of Christian Aid include the practice of working through partners in developing countries. In other words, rather than sending UK-based aid workers to help meet the needs of people in low-income parts of the world, the policy is to go out and identify locally-based organisations that are already doing that, and to give moral and financial support to these organisations. The criterion applied is that of effectiveness, not religious affiliation. Christian Aid works with Muslim partners and with partners having no religious connections. The typical recipient of its support is a small-scale outfit, run by individuals who come from within the community needing help, and thus more likely to be responsive to the local situation and its possibilities. Partners are sometimes invited to visit Scotland and talk to the grass-roots activists here. Both parties gain from this: donors in Scotland get a more realistic picture of life in developing countries, and the partners are heartened to see that in a relatively better-off country there are plenty of people interested in their endeavours to address local problems.

Christian Aid employs youth workers whose aim is to raise the awareness of young people in Scotland regarding development issues like unjust trade rules, HIV/AIDS and global warming. The aim is to try and ensure that the link that exists between the charity and its sponsoring churches doesn't mean Christian Aid is of interest only to church-goers. At the committee's recent meeting, we heard about an initiative launched by the Department for International Development, whereby youngsters from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in Britain are being offered opportunities to go and work for short spells on 'voluntary service' projects overseas. This is intended to meet the danger that only more affluent members of this age-group can afford to have that sort of experience. One of the new projects being undertaken by Christian Aid is to help with the recruitment and training of such volunteers.

Over the sixteen years that I have been part of this committee, there have been various changes. One of these was the appointment, several years ago, of a new UK National Director recruited from India, Daleep Mukarji. Another was the arrival of a new Scottish organiser, Gavin McLellan, three years ago. Gavin had previously worked for Tearfund, and before that he had experience of work in the business sector. Coming from this background, he has been in tune with the overall policy whereby staff are encouraged to learn from commerce and industry. Thus, the fund-raising manager attending the recent meeting spoke about the need for a charity like Christian Aid to strive for a brand image in the public mind that will be in keeping with its long-term aims. Another aspect of the changes is that the committee's role as a purely advisory one has been emphasised by a change in its name. Nevertheless, it still serves an important function in serving as a channel of communication between the organisation's staff and its supporters, including its Quaker supporters.

A QUAKER RETREAT

Margaret Roy

I've been associated with Quakers since 1972 and been a member for almost 30 years and I have a concern for what spirituality means to Quakers, especially in a world where it is becoming more and more difficult to relate to God, I've now spent over 15 years with the Buddhists in my search for meaning and I am now revisiting my Christianity with many of the tools I have gathered. During my recent retreat I thought others might be interested in joining me on the journey so. . .

As a 'Core Process' psychotherapist, it was part of my training to spend time each year 'in retreat'. Since the training is based on Buddhist psychology, I spent 8-10 days each year, for nine years, in a Buddhist monastery in 'Noble Silence'. As well as training the Mind, through meditation, for up to 10 hours each day, the main object of 'Noble Silence' is to experience the absence of Ego. You can imagine this is quite a struggle but it is aided by the techniques developed over 2000 years study of Mind which is Buddhism. Thus a retreat is a deep confrontation with Self which blows away accumulated cobwebs to realign with one's basic principles and *raison d'être*. It is the most thorough psychotherapy I have ever undertaken (and I have done 12 years with 3 top-of-the-range specialists).

Why bring this to your attention? Training the Mind. Absence of Ego. Exploring Spirituality. Could this be a Quaker thing?

The Early Quakers used the silence in a similar way to confront the Ego and to better themselves. Today we would use such language as 'to gain a deeper understanding of Self'. Should Christians rely on Grace alone to 'save' them? The Buddhist sees the onus on self if we are to progress. And the Buddhist has a belief that we can and should be better people, i.e. there is no compromise on morality.

And yet of course it is known as a very tolerant 'religion'. 'Noble Silence' is one of their main tools so what might we have in common?

I am very critical of many of today's Quaker meetings for their lack of spirituality. That word 'spirituality' has such a varied meaning these days. I would never say that Quakers as a group are not well-meaning, kind and compassionate with a mission to work for a better world, even to look for that of Christ in everyone. Many see the meeting as sustaining them in their work and life. Many even see God as part of that process but increasingly God has no place. We stand alone, in our own little egos. If God is not in our hearts, what is?

You do not need to go far into 'Noble Silence' to see the Ego as a hindrance to developing spirituality

When we look around we find most people think in terms of Newtonian Physics, cause and effect, 3 dimensions. The Buddhists call this the 'Man of Middle Intellect' who thinks in terms of polarity. Good and evil, opposites that are the root of war. Yet we know that we use only a fraction of the brain and Quantum Physics postulates 11 dimensions. And still current books on theology cannot encompass a concept of God that enters into this grand scheme of things. Still stuck with the 'Man of Middle Intellect' they postulate "Christianity Without God", "An All Inclusive God" without any ground rules except acceptance, and "God Without God - Western Christianity without the wrathful King". Their God is an Authority without, and they think they can do as well as God. The Buddhists see the Mind as needing trained if it is to come into 'its true nature' (which has nothing to do with psychism).

I would like to see Quakers using their discipline of silence to take up the challenge of the Early Quakers to seek that of God within. Challenged by a world of 11 dimensions, we are struggling to

redefine our relationship with God. We ask for more than belief yet we have few tools apart from those developed in a society dominated by 3 dimensional science. There is another way, through 'Noble Silence', to reclaim our birthright of the Mind that is indivisible from God. We can open up areas of the Mind to think differently, to experience the world differently. We can borrow the Buddhist tools to train the Mind beyond the Ego. The Ego is an artificial construct of defence processes that form personality. This in turn gives rise to attitude as to how we see the world, and what draws and focuses our attention.

I would like to take Quakers into a retreat, into 'Noble Silence'

After 2 years absence looking after an elderly parent, I was too late to get in this year so did a retreat on my own at home. I have studied with various Buddhist masters including the Dalai Lama so felt confident that, if I did not know the ropes, I knew when to alert help and I built in sufficient routine to create stability. My reward on my own was that this allowed me to go more fully into issues of Christianity.

I intend to do another, shorter retreat at Christmas but would invite those interested in joining me next summer to get in touch. If you have not done 8-10 days silence before, it is harrowing (deeply disturbing even) so you would need to get in some practice!

Any takers? Contact me initially on margaretroy49@tiscali.co.uk.

*I also have a concern that, as a group, we Quakers have a very poor understanding of the basis of our Christian faith so I would like to study the Bible regularly with Quakers.

How about EDINBURGH Wed. 5.30 - 7pm

or GLASGOW Mon 6 - 7pm. Call me on 01899 220931.

FAREWELL

More time for my other life

Graham Marsden

As you may now be aware, after more than 9 years I have stepped down from my 8 hours' weekly paid duties as Quaker Scotland Administrative Secretary from the end of June this year.

I have (mostly) enjoyed the challenges this has brought over the years.

Inevitably, the job changed and developed - a journey I shared firstly with Margaret Peacock, as both GM Clerk as well as Database guru, and then Pamala McDougall, then GM Clerk, now Representative Friend.

I felt privileged to work for them both; they were supportive of my position and appreciated the support I provided to them during their Clerkship.

Time and tide move on; now my duties as a Highland Councillor following the election last May (2007) have left me less and less time to concentrate on my Quaker duties, and this seems to be the right time to allow someone with more time to take over.

You may know I also have a job as Money Advisor dealing with multiple debt at Nairn Citizens Advice Bureau two days a week. I'm proud to have been one of the founders some fourteen years ago - where does time go?

But I'm not quite free yet. To ensure continuity and to ease Bronwen Currie into her new job, I am working once again with Margaret Peacock - our Administrative support, database Guru and general problem-solver - firstly to produce the Check-list and then, once the

returns have been added to the database by Bronwen, possibly to produce the 2009 Book of Members and Attenders.

I wish Bronwen Currie all the best. She will, I'm sure, prove to a very efficient and capable administrator, I hope you will afford her the same level of support and good will you did me.

I do intend to be of further service to the Quaker community in Scotland as and when time permits. In the meantime, I look forward to meeting you at future Quaker Scotland Meetings.

HAIL

Greetings, Friends

Bronwen Currie

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you as your new General Meeting Administrator. Perhaps "introduce" is the wrong word - I know many of you already, and have had phone and email conversations with many more over the years. But I am now employed by you, amongst other things, to support the GM clerk and function groups, to maintain the database of members and attenders and to keep your personal details safe. If you want to know what the "other things" are, ask me again in a year or so's time - I am still somewhat new to the job (10 days in post as I write this) and I look forward to learning from my predecessor, Graham Marsden, from GM office-bearers, and from yourselves. I may not have the answer to every query (or even any of them yet!), but if there is anything you think I should be doing or that I can help you with, please do get in touch on ScotFriends@gmail.com or 01496 850006. (Please note that this is a NEW ScotFriends email address and amend your email contacts list if necessary.)

I'm on my way home from Meeting for Worship. It's 8.00pm, and I set out from home this morning at 8.15am. Yes, I know, we've all known Sundays like that: meetings before Meeting; preparing coffee and clearing up the lunch; meetings after Meeting; Elders' and Overseers' meetings.... being a Quaker can be a time-consuming commitment. But no, Friends - I just went to Meeting. These days my journey to Meeting consists of 18 miles by car (or, in the summer, bike), followed by the morning boat (2 1/4 hours), followed by a further 5-mile bike ride (or, in the winter, bus). And then the same journey home on the 6.00pm boat. There were four of us at Meeting today. Sometimes there are seven or eight. But in a membership which extends from Inveraray in the north to Campbeltown in the south, and from Islay and Jura in the west to Tighnabruaich on the east side of Loch Fyne, it is a challenge to find a geographical and transport-friendly centre, and currently different sub-sets of us meet in three different locations according to the Sunday in the month.

It is a far cry from my first quarter-century of Quaker life, in one of the largest (the largest?) local Meetings in BYM, where both before and after worship all was buzz and activity, where the children joined us for the last part of Meeting and showed us what they had been doing, and where the notices at the end of Meeting bore witness to all manner of Friendly activities taking place during the week. In our small Argyll Meetings I have regularly experienced a gathered silence which I touched only occasionally in a Meeting of 70 or 80 people, and vocal ministry is rare, and precious when it comes. But our Meetings are fragile. We are keenly aware of absent Friends, we have no young families, the loss or departure of one or two members could make a Meeting unviable, and our geographical spread and dependence upon ferries makes it almost impossible to organise meetings for learning or outreach events. I realise we are

not alone in this: a quick glance at the Book of Members and Attenders tells me that, particularly north of the Great Glen, there are many Friends who have at least as complicated a journey as I have, to get to Meetings whose membership is even more scattered than Argyll's.



Many Friends will know of the connection that John and I have with a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Mardan City in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan. In 1991 we joined this health project as VSO volunteers. The Society of Friends and associated Trusts have been significant supporters of this unusual NGO over the years, including after the 2005 earthquake. Now once again the Society has been generous in helping to expand its services.

Frontier Primary Health Care (FPHC) is a health project started in 1980 by the Austrian Relief Committee for Afghans (ARC). It provided medical relief to about 30,000 refugees in three camps - a fraction of the eventual 2.5 million who fled into Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Over one million remain in Pakistan.

The medical activity developed beyond relief work into a highly organised public health programme based on primary health care principles outlined in the Declaration of Alma Ata (1978). Among other things, this includes safe water and sanitation, prevention of endemic diseases, immunisation, and Mother and Child Health. In the early 1990s, an external evaluation recommended that the health

project become independent of the ARC - by that time a large umbrella organisation running diverse projects. Thus in 1995 the Pakistani-registered NGO "Frontier Primary Health Care" was born. The new aim was health care for local Pakistani villagers as well as for refugees. Many villagers had already voted with their feet, choosing FPHC's clinics rather than government basic health units. Sadly, the government system is widely recognised as limited, under-funded, not universally accessible, and prone to chronic staff absenteeism.

Friends helped during the critical initial period of the infant NGO: the W.A. Cadbury Trust and SES MM made donations to ensure that it survived. Independence raised FPHC's profile, and new donors emerged, including a short-lived government fund for NGOs. By 2000, FPHC's services were available to about 150,000 people, mostly villagers, including the original refugees. Local communities got more involved in aspects of their own development; the numbers of volunteer health workers, men and women, increased - all trained by FPHC's Human Resources Unit. Some village women, themselves illiterate, agitated successfully, in the interests of their daughters, for improved staff attendance at a local school. Others pressurised government to repair the road and install a telephone line to the village.

The public health approach continued, with the addition of labour rooms at one or two of FPHC's six Health Centres. This is far preferable to village tradition of giving birth at home, sometimes with little skilled help. Now there is also a fully-staffed round-the-clock Emergency Obstetric Centre open to refugee and village women. The Provincial Government is showing more interest, even sending staff on study visits to FPHC. FPHC takes part in research activities, some supported by Canadian agencies. Depending on availability of money, further improvements are feasible.

In 2007 Mike Perks as Area Meeting Clerk alerted me regarding Friends House's new QPSW Relief Grants. These are intended for people suffering as a result of natural disasters, climate change, war or conflict, but not for immediate crisis relief. Consultation with FPHC by email resulted in an application in January 2008 for funding another labour room, and for extending classes in a girls' school (SES Area Meeting provided a supportive Minute for the application). This school covers only early primary years; girls wishing to proceed further need male escorts for travel, according to local protocol. Escort is not always available, and means additional costs for poor people.

Out of 22 applications for QPSW Grants, six have been successful. In May, FPHC received the equivalent of £6000. And further, because the rate of exchange has recently altered in FPHC's favour, they are able to convert a vehicle into an ambulance (very basic!) and improve premises already earmarked for the new labour room. FPHC (and I) are deeply grateful for yet more support from Friends.



GENERAL MEETING: September 2008

Marjorie Farquharson

The Quaker "Retreat" walked through the 1980s 'in its sleep', its medical director Chris Holman told General Meeting in Glasgow last month, but now its Quaker and medical principles are in closer fusion. He is optimistic about the next five years.

The "Retreat" occupies a particular niche in the UK mental health scene. Those of us unhappy with private medicine, were glad to hear

that it is a charity, representing a 'Third Sector' initiative, dealing with patients that other institutions mostly do not treat. They are people suffering from psychosis, who have difficulty managing aggression, and whose rehabilitation is slow.

We learnt that aggressive men often gravitate to hostels for the homeless, and women self-harm. Chris Holman's message was that we would too, if we were handling the same deck of cards. I liked that. 'Relationships' are central to the therapy at the Retreat, which tries to offer a safe place and medicine for people who can't 'go home': patients have quiet, a pleasant room, and space in the garden. Chris Holman was scathing about the effect of prison on people with psychiatric problems, since it purposely destroys any relationships budding between inmates. In future, the Retreat plans to help more adolescents and to improve its specialist nursing skills.

Chris Holman told us that the "Retreat" exists for patients 'rather than staff', and offers a rare combination of Psychology and Psychiatry. It also includes patient evaluation of its services. There is some tension between standard medical practice and Quaker methods for seeking discernment, and I sensed tension too, when a Friend asked if "Retreat" staff were perhaps conducting an experiment on their patients.

What Chris Holman brought home to me was the million acts of kindness that contribute to our normal well-being – things that rarely penetrate the sense of alienation of someone who is mentally ill.

Much has been written about the "Retreat" this year, including in the Friend (October 2008) and the Northern Quaker (Autumn 2008). We know how it evolved in 1796 from the old York asylum, where a Quaker Hannah Mills had died, incommunicado. The "Retreat" was the first to keep mental health records, and try to discover what was conducive to patients' recovery. In that sense it has not

changed.

The rest of General Meeting was given over to Quaker business, and relations with the wider ecumenical community in Scotland. We welcomed Bronwen Currie, a friend from Islay in Argyll AM, as the new GM Administrator who will take over from Graham Marsden.

This year's Kindrogan Conference was a meditation on 'time', addressed by Michael Hutchinson, the Assistant Recording Clerk. Over the weekend Friends looked at geological time, overarching human years. Friends are reminded that bursary help is available for the conference next year, which will be held from 12-14 June 2009.

We also heard a report from September Meeting for Sufferings, which had adopted the long term framework for Quaker activity, now called "Together in Worship and Witness". It gives a special place to the 'inclusion' of all sorts of Friends and abilities, and space for leadings of the Spirit. Friends felt it was a finer document for these changes.

Our representative Friend attended a meeting at Holyrood for religious groups to take part in the 'National Conversation'. Action for Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) was invited to suggest a conversational topic, and proposed the spiritual aspects of homelessness, poverty, alcohol and trafficking. You can read the statement they issued on the websites of ACTS (www.acts-scotland.org) and the National Conversation.

GM made a £30 donation to Jubilee Scotland, and gave £120 to "Scotland's for Peace", the movement to counter Scotland's traditional image as a warrior nation.

Friends are invited to residential General Meeting in St Andrews on 22-23 November 2008.

At the meeting of ACTS Forum on 27 August Bruce Cameron, interim Warden, gave us a report and told us of his and Elaine's dreams for the future. The first phase - converting bedrooms to ensuite - is going to plan, and a Director to succeed the Interim Wardens on 1st January is being appointed as I write. Also as I write, I hear that the full target for the phase 1 appeal has been reached. Bruce and Elaine are responsible for the House programme for the first six months of 2009, and have consulted widely about this. They believe the House should be a place where it is safe to grapple with difficult issues; where the church and the world meet; and where heart and head feed each other. As well as that, the House needs to be 'owned' more by local people and churches; recognised as a 'sacred space' - a place of healing and compassion; and to support a praying community. Local people will be invited regularly to take part in acts of worship in the chapel.

The programme will include "Grasping nettles" - a series to explore major issues of difference, and "Encounter" - a series to engage with inter-church, interfaith and multicultural dimensions, to move to encounter from being merely informative.

Part of the vision involves investing in people. The House belongs to the churches, and they are encouraged to see its work as their work. Besides contributing to the building fund, church sponsorship will be invited in three ways; an event such as the asylum seekers' weekend; a bursary for a young person to attend a course at half price; or a resident volunteer.

* * * * *

1. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Trustees' meeting on 18th June. There's a wide scope of CTBI work. Most church organisations struggle with numbers - finance and members. Offices will move to smaller premises.

Difficult topics - growing: emerging black churches; suggestion that strong dialogue with Muslims could be at the expense of Christian traditions and life; and also some evangelical efforts

Receipt of open letter 'A Common Word Between Us' from 138 Muslim scholars - CTBI has produced a resource booklet 'Above Us and Between Us' to articulate differences of understanding between the two faith communities.

Recommend CTBI website - much info. and resources.

2. National Conversation

Leaders and Reps of Scotland's churches were invited by Scottish government to contribute to future of Scotland's political life. It had the danger of it being a one way conversation but the 11 of us spent valuable time to produce a joint statement. See ACTS website. ACTS also has made a submission to the Calman Commission based on the paper (all parties, except for SNP, which are not looking at independence for Scotland) The First Minister joined us over lunch - I asked how long would the National Conversation take - he replied 'as long as it takes'.

The group issued a joint statement which can be seen on the ACTS website.

3. Church Leaders' Meeting with the First Minister.

At the preparation session for this meeting we had decided, mainly in response to the financial climate, to issue an invitation to the people of Scotland to use St Andrew's Day this year as a day of prayer and reflection. Alex Salmond supported our initiative at the meeting, and we put out the following statement.

"The Leaders and Representatives of Scotland's Churches encourage our church communities and all people in Scotland to celebrate St Andrew's Day this year as a day of prayer and reflection in which we will hold the principles of social justice and the difficulties facing the nation and world in our hearts and prayers in faith and hope before God."

This statement was issued on the occasion of the meeting of church leaders and representatives with the First Minister, Thursday 9 October 2008.

First Minister Alex Salmond said: "Our national day provides a great opportunity for all of Scotland's people to reflect on the kind of society we are and where we aspire to be. At this time of global difficulties I welcome the call for St Andrew's Day to be celebrated with prayer and reflection. This is something which can unite all of us in Scotland, whatever our beliefs, and I for one will certainly take part."

The actual contents of the meeting have to remain confidential, but I can say that homelessness, poverty, sectarianism, human trafficking and the world's financial problems featured on the agenda.

4. ACTS Forum

a) Now renamed ACTS Members Meeting after agreement of the Memorandum Articles of Association of ACTS to be incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status. Some reorganisation has taken place in the governance of ACTS - we now have an Electoral College which has met and confirmed the process of electing the new Trustee Body.

b) Church and Post Offices - One-day conference arranged by ACTS Rural Group in winter (date to be arranged) options for churches to initiate community projects.

c) Funding for the CAIRS Interfaith education officer, Andrew Sarle, is coming to an end and no more money has been identified, so

Andrew's job will probably end in the Spring.

I remind you that myself and Margaret Peacock are your reps on ACTS Forum and Mary Latham our deputy.

5. Scottish Churches House

a) The temporary co-wardens Bruce and Elaine Cameron have settled well - see Margaret Peacock's article.

B) Our own contribution to the programme, a study day 'The Quaker Way' was on Oct. 2nd when Joyce Taylor, Mike Brown, Paul Burton, Adwoa Bittle, and myself as host offered reflections on Quaker life, history and practice - with exhibition from Friends' House. We had good feedback from this.

5. Church Leaders' Homelessness Day 9th Sept.

The Chief Executive of Scottish Churches Housing Action - our Friend Alastair Cameron, invited me to take part in one of the visits his office had arranged to homeless projects. I visited Angus Starter Packs along with my colleagues from the Methodist church and Syd Graham, who is the Vice chair of Scottish Churches Housing Action.



How to get to St. Andrews.

Pamela Brunt

The nearest train station is Leuchars. There are buses every 15 minutes to St. Andrews. It is a short walk to Holy Trinity church hall which is in Greenside Place. Walk along City Road and Alfred Place to the West Port. Walk up South Street, turn right into Queen's Gardens and then left along Queen's Terrace. The hall is on the left just after West Burn Lane.

By car, via the A91 through Cupar, along North Street to the cathedral ruin, right twice into South Street, then first right into Greenside Place. Don't go down the hill, but bear right towards

General Meeting for Scotland
 St. Andrews 22-23 November 2008

"Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand."

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Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

Our theme in November is the work of volunteers with Quaker Peace and Social Witness. QPSW have an active programme of placements of volunteers both in UK projects and overseas. This weekend will provide an opportunity to learn more about the programme and to meet returned volunteers Robert Rhodes (Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Former Yugoslavia) and Charlotte Smith (Oxford research Group).

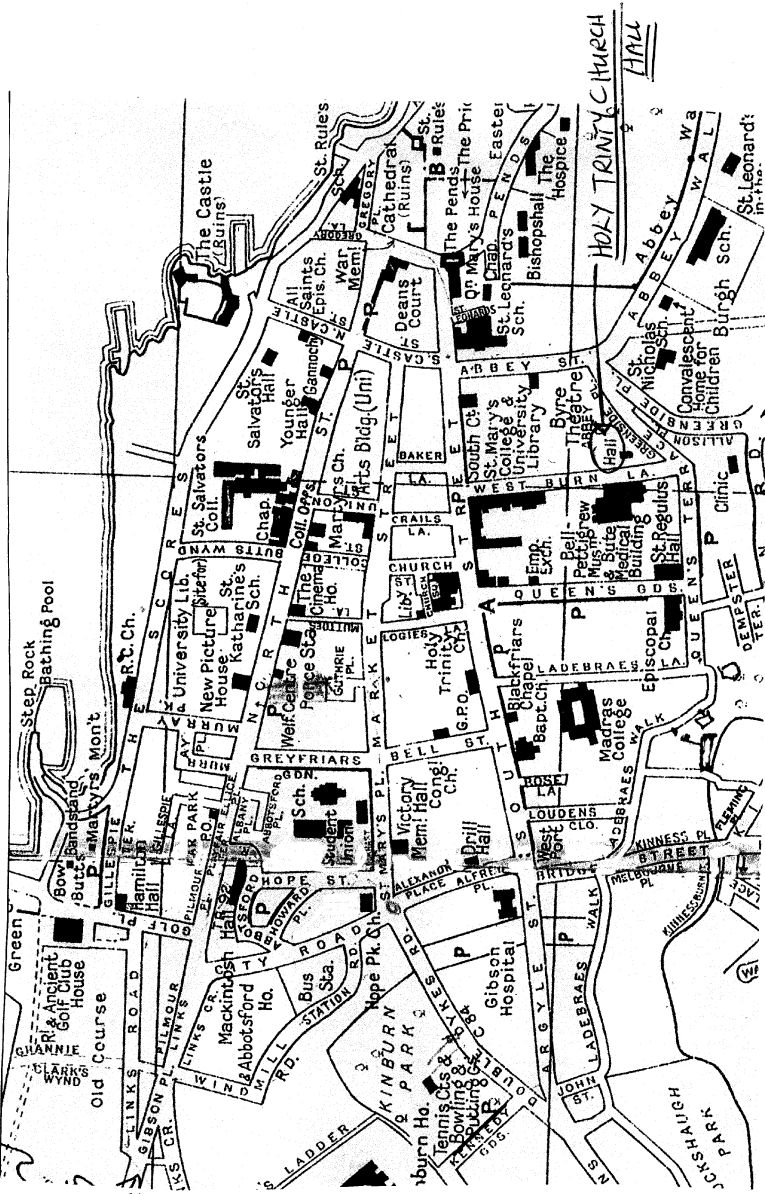
We shall also be looking at how Quakers in Scotland might respond to the report "A Framework for Action" which was recently approved for use throughout Britain Yearly Meeting. And we shall be considering our financial planning for 2009.

The weekend starts on Saturday 22nd with Meeting for Worship at 11 am, followed by business items. Overnight accommodation can be provided with local Friends - see the application form inside.

Is there a new member or attender in your meeting who could be invited to GM? Please let our Assistant Clerk, Beryl Milner, know so that they can be properly welcomed. Bursary assistance is available.

We have a full and interesting agenda, including a musical evening on the Saturday. Please come to St. Andrews and share it with us!

Robin Waterston, Clerk



A41 from Cupar

Queen's Terrace. The hall is on your right and there is some parking space there. Directions to alternative parking will be given on site should too many cars arrive!