



August
2016

Scottish Friend



Fence panels in tangential sunshine

MP

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Please send material for next *Scottish Friend* by 7 October! to Margaret Peacock, 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk. *Scottish Friend* will be posted on the GM website and can be emailed to you at the same time as it goes to the printer. If you would like an email copy instead of a paper one, please email scotfriends@gmail.com, to let Marion Sharkey know. You are strongly encouraged to do this, in view of escalating postage costs - and of course you get the photographs in colour, as an incentive!

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

Refugees, what can Friends do?

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Hilary Patrick, Central Edinburgh Meeting

hilaryjpatrick@gmail.com

Introduction

The issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers are so complex that it is hard to work out how to respond. Many Friends want to offer help but do not know where best to target their efforts and resources. This article seeks to highlight some of the initiatives we already know about. Perhaps the gaps in it will spur Friends to share their knowledge with other readers.

A new group, Scottish Faiths Action on Refugees, was set up in 2015 to co-ordinate and promote action by faith communities in Scotland to support asylum seekers and refugees. An interfaith organisation with a paid co-ordinator, it is funded by the Church of Scotland until 2020, and is a valuable source of information. I represent General Meeting on that group, and this article is an attempt to share some of what I have learnt from them. They are compiling a comprehensive information resource for local groups.

The humanitarian crisis

As we know, many of the nearly 60 million displaced persons in the world will be fleeing war, conflict and poverty. Many Friends will already be supporting bodies which attempt to tackle global inequality, such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and Jubilee 2000.

Nearly all refugees (86%) live in the developing world, mostly in camps. Turkey hosts the largest number (2.5 million people from Syria) with Jordan and Lebanon hosting 1.7 million between them. There is a desperate need for money to help the refugees in camps. Among the international groups providing humanitarian assistance are the Red Cross, Save the Children, UNHCR, Doctors without Borders and the International Rescue Committee.

We need to call for a safe refuge for refugees and funds for humanitarian assistance. Quakers in Britain put out a statement in September 2015 calling for safe paths for refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria and a proportionate response from governments,

<4> including the UK Government.

Refugees in Scotland

As Friends will know, the UK government has agreed to accept 20000 Syrian refugees over the five year period from 2015 to 2020, as part of the UN resettlement programme. They will be those identified as being among the most vulnerable in the camps: women and children, people in urgent need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence. As of May 2016, 610 people had arrived in Scotland. 19 local authorities have taken part in the resettlement programme, and the remaining 8 have signed up to do so.

The majority of refugees and asylum seekers have traditionally been housed in Glasgow (around 5000 people). A number of innovative projects have been set up in the city, although all could do with financial support. For areas where the numbers of refugees are likely to be much smaller, local initiatives will have to develop.

Sponsorship scheme

The UK Government is still looking into the feasibility of private sponsorship of refugees, and is running various pilot projects. The model currently under consideration would involve not just financial sponsorship but also support with housing and well-being. I will keep Friends updated.

What we can do

As individuals

- To keep informed, sign up for mailings from Scottish Faiths Action on Refugees (sfar.org.uk).
- You might want to campaign for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. The Scottish Refugee Council (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk) would be a good starting point.
- Consider if you can donate money to humanitarian relief (as above) or to an organisation working with refugees in this country, such as the Scottish Refugee Council or a local organisation like Positive

Action on Housing (paih.org).

- Register with Scotland Welcomes Refugees

www.scotlandwelcomesrefugees.scot. This Scottish Government /Refugee Council website allows people to offer a variety of types of support, such as befriending, help with English, practical help and so on. They will pass your details on to your local authority, which may contact you. Alternatively you may need to contact your local council yourself. Some local authority websites set out ways in which you can help and have links to local organisations.

- If you could offer a place in your home, Positive Action on Housing has a register of people able to offer accommodation throughout Scotland. Some local councils are looking for properties they can take over and rent to refugees. Large properties are particularly needed.

As Meetings

- Consider a special collection.
- Practical help can include collections for home-making (e.g. Fresh Start in Edinburgh) or for goods wanted by refugee camps. There are a number of well established organisations which collect and deliver directly to refugees. For example ReAct (Refugee Action Scotland re-act.Scot) has six collection points throughout the country.
- Ask David Bradwell of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees to speak at a local, Area or General Meeting. He could advise what might be needed in your area and suggest other faith groups which might be looking to collaborate on a project.
- The Quaker Refugee and Asylum Network, set up in 2006, has a great deal of expertise in helping refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Although largely based in England, some of them are willing to travel a long way to speak with other concerned Quakers if the hosting Meeting would fund travel and maybe an overnight stay if appropriate.

Sometimes the very scale of this humanitarian crisis can seem overwhelming and we are paralysed into inaction. This article has

<6> attempted to show that there is something, however modest, we can do, individually and as Meetings. Please get in touch with me if you think I could be of any help or provide you with any further information.



Interfaith Scotland - on the move

Barbara Potter, Milngavie Meeting

After the Church of Scotland decided to sell the old manse that housed the former offices in Pollokshields, Interfaith Scotland searched for new premises in Glasgow, outside the city centre. Their new place is off Springburn Road in a converted building opposite the new Kelvindale college. With a grand staircase with stained glass windows it has an impressive hallway and entrance. The offices are accessible by lift on the second floor and have 4 spacious rooms, one of which is large enough to host dialogue events.

The contact address is: 2nd Floor Flemington House, 110 Flemington Street, Glasgow, G21 4BF phone 0141 558 0778.

We were invited to our first dialogue in the new building on 31 May where we were invited to consider what Interfaith Scotland currently does, and our direction for the future. We had presentations from the parliamentary officer, the integration officer, and Maureen Sier who is the director.

Time was spent considering how to support the Syrian refugees who are being resettled in Scotland, There was some concern that they would be distributed widely across the country which could make for some difficulties in fulfilling their cultural needs, as well as problems accessing appropriate foods.

Sharing with other Interfaith representatives brought <7> some interesting ideas: one said that she had decided to step back from being the "obvious name" and found that there are other, younger people willing to become involved; another told how interfaith matters were represented within the structures of his church, and how they had a regular feature in their church newsletter of "a day in the life" of someone of another faith. Each of the tables were invited to take notes on post-it stickers and these were collected to be assigned to groups and will be circulated to us all.

Interfaith Scotland supports local Interfaith Groups around the country, and provides training and assistance to many on interfaith issues. They liaise with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Refugee Council. Their work has moved into taking interfaith issues into schools, and developing an awareness of faith matters. In our group we had a sikh, who explained how travelling by air was difficult because of his bracelet, a symbol of his faith. When he was last flying he met another family going through security who were concerned that this elderly man was being searched so thoroughly, when they had gone through security straight away. The man of the family said that he had decided to leave his bracelet at home, because it was just too much trouble to be searched at every check in.

It is enormously enriching to meet with those of other faiths and share aspects of our spiritual journeys. I can recommend contacting your local interfaith group where you will receive a warm welcome. More details of Interfaith Scotland at <http://www.interfaithscotland.org/>

Please take part if you can in Scottish Interfaith Week, 30 - 20 November.

<8> **Scottish Episcopal Church Synod 2016 - 9 - 11 June.**

Cathy Bell

This gathering of seven bishops of the Scottish Diocese, clerics, laity and representatives from many other churches - met in St. Paul's and St. George's Church on York Place Edinburgh which proved to be a very good venue for all the different activities, discussions, reports and church services that were held.

We started with an opening Eucharist service, led by the Primus and the other 6 bishops. The seven were all robed up, golden mitres in place etc. and I felt I had stepped into the pages of an old medieval book!

I had been welcomed on arrival, by a lay member from Aberdeen and ushered to one of the front round tables, below the altar and then business table - introduced and made to feel very welcome. I was about to start a few days of much voting by hand and by paper! (but not me !)

Some of the sessions were of more interest than others - inevitably - but I attended everything (which was noticed by one of the bishops !).

We heard from three very different speakers on how they had worked in their areas with The Mission board - ie Outreach - and one church's actions to reinvigorate itself and its local community (films were shown). Tembu Rongong young cleric from Goldenacre Edinburgh showed films and spoke impressively - with some of the young people - about the active young people's group in Scotland.

We had good sessions on Climate change, housing, poverty, and better pay for ministers! The Liturgy committee brought forward a proposed 'Rites before death'.

Everyone was delighted to hear they have their biggest number of students coming forward to train for the ministry this autumn.

An army chaplain spoke with a film about their work with soldiers and somehow I found myself uncomfortable with this session.

The cleric in charge of all the excellent IT at the church and Synod event is a man who has a parish way up north of Inverness and who has taken out dual membership of the Religious Society of Friends. After he had spoken very well - we had some Quaker silence - which I really appreciated!

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He spoke about the importance of communications and what we choose to say (and not !) and quoted from Ephesians 4 - 29. The importance of being kind and compassionate on the internet etc. and how parish magazines still have a place as well as the internet because more folk respond very often to the written word which they revisit!

I went home - tired and enthused.

I leave you with this quote -

"You can be the change you want to see"



Overleaf is the submission by my father Robert Forrester seeking exemption to military service in 1916

MP

Copy of application to Seddington Local Tribunal 25.2.16

MILITARY SERVICE ACT 1916 — Application as to exemption

1. Man in respect of whom application made

(a) Name (in full) Robert William Forrester

(b) Age 19

(c) Address (in full) 31 Blackmoor Grove, Seddington, Midd'x

(d) Occupation, profession or business (Give full & exact details) Internal student of the University of London taking degree course in Chemistry for the purpose of teaching. Under agreement with the Board of Education to teach in a state aided institution.

2. If an employed person, etc. -----
3. Ground on which application is made. A conscientious objection to undertaking any military service, or any service for the more effective prosecution of war.
4. Nature of application. For absolute exemption.

5. Reasons in support of the application (These should be fully stated)

My application for exemption does not arise from unwillingness to serve my country. As a subject of Jesus Christ, I must devote the whole of my life to His service, which, as shown by His words and His life on Earth, is the service of my fellow men. I am therefore entirely in sympathy with the efforts made by my country for the welfare of mankind. As a subject of Jesus Christ, however, I must rely entirely on the method that He taught and practised, the method of persistent love and goodwill towards all men, a love that knows no breaking strain. I must never hate or injure one man or one nation for the sake of helping another. I believe that this is the only course which can lead to a permanent and lasting peace such as we all desire. I am fully aware of the possible danger to myself and others which might result from ceasing to rely on this - what I believe to be God's will, but relying absolutely on the justice of God, I can leave the consequences to Him.

My claim is for absolute exemption. I believe not only the the vocation for which I am now being trained is of vital importance to the welfare of the nation, but that I have been definitely guided by God to take it up. I can undertake no other work without His guidance and cannot agree to any such undertaking being a condition of exemption.

6. (a) Signature of person by whom application made RW Torreyer.

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e) Date of application

25th Feb. 1916

<12> Quakers in Scotland Website Development Steering Group

David Sterratt, Central Edinburgh Meeting

In June 2015 General Meeting set up a steering group to guide the development of the Quakers in Scotland website, <http://www.quakerscotland.org>, which General Meeting noted "has various shortcomings". The group comprises representatives from the four Area Meetings in Scotland, the GM Administrator and the web manager. We were appointed on 1st January 2016, and one of our first actions has been to write this article to raise awareness of the site among Friends, and keep Friends informed about what's going on.

a A brief history of QuakerScotland.org

The QuakerScotland site has been live since before 2000, when Joe Latham compiled much of the content. There was a front page which linked to a section about Quakers, pages for each Local Meeting and Area Meeting in Scotland, and pages about General Meeting and its business. Scottish Friend and other items of news were posted. In 2007 we moved to a Content Management System (CMS) called Drupal, which allows the web manager, the GM administrator and designated Friends in LM and AMs to log in and create and edit content. The site shares a server rented by David Sterratt and a friend of his from Bytemark in York. David Sterratt has dealt with the technical side of the site, e.g. dealing with software upgrades and implementing page templates. GM-appointed web managers Neil Turner (~2006-2012) and Peter Kennedy (2013-2015) have edited the site, and helped LM and AM editors with their work.

Over the years the site has evolved gradually, led by the needs and requests of the web manager, the GM administrator and the page editors. Neil Turner produced a clickable map of meetings on our "Find a Meeting" page. There is now a neat way of posting and archiving PDF versions of newsletters on meeting pages (see, for

example, South Edinburgh's entertaining newsletter - and <13> you may be reading this edition of Scottish Friend from the GM page) Events, announcements, documents and minutes can all be posted to LM and AM pages too. Adding an image to an LM page has also been made easier. A few years ago we changed the design, with a cleaner front page and a design that works better on small devices (tablets and phones) than the old design did. At the beginning of 2016 we added a page to describe our work, in particular the Parliamentary Engagement work that Mairi Campbell-Jack carries out on our behalf.

b. Room for improvement

Yet there are still "many shortcomings". At the first meeting of the Steering Group the main points raised were:

Overall, the site could be more welcoming.

The visual design now looks old-fashioned, especially in comparison to the revamped BYM site - one description was "dour and Scottish", to which we added "and Quakerly?" There are few eye-catching photographs on the site.

The text could do with reworking: the introductory text is not as welcoming as it could be and the "About Quakers" text needs reviewing, especially in light of what is on the updated BYM pages.

It might be possible to improve the layout of the information: For example, some AMs and LMs would like to have more prominent pages, not buried under the "Quakers in Scotland" banner.

C Who and what's the site for?

We've been in contact with Nik Dadson, who manages the BYM website. He advised that it's essential to be clear who the site's for and what we want to communicate at the start of the process. With this in mind we formulated a Draft Design Intent at our first face-to-face meeting in Dundee in May.

The final one-page document

(<http://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/draft-design-intent.pdf>) perhaps doesn't do justice to the hard work that went into producing it: we considered 17 Quaker "personas" developed to help with the BYM site redesign, to help us

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"see ourselves as others see us".

In summary, the design intent states that our three main audiences are Enquirers, "Information seekers" (e.g. journalists, pupils looking for information about a project), and Quakers in Scotland and beyond. We commit to being accessible and engaging by good design, straightforward language and presenting more information in pictures and by video. More controversially, the intent says we will not prioritise using the site for internal Quaker Information, since there are other systems, such as Dropbox and Google Drive, which may work for this purpose. We informed General Meeting about the intent in June, but there was not time to consider it fully - so please contact Marion Sharkey if you have views on the design intent.

d. Don't mention the Q

With so many much more pressing issues in the world, we felt loathe to bring up the issue of our logo, but it is integral to our website. When a new design is unveiled, if it just has the "Friends in Scotland" Q, some Friends will be upset and others delighted; if it just has the BYM Q some Friends will be upset and others delighted. The Spirit doesn't seem to have been helping much with discernment about aesthetics, but at our May meeting we tried to discern what the meanings of the logos were:

We discussed the issue of our corporate image. We feel it is important that the logo on our website expresses the truth that we are part of Britain Yearly Meeting, and is consistent with our leaflets, posters and literature. We recognise that we may also wish to express the truth that we are a distinct body, like

Friends in Wales, who are having a variant of the current BYM Quaker logo developed. This could be done by having a separate symbol which could be placed next to the BYM Q. We recognise that there are strong views in favour of our existing Q and the BYM Q. We considered the possibility of not having a logo at all.

We raised this issue at GM in June; again there was no time to consider the issue properly, but it was very good to hear Friends' views over lunch, and I left a bit more hopeful that some way forward would emerge.

<15> d What next?

We are aiming towards producing a trial website later in the year, which Friends in Scotland can comment on for a period of around 6 weeks. We'll then produce a final new design in the light of these comments. Assuming the design intent withstands the views of Friends, it is likely that the content of the new website will be broadly similar to the old one, but with the following major changes:

- More welcoming front page.

- Much more welcoming and engaging "About Quakers" section.

- Area Meeting and Local Meeting pages given more of their own identity.

- A new visual design, including more photos.

We don't want to reinvent the wheel, so we'll also be looking at other Quaker AM and LM websites, as well as the Friends in Wales website (<http://quakersinwales.org.uk/>).

How can you help?

We're not going to please all Friends in Scotland, but your views will be helpful. Is our focus in the draft design intent right? Is there information that you think should exist on the site that you can't find? Is there another Quaker website whose design appeals to you? If you imagine yourself as a newcomer to Quakerism, how was the journey through the various Quaker websites? Please let the group know by emailing GM Administrator Marion Sharkey - <scotfriends@gmail.com>.

Your practical help might also be useful. Are you a photographer who could take professional-looking pictures of groups of Friends? Have you skills making videos? Would you be willing to be interviewed about why you are a Quaker, or something that Quakerism has prompted you to do? Please let us know.

This article only summarises our thinking; for full details, see the notes and minutes of our meetings at

<http://www.quakerscotland.org/website-development-steering-group/>

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GM Website Development Steering Group:

Ruth Bacon (West Scotland AM), Chris Booth
(South East Scotland AM), Martin McCaffery
(East Scotland AM), Clive Potter (North Scotland AM),
Marion Sharkey (GM Administrator),
David Sterratt (GM Web manager).

Wanted - a good home for copies of Friends' Quarterly
from issue 4/2009 --Issue 4/2015, and
Quaker Voices, 30 copies from Vol 1 No 5 (Sept 2010) --
Vol 6 No. 4 (July 2015).

Contact Philip at p.bryers@virginmedia.com , or
01738 560 250



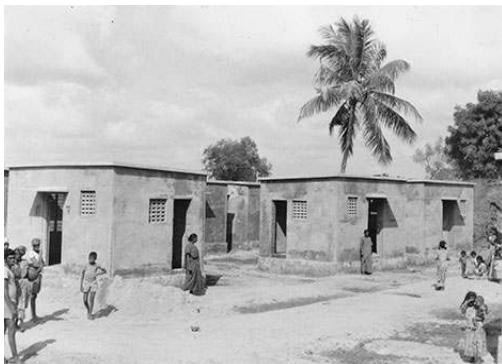
Picture: World Council of Churches laying the foundations of social investor, Oikocredit, 1968

Oikocredit 1968: Leading world-wide social investor is born from the pioneering vision of young WCC members

In 1968 the concept of socially responsible investing for faith-based organisations was both innovative and controversial. With major world unrest, including South Africa's Apartheid and the Vietnam War, WCC church members wanted assurance that church investments were promoting peace and positive development. The idea of an ethical investment channel for churches, related organisations and the public at large was therefore put forward by young politically-engaged WCC members from all denominations, with the intention that investments would promote social justice by providing credit to enterprises focused on giving a "hand up" to the poorest communities in the world.

Some church members remained uncomfortable with the idea of investing money, rather than *giving* money to disadvantaged people. Others disagreed with investing church money without maximising financial return. Nevertheless, the wheels of the new social investment vehicle began to turn, with the (Oikocredit) Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (EDCS) formally established in 1975. [The Oikocredit name, added later, comes from the Greek for community and the dual meanings of credit: loan and belief].

<18> The first decade proved difficult for Oikocredit to raise sufficient investments. However, many individual church members around Europe trenchantly believed in the concept of social investment and launched Support Associations to raise capital (Support Associations continue to mobilise the lion's share of Oikocredit's capital today). As such, by the end of the 1970s, Oikocredit was able to invest in its first projects: one in India, one in Ecuador, both countries in which Oikocredit remains highly active today:



Oikocredit India Housing Project - then and now.

One of Oikocredit's first projects: A loan to Vellore Medical College & Hospital to provide affordable mortgages for their lowest paid staff. The son of one of the original mortgage recipients, Jacob (featured), said: "My father, Joseph, received a mortgage to build the house where I was born and raised. It's now home to my wife and children."

The Oikocredit International Share Foundation was subsequently

introduced in order to provide an investment opportunity for <19>

the wider public to contribute to development aims. Today, the OISF remains the main capital-raising vehicle for Oikocredit, with €101 million being raised during 2015 from its 51,000 individual and organisational investors

Through social investing and capacity-building activities with 800 partners in almost 70 countries, Oikocredit now reaches 37 million people like Joseph and Jacob with much-needed financial and other support. Oikocredit's primary sectors include microfinance, small-scale agriculture and renewable energy ventures - all placing planet and financially-excluded groups (particularly women and rural communities) at the heart of its investing criteria.



Client of Oikocredit microfinance partner, Africa. Photography:
Opmeer Reports 2015

www.oikocredit.org.uk

www.theguardian.com/oikocredit-investing-for-development-zone

<20> Sweden Yearly Meeting

Held in Svartbaecken May 5th to May 8th 2016-

Gisela Creed, Glasgow Meeting

The 82nd Yearly Meeting was held in Swedish Friends' beloved retreat centre, Svartbaecken, which lies in lovely country side about 40 miles north of Stockholm.

I found a wonderfully welcoming and joyous atmosphere enhanced by the beautiful surroundings of fields and forest covered in wood anemones and 4 days of lovely warm early summer sunshine. About 50 people gathered including 5 visitors from abroad and 5 children. We shared good conversation, serious reflection, fun and play with the children, and were sustained by lovely food, miraculously prepared by one of the young parent members and his small son, not forgetting lots of coffee, cake and delicious Knaeckebrot.

Swedish Friends were conscious that about half of the participants were attenders and took great care to make the Quaker business process understandable and straight forward for everyone. This meant using very little Quaker "jargon". I admired the timely and sensitive explanations of the business process given by the clerk, thereby increasing active participation and depth of reflection by all those present. Translation for the visitors was generously on offer by tireless Friends using wonderful equipment and the new hearing loop was also greatly appreciated.

For me, being from a big Local Meeting in Scotland, it was amazing to witness, how such a small Yearly Meeting (100 members in total) copes with its business and reaches out to the world so well and with such a light touch. We heard exciting reports from Quaker Service Sweden, of work in Bangladesh, Burundi, Georgia and Palestine, but we also considered the serious financial constraints for this work in

the future. Swedish Friends strongly consider themselves <21>

part of the European and World family of Friends and reported enthusiastically about their attendance at the world Plenary Meeting in Peru and their involvement with FWCC and the European and Middle East Section.

The business sessions covered everything from committee reports, membership matters (admission of their 100th member!), finance, property, employment, European and international cooperation. Can you imagine LM, AM, GM and Yearly Meeting rolled into one?? That's how it felt like at times, beautifully and sensitive led by the 2 clerks, who split their work in a manner new to me: one presiding, the other recording. It worked brilliantly, with the presiding clerk being able to present the business and pay full attention to the sense of the meeting without the burden of preparing the minute and the writing clerk concentrating on composing and then presenting the minute. I had never experienced Quaker business meetings conducted quite in this way and hope to discuss this more widely in our own area.

We also worked in small groups and had a threshing session to consider the dwindling financial contributions by members in an atmosphere of trust and openness and I hope that based on this work Swedish Friends will go forward to resolve their difficulties.

This year's theme was: **"Non-Violence: possibilities and limitations"**. Jalka from Vienna, who had been invited to lead these workshop sessions, turned the title into a positive: **"Be courageous and cool"** With her help we explored "Bridge building" in conflict situations. This starts with learning to communicate in tense situations with courage and wit, and being authentic, emancipated and creative in our dealings with the "other". We learned that tension is energy which actually is neither good nor bad. Quakers must learn again to use this precious energy and transform it into understanding the

<22> different views of others, instead of trying to avoid conflict because they equate it with violence. Avoiding confrontation can also be a form of violence.

We need to understand that when dealing in conflict situations we must feel protected, acknowledge the state of our body and emotions and attempt to think clearly so that we can analyse the situation. It's important to be aware of our inner monologue and not let it become ugly. It's not about changing "the other", but it's understanding each other.

Ahmet, one of our participants, was able to reflect movingly the emotions and feelings created by some of our work together with his superb improvisations on the cello, underlining the effectiveness of transforming emotions into other creative outlets.

I feel privileged and most grateful to have been given this opportunity to attend as BYM representative, it has strengthened my feeling of belonging to the world family of Friends, and I feel encouraged that together we can work for positive change in the world.



Meeting for Sufferings 2nd July 2016

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Jane Pearn, Kelso Meeting

We met a week after the EU referendum, when events were still unfolding and uncertainty hung in the air. There will have been more changes by the time you read this.

Our Clerks asked us if we needed time to reflect incorporated into the agenda - yes, we did. Ministry was deep and helpful, ranging from concern about division within meetings (something we are familiar with in Scotland), personal stories of those already affected by incidents of xenophobia, to accounts of Meeting for Worship in Local Meetings (the first after the result was announced). A Friend commended the NFPB statement: although it was written before the vote, it is relevant and helpful. <http://nfpb.org.uk/EUrefstatement>. Someone commented, 'Our society needs our Society'.

We had work to do, too. Five more names were added to the prison register - all for activism against Trident at Burghfield. Ingrid Greenhow, the Clerk of BYM Trustees, updated us on their current work. There will be no immediate impact from the referendum result, but UK withdrawal from the EU will affect us financially and in other ways that can't be foreseen at present. There is rightly concern about the temporary impact of HS2works on our staff 's working conditions and on Friends House lettings. But we were reminded by a Manchester Friend, that in other parts of the country the damage and loss of homes and farmland will be permanent, and there is strong opposition to the scheme. There have been some changes to senior staff job titles to reflect the increased cross departmental work, but the departments themselves stay the same. Ingrid talked about the planning needed for an aging and declining membership - and urged us to stop aging and declining!

Leeds Area Meeting has now produced its book on Assisted Dying. This consists of a series of essays looking at the subject from different perspectives. Every Local Meeting has received a copy, so

<24> there is opportunity for us all to engage with this difficult issue.

Several minutes have been received about refugees and asylum seekers. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) has been working closely with QARN (the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) on this.

Helen Drewery, from QPSW, spoke about the deep concern that Friends express, but told us that QPSW had felt that the private sponsorship scheme promoted by Citizens UK was not the right route to follow. However, we are to employ someone for a year, hoping that this will be the first year of a three year project. Their role will be to explore all the options and contribute to our discernment of the right way to act. There will also be a conference at Woodbrooke next February on 'Forced Migration - how can Quakers respond?' Friends will be pleased to know that this will be a Europe-wide conference, with 10 places reserved for representatives of European Yearly Meetings. We heard that 'great movements of people will be the new normal.'

Friends who are concerned by the arms trade, especially UK sales to Saudi Arabia, were encouraged to support Campaign Against Arms Trade, which was co-founded by Quakers in 1974. There is some good news - CAAT has been given permission to take the government decision on Saudi arms sales to judicial review. The campaign to recognise conscientious objection to taxation for military purposes is spearheaded by Conscience, another group with strong Quaker links, including the current placement of a QPSW peacemaker.

Appeals - when things go wrong between a member and his or her meeting, there are processes to follow. The guidance in Quaker Faith and Practice is to be revised by a group of Friends, who will be appointed in due course.

Our Clerks asked for our thoughts on next year's Yearly Meeting Gathering where the main theme will be our contribution to

movement building. Suggestions ranged from holding <25>
Yearly Meeting 'as led' with no set theme, to finding common cause
with others of all faiths and none. This linked with the later report
from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations
(QCCIR) on their work. The report included the comment that
shared purpose brings us together, where doctrine may divide.

We heard that we need to 'join up the dots' linking our wide-ranging
witness, so that we feel connected with each other - but also a plea
to find a focus that we can all unite with. Another Friend
commented that we are too remote, too comfortable, too far away
in our Meeting Houses and in our lives, from people who need our
message.

A question ran as a thread through our day together. 'What does
love require of us now?'

<26>Thanks for the Grace of God

Graham Morton, Perth Meeting

Thank you for the privilege of participating in the Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church (URC) in March 2016, as a representative of General Meeting.

What did I 'take from' or learn at the weekend?

- * The warmth of the welcome extended to the 'ecumenical guests' - of whom I was one of (I think) five.
- * Being regarded as an equal was refreshing (having become accustomed to the separation of sheep from goats). It was stressed that contributions to the deliberations from ecumenical guests would be welcomed, and that we were entitled to participate in votes too.
- * Developing lay leadership is a priority, ministers being in short supply. Resources and ministers are increasingly being shared through 'clusters' - such as Tayside & Fife - or via local ecumenical partnerships with churches from other denominations. Many areas with substantial populations, such as Perth, lack any URC presence while Dunning and Newburgh (Fife) have small ones.
- * As with many local Quaker meetings, collaborating with others to build or sustain community is often very important. In Selkirk, for example, people from different churches work together very effectively to enable older people to meet and support each other. The warmth of many relationships (individual and collective) across denominational boundaries was a theme I heard a number of times.
- * It was lovely to meet and learn from people such as Mary. A nurse, originally from Kenya, she lives in one of Edinburgh's more deprived areas. In one of the projects in which she is involved, Granton Community Gardeners, the gardens are all shared, everyone works together and the produce is shared out - with enough for more than two hundred people to eat together. Vicky Allan has written about

such projects in her Herald article *Croft Work*.

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Most of the representatives were lay people, not clergy.

Why the title of this article? While it wasn't a specific theme (in a sermon, for example) and may not have been mentioned many times, 'grace' was the word which made most impact on me. The same applied several years ago when (at a Quaker meeting in Buckinghamshire) I heard a Member - a particularly lovely person! - speak of 'thanking God for his grace' as shown in the life of someone who had recently died.

The word doesn't appear in the subject index of my edition of *Quaker Faith & Practice* but this comes from 11.41:

The light of Christ, a universal light and known inwardly, is our guide. It is the grace of God which gives us the strength to follow. It is his forgiveness which restores us when we are oppressed by the sense of falling short.

Attracted by the title 'A compelling story of transforming grace' of a recent review by Rowan Williams, I must now try to read Marilynne Robinson's novel *Lila*.

Thank you, *General Meeting* and *URC*. Maybe I should add that a *UR* church has played a huge part in my life. It was there that I met Rosemary, my 'other half'.



<28> PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release, 5th July 2016

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES REFLECT ON “BREXIT”

Representatives from seven member churches of ACTS gathered in Edinburgh on Monday 4th July to share initial thoughts, questions and concerns over the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The Rev Aled Edwards, Chief Executive of Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales), travelled especially to participate in the meeting and explain reaction in Wales.

Concern was expressed about the uncertainties facing EU citizens in the UK and British Citizens in the rest of the EU. The way much of the debate was conducted, leading to instances of racist and xenophobic abuse and through the use of what has subsequently been acknowledged to be misinformation, was criticised. Looking forward, participants agreed that the values of the Gospel must be upheld and that the priority of all, politicians, churches and wider society alike must be to promote the necessary conditions for human flourishing, including access to education, health care, family life, justice, security and peace.

Participants committed themselves to continuing ecumenical engagement with churches and other organisations across Europe, including the Conference of European Churches, recognising that Scotland remains part of European culture and society irrespective of political decisions.

The meeting concluded by resolving to plan for a conference to be held later in 2016 which could explore the role of the churches in addressing the issues facing society which surfaced, explore more deeply the Christian understanding of unity and seek to find ways of offering Gospel insights within the ongoing public debate.

Opening Session of the Scottish Parliament.

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Pamala McDougall, Dundee Meeting

As Representative Friend of General Meeting for Scotland I was invited to both the Kirking of the Scottish parliament, and the official Opening of the 5th Session by the Queen on 2nd July 2016. The Kirking, or church blessing, was an interfaith service and was attended by MSPs, dignitaries and representatives from church and civic communities. Interfaith blessings were offered, including one from the Humanists! - and this was followed by a reception where old and 51 new MSPs mingled with the guests including Alex Cole-Hamilton (Lib. Dem.), the only Quaker MSP. Wearing my Quaker badge gave plenty of opportunities for introductions, outreach and information about Quakers.

The formal Opening of the 5th Session held in the chamber of the Scottish parliament was full of pomp and fanfares for the Queen and Prince Philip, congratulations on the Queen's 90th birthday, speeches from the Presiding Officer, the Queen and the 1st Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, national poetry readings and lots of music, including Midge Ure singing Robert Burns' 'A Man's a Man for a' That' (no inclusive language here but a beautiful rendering of a lovely song).

The Queen's speech was particularly well received with its advice for politicians to be 'reflective and calm' in these turbulent political times. After the formalities there was a 'Riding', a celebratory parade down the Royal Mile with many community groups, bands, local heroes nominated by their MSP, and enactment groups in memory of political and social activists of the past. It was all very jolly and a party atmosphere prevailed.

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In the afternoon a 'Big Day Out' took place at Holyrood with the doors of the parliament building opened to all with a programme of events and exhibitions to mark the Opening. The Zones included Culture, History, family events, Science and Innovation and Nature with music and dancing from around the world.

It was a privilege to be present and to absorb the atmosphere of much needed celebration in difficult and uncertain times, and hear hopes for the future despite some views to the contrary. My *GM* post often throws up unusual and often exciting opportunities to be part of civic and ecumenical life with Quaker insights and to be open to those of others - this was part of that bridge building.



General Meeting for Scotland - Glasgow 11 June 2016 <31>

Joyce Taylor, St Andrews meeting

There was much to ponder on the way home and in the days following this General Meeting which was full of interesting, informative, challenging and moving reports from Bob Fyffe's account of the refugee crisis, to a report of the visit to the EU ahead of the referendum and the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Officer on cadet forces in schools.

During morning business we heard the Trustees Report which was substantially about the development of the Scottish advocacy project involving the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group (PLFG), the Engagement officer, Mairi Campbell-Jack and Friends House working together. The renewal and future funding of this work beyond the 3 year pilot phase will be questions to be addressed by a review to be started at the end of this year.

The work of Parliamentary engagement also came up in the agenda. A concern was raised about £60 million which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had committed in last year's budget statement for the development of Cadet Forces in schools. This was money which had come in to the Treasury from fines levied on banks as a result of their bad practice. This is an issue which is not yet being pushed by Quakers nationally. Following a meeting with Education Scotland it was confirmed that some of this money was to be spent in Scotland. There needs to be greater awareness of what is proposed and alternative ideas for peace education put forward. The PLFG asked GM to take up this concern and pass it to Meeting for Sufferings which was agreed. Mairi Campbell-Jack's work has been focused on aspects of countering militarism in schools including the petition which will be presented to the Petitions Committee of the Scottish parliament in the autumn and in the production of the election guide for Quakers to engage with prospective candidates in the Scottish elections.

Communication of information with local meetings and also for enquirers is always a challenge and David Sterratt gave an update on the work of the group who are looking at the development of the GM

<32> website. They hope to produce a prototype website which will be available for comment later this year although the thorny issue of the logo - national or Scottish or something in between - is very much alive it seems!

Quakers had been part of an ACTS delegation of 16 people from 8 denominations which went to Brussels to find out more about the work of the EU ahead of the referendum.

Pamala McDougall and Joyce Taylor spoke about the wide range of topics covered on their visit which took place just after the bombings. Understanding the way the EU commission functions, the aims of the single market, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, migration, the circular economy in relation to waste management and EU work outside Europe as well as meetings with MEPs and the Scotland office made it a packed agenda with little time for analysis and quiet reflection with their fellow delegates.

They observed that presentations were given by articulate and committed people who were understandably enthusiastic about the European project. Presenters were very frank when answering questions and acknowledged that there need to be changes. Things do move slowly and getting necessary agreement can take time - the worst example being the refugee crisis which was spoken about with shame that the EU had only been able to resettle 1000 refugees in a year.

There was recognition that the populations of member countries are critical of the EU and in recent referendum voters had been negative. On the issue of the possibility of Brexit they were told that unlike the Scottish Independence referendum when there was a lot of discussion and planning about what to do in the case of a yes vote, the Brexit scenario was not being worked on in case it was construed that such an outcome was a real possibility. There was acknowledgement that Europe hadn't listened enough and needed to reform if voters in member states were not to become disillusioned. This is interesting as by the time you read this it will be post vote! The refugee Crisis was the subject of the afternoon session led by Bob Fyffe from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. He talked about the unfolding situation in the Middle East which though not

perfect before was now 20 times worse,

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the result of which was huge displacement of people.

We were asked to consider why the attitude to refugees was so different now from previous situations when refugees had been welcomed. Why are those displaced being portrayed as petty criminals and scroungers out to undermine us when in reality they are people who have been bombed out of their homes. Although there had been a great focus on Calais and a delegation of church leaders had gone there and observed the misery of life in the camps there, Bob told us that the real horrors of the refugee situation were to be found in Greece.

A delegation of women church leaders led by Kathy Galloway had been to the border crossing between Greece and Macedonia to talk women to women in the camps there. Women are the most vulnerable often with responsibility for children, the sick and the elderly. We heard very moving accounts of what happens if you close a border. When fences go up you corral people and the criminals move in. Thousands of children and adults have disappeared for exploitation in the sex trade, for the theft of passports and papers, for belongings and money and for trade in organs.

The Women's Report highlighted the terrible conditions and the lack of security for women, children and unaccompanied minors. Friends are urged to read the women's Letter to CTBI member churches about the refugee crisis which provides a disturbing and moving account of what they found on the CTBI website. Bob emphasised that it was important for individuals, churches and organisations to work together with existing agencies. In closing worship we heard moving ministry including, from QF&P 20.01:

I ask for daily bread, but not for wealth, lest I forget the poor.

I ask for strength but not for power, lest I despise the weak.....

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Church of Scotland General Assembly 2016

Nigel Dower, Aberdeen Meeting

Some 600 or more CoS commissioners along with various others such as ecumenical visitors (like me) and overseas visitors from other Presbyterian churches were packed in the Assembly Hall on the Mound in Edinburgh for a week of intensive activity. The opening and closing ceremonies were definitely pomp - with the Lord High Commissioner (sitting on a throne above us!) representing the Queen opening the Assembly and at the end closing it. (The pageantry was also in full display in the St Giles service on Sunday morning.) All this reminded me of how in the past the Church of Scotland was at the centre of political power in Scotland - military staff still in attendance for the Lord High Commissioner - of which the pomp is really just a much cherished echo. That said, most of the business was on the church's witness, mission and service to the world - all centred round the theme of the week 'People of the Way' (the suppressed article was I think 'a' not 'the') - a reflection of the Road to Emmaus.

Let me next note three further ways in which the General Assembly is rather different from our Yearly Meeting. Similar numbers in a similarly sized hall, yes - I was used to the buzz of so many together - but what is striking is that those attending are commissioners who are appointed to attend. Most of these are ministers and elders for roughly one in four churches in any given year. So it is quite unlike YM where any Friend can attend!

Decisions are made in a quite different way. Most 'deliverances' (as they are called and listed in the reports from the various committees), unless someone rises to speak to them, go through on a stamping of feet, some if discussed are approved by people rising in favour or against, but if the numbers are too close to call or the matter is controversial (as it was in some cases) then they formally voted electronically. No sense of the meeting stuff! The moderator (Russell Barr - extremely good, combining confidence of direction

with a warm touch) had a lot of tasks to do but <35>
trying to write minutes was not one of the them! There was one contentious issue about the appointment of a senior person where the discussion went on and on with amendment and counter amendment, and eventually resulted in what to me seemed a sensible outcome, but one that I felt could have been reached much more quickly by patient listening and a clerk drawing up a minute.

Third, the language of Christ's church, the trinitarian message and mission were prominent in a way that they aren't in YM. Indeed I was struck by the Christ-centred energy expressed by very many speakers (reflected in the really lively way the hymns - and there were many of them, as each day the assembly was 'constituted' by short services - were sung. A great joy!). I remember several years ago giving a talk to theologians and ministers in which I admitted that in Quakers there were at least four groups - trinitarian Christians, Christians acknowledging Jesus as a supreme spiritual leader, universalists and 'sea of faith' supporters - and one CoS minister said 'really interesting - we have all four categories but we cannot admit it, as we have a creed' and many others agreed. But I did not have any sense of such theological diversity at the General Assembly. So I guess I was happy to participate in everything (except taking communion) I suppose as a sort of 'reverent agnostic'!

It is when we heard the Reports from World Mission, Church & Society and Social Care Councils, that one realises that, whatever theological differences, the commitment to social justice, care for creation (a strong theme this year), care for the disadvantaged and so on is very strong, as it is in Quakers. (There were two very vocal climate sceptics - which I found hard to believe - so a deliverance went to a vote but was I am glad to say firmly endorsed!) I heard about the work of Crossreach - the social care charity - which is I understand the largest charity in Scotland. (Of the central COS

<36> budget of approx. £100 million, almost half is spent on social care projects and almost half on paying for ministers.)

There were several areas of deep controversy. The first was over the issue of accepting Ministers as being in same sex marriages (as defined in Scots law). Acceptance of ministers in civil partnerships had been accepted earlier but last year this issue first came up and was referred back under the 'barrier act' so that presbyteries could vote on the issue. Roughly 3/5ths had approved it and 2/5ths opposed it. That meant the GA could consider it again, and the vote went in the same proportion, but not until after a rerun of the substantive issues. I could not believe my ears with some of the things that were said. I took the occasion to tell many people about our 2009 decision! Another was over whether the CoS should support the call to make illegal any corporal punishment for children including smacking. This was passed narrowly after many confessed that they had smacked their children and/or had been smacked themselves with no harm done!

Despite the immensely positive energy at the assembly, the church is clearly in some sort of crisis, with falling numbers and financial support, and with many churches without ministers. There was however a lively group from the Youth Assembly who contributed well to the discussion but had no vote (as they are not commissioners) - a sore point! But there is a long way to go on various issues. Theologically there is a problem about even elders being able to administer the sacraments, and indeed the idea of the CoS solemnising same sex marriages is a long way off.

A highlight was the visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby who welcomed the Colomba declaration in which - wait for it - for the first time each church officially recognised each other's

existence. This step towards closer cooperation is all <37>
the more remarkable given the CoE's even more traditional position on same sex relationships - at the same time as the Free Church and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland have distanced themselves from the CoS because of its modest step of allowing ministers in same sex relationships! ('O what a tangled web we weave..')

I found myself moved to speak twice. There was a brief debate about whether the CoS should support staying in the EU. With some dissenting voices this was carried by a clear majority. My point was that we should not forget that the EU is the outcome of the greatest experiment in peacebuilding the world has seen and this would be weakened if we left. The other was the session on the Armed Services Chaplains report. I rose to note that the navy section was essentially the Navy's own self-self-justification, and that while I welcomed the role of chaplains serving the spiritual and pastoral needs of armed services personnel, I hoped that chaplains could maintain a 'critical distance' from the services they serve. There was no debate about this but quite a number said afterwards that it was good that someone had said it - including an army chaplain and a navy chaplain!

Visitors were looked after well. Three evening events were organised to which we were invited. A special dinner for overseas visitors and ecumenical visitors (I was sitting at the Moderator's table!) in the Royal Overseas League overlooking Princes Street and the castle, and two receptions, one hosted by the Moderator in the old Parliament Hall, the other by the High Commissioner at Holyrood Palace. None of these places had I been to before.

I could go on. But let me just conclude with one remarkable mini-sermon the Moderator gave in the short service at the

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beginning of the Wednesday session. He told the story of how he visited a hospital to see one of his parishioners who had just had a serious operation. And he then went to the chapel and saw another man there whom he recognised as her surgeon. One asked the other 'are you here to pray for her?' and the other said 'yes', so 'we prayed, me on my knees and he on his prayer mat!' After a suitable pause to let that sink in, he said 'And who do you think God listened to - the Christian or the Muslim?'. He meant of course 'both'. Although the CoS has recently appointed an Interfaith Officer, I am aware that many are not that interested in Interfaith. It struck me that there were ecumenical visitors but not visitors from other faiths as in YM. Quakers may have a range of views about intercessionary prayer, but to me that story was a brilliant example of gentle but effective Interfaith awareness-raising. And it was only one of many memorable and thought-provoking things that were said.

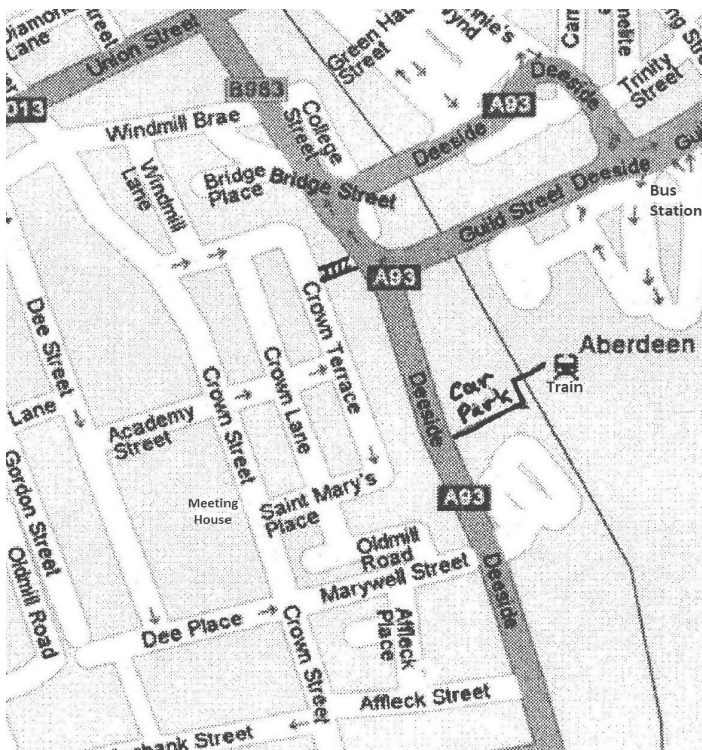


General Meeting for Scotland - Aberdeen 10 September 2016

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Are your meetings for church affairs held in loving dependence upon the spirit of God, and are they vigilant in the discharge of their duties? ...Do you individually take your right share in the attendance and service of these meetings so that the burden may not rest upon a few?

Queries, 1928



Inside the station, go up over the footbridge and through the multi-storey car park. Turn left and cross at the traffic lights to go up Affleck Street, then right at Crown Street. To avoid steps, go outside the station and left along Guild Street, then right up Bridge Street, left at Union Street, left again at Crown Street. Then the Meeting House is on the right by the motor bike shop.

General Meeting for Scotland

10th September 2016 at 11 am in Aberdeen Meeting House, 98 Crown Street, AB11 6HJ

Dear Friends and Attenders throughout Scotland,

General Meeting on 10th September will start as usual with tea and coffee from 10.30, with the meeting itself starting at 11 am. Much of the day will be occupied in considering whether our Quaker structures, including General Meetings itself, and the way these operate, are still fit for purpose.

Our main speaker will be Michael Hutchinson of Glasgow Meeting who served for 21 years as Assistant Recording Clerk for Britain Yearly Meeting and is currently clerk of West Scotland Area Meeting and of Woodbrooke Trustees. The title he has chosen is '*A challenge to our Quaker structures: managing decline or using what we have been given?*'

Margaret Fell said to Charles II that 'We are a people who seek after those things that make for peace, love and unity'. We have been given a very precious Quaker heritage that can transform ourselves and others. But are we still a 'people'? How do we live together to let transformation engage and change us and the world? Michael wants to examine the Quaker structures we have inherited to see if they still work for us and what we can do about it. There are no easy answers, but how do we model how we should be as an active spiritual community - a people?

We will also consider the results of the recent questionnaire sent to all Friends and attenders in Scotland seeking their views on the role and functioning of General Meeting, including the future of the annual residential GM. However, the day will not solely be about structures. We will hear from some of our Function Groups, of developments at The Retreat in York and of ACTS initiatives following the Brexit vote.

I do hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us in Aberdeen for this important meeting.

Martin Burnell, Clerk .