

# SESAME

Number 174 : October 2012

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Nontheist Friends/ Scotland and NATO

## *Sharing South East Scotland's Sustainability Stories*

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**Deputy Editor: Alan Frith**

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to the editor Alan Davies at 49a Lockharton Avenue, Edinburgh EH14 1BB, (email: [a.davies@ed.ac.uk](mailto:a.davies@ed.ac.uk)) at the latest by **Tuesday 20 November**, for distribution week commencing **2 December**. The Editors reserve the right to condense articles. If possible please submit articles by email, sending as an attachment as well as in the body of the email, or on CD-ROM typed in Word™ accompanied with hard copy. Email versions of SESAME are available in PDF and Word™ format. Contact the Editor.

### **SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING**

Our next Area Meeting will be on Saturday 20 October at **2 p.m.** (PLEASE NOTE TIME), at 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh. As well as regular business, we will hear reports from Festival Committee and Overseers, and look forward to Residential General Meeting on 17-18 November in St. Andrews.

There will be light refreshments at the end of the Meeting for Worship for Business. We would hope to finish no later than 5 p.m.

The Meeting House is wheelchair accessible with accessible toilet and also has an induction loop in the Meeting Room.

Kate Arnot, Clerk  
South East Scotland Area Meeting

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### **Library News**

#### **NEW IN THE LIBRARY AT VICTORIA TERRACE**

**Pendle Hill Pamphlet 418: "Some Thoughts on Becoming Eighty-five" by William Z. Shetter**

A meditative walk through a varied life, done with humour and clarity. Includes discussion questions.

**"God Just Is: Approaches to Silent worship" by Curt Gardner**  
Varying traditions of silent worship woven into the author's spiritual journey as a Quaker. (2012)

**"Snakes and Ladders: A Personal Exploration of Quaker Work on Human Rights in the United Nations" - The 2012 Swarthmore Lecture by Rachel Brett who discusses how and why Quaker work in the UN is unique.**

**"Deepening the Life of the Spirit: Resources for Spiritual Practice" developed by Ginny Wall**

Commissioned by 'Quaker Life' these resources - from exercises to workshops and personal reading - are intended to nurture spiritual

experience and understanding. Ginny Wall is a tutor and project developer at Woodbrooke.. (2012)

**"Answering That of God : Discovering the Spirit within" by Peter Parr, published by The Kindlers**

A booklet challenging us to explore what we mean by "that of God." It asks us how we can live by those reflections. A recommended reading list is included. (2012)

To locate a book, pamphlet, CD or DVD by title, or a particular author's work, or the library's holdings on a particular subject, please use the card catalogue on the shelf to the left of the library door. Then use the shelf numbers on the card to find the item. Note that 'p' means 'pamphlet' and these are in boxes on the shelves. (Items marked 'Reference' are for use only in the library.) Check the "New Acquisitions" shelf as well - on the wall to the right next to the notice board.

**Rhoda MacKenzie**  
Library Committee

***Life Writing for Transformation: Workshops to be led by  
Alison Lock and Anna Levin***

**Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House  
23th (eve) & 24<sup>th</sup> (all day) November 2012**

*"At the heart of our Quaker faith are stories. Instead of rules and creeds we have the experiences, reflections and insights of generations of Friends who have been challenged, transformed, nourished and inspired by living out their Quakerism.*

*Through the stories of individuals and communities, we can come to understand what being a Quaker means. But it is only through telling our own stories that we can come to understand what it means to us..."*

*Alistair Fuller, Quaker News, Summer 2012*

We'd like to invite Friends to join us for a short course of 'telling our own stories' through the tools and techniques of Transformative Writing™. *"Transformative Writing brings together the reflective, expressive, healing tradition of personal writing (journal, diary, memoir), and the artistic, creative tradition of*

*literary writing (poetry, short story, fiction). Uniting the two produces a unique blend of intimacy and universality that maintains the integrity of each elemental aspect of its origin."* (Joanne Klassen, founder of Heart-space Writing School, Minetoba, Canada).

Developed by Joanne Klassen in Canada, Life Writing for Transformation was tentatively offered by the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham in 2009. Woodbrooke's programme leaders were taken by surprise by the speed it sold out and the scale of the response from Quakers throughout Britain and Europe. It seems something in the concept of finding your authentic voice to write from your own life resonated with a need among contemporary Quakers. There has been a waiting list for the course every year since.

In response to this growing interest, the European Centre for Life Writing for Transformation was formed in 2010 as a partnership between Woodbrooke and Heartspace. A team of 10 facilitators were trained to further the reach and explore the potential of Life Writing in Quakerism.

I was a participant on the first course and have returned to Woodbrooke four times since for further courses and alumni retreats. I've found it as transformative as the name suggests! After working as a journalist for 10 years, writing with no word count, brief, editor, red pen or deadline was as exhilarating as freewheeling. Through focusing on the process of writing rather than any product, I rediscovered the sheer joy of playing with words and telling stories. I learnt that writing could be fun, and easy, that reading my own stories could give me greater clarity and understanding, and that sharing stories was a powerful experience creating a depth of community.

I knew right away that I wanted to make this work part of my life and to share the process with others. I booked to join the first training course, but as life turned out I was a bit busy that week giving birth to my baby girl Saskia - born the day the team gathered to begin their training!

So I am catching up this year, and part of my training is the co-facilitating of this course, with Alison Lock - a poet and Quaker from Huddersfield Meeting. Myself and Alison met on the first Life

Writing course and have teamed up to facilitate on subsequent retreats. We're both interested in using Life Writing to explore our Quakerism and interconnections with the natural world, and we're really looking forward to working together again!

We hope you'll join us and give transformative writing a try. It's good stuff: surprisingly gentle yet deep and insightful. There's no 'red pen', no pressure to share – everything is by invitation not expectation.

If you'd like to find out any more about the course, please contact me: [Anna.levin@phonecoop.coop](mailto:Anna.levin@phonecoop.coop)

To book, please contact Sue Buxton at Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting: 0131 225 4825.

We would like to ask a £15 contribution from each participant to cover the costs of Alison's travel. But if this is more than you can afford just let us know.

### Sharing Southeast Scotland Sustainability Stories (SSSSS)

SSSSS is the group coordinating our Area Meeting response to the Yearly Meeting's commitment to work towards becoming an environmentally sustainable community. We have started collecting stories from Friends who have taken personal steps, small or large, in this direction and we will be publishing some of these in the next few issues of *Sesame*. We would invite all readers to contribute your own stories to add to our anthology. Please email or post to one of us:

**Rachel Fitzgerald, Don Stubbings, Phil Lucas**

*(We publish four of these stories in this issue of Sesame. More will appear in subsequent issues. Eds)*

#### My Story

In early 2009, I was recently widowed and living in a potentially

7-bedroom house with a large and challenging garden. It worried me that I could not keep up the garden and, although it was nice to have space to accommodate family visits, it did not seem right at a time of housing shortages to stay in such a big house alone. I either had to let space or move. I like the area - all basic services are within easy walking distance and there is a very good bus service into town – and the garden was big enough to divide, so, with family encouragement and the support of a friendly architect, I looked into the possibility of subdividing the garden and building a smaller house. I had been interested in sustainability for some time, so it had to be an eco house.

The site was very steep, it poured with rain, the promised rock foundation was not there and the digger slid dangerously down towards the river reducing the land area still further, so it was a slow and inauspicious start. But at last we had a split-level eco design and the heavy prefabricated walls, roof and windows were craned in, often in high winds.

I have now been in the house for nearly a year. There have been hiccups, but they are mostly ironed out now and I am really enjoying having somewhere I can sit where I can watch the garden grow, see the seasons change in the trees and enjoy the river. I am making progress with the upper garden and have been able to produce some vegetables. The solar PV panels are working and have provided about £300 rebate on my power bill so far. There is no central heating and I used quite a lot of extra heat in the ground floor in the winter, but now that the floors and walls have dried out and absorb any warmth from the sun, I rarely use extra heating. The walls and roof are very well insulated and the sedum roof helps to maintain a constant temperature. Overheating from the sun has not been a problem this year! With such a good bus service I have been making progress in reducing my use of the car.

**Brenda McGovern, Central Edinburgh Meeting**

### **Deep Peace**

Once upon a time I lived in the USA for 8 months and, sharing in 'the things that are eternal' with people, I made very close, deep friendships. However, I had to face the fact that flying is one of the most damaging things an individual can do for the environment, and I don't believe that 'offsetting' emissions is a solution to the problem. So the deal I made with myself was: after this return trip across the Atlantic, no more flying.

Now this sounds like a sacrifice story, doesn't it, and sacrifice stories, while often admirable, are often off-putting and uncomfortable. But I found that the story I thought was a sacrifice story - never flying to the USA again, and therefore quite possibly never seeing some very dear and important friends again - turned out not to be a sacrifice story at all. It turned out to be a 'discovering freedom' story, a story about how great the other side of a difficult decision can be, a story about the peace that passeth all understanding. When my younger sister was struggling with a similar choice, I was able to tell her that however hard, painful, even impossible a decision may seem before it's taken, if it's the right decision to make, the peace and comfort experienced once it's made are worth everything.

It's over six years since I saw any of my friends in the USA. But we've kept in touch by phone and email, and in one particular case I feel our friendship has developed and strengthened despite separation. Using email in this context makes one really think about what it's important to say. And we are joined in spirit, as we all are in Meeting for Worship, with bonds that distance can't destroy.

**Rachel Howell, South Edinburgh LM**

### **An Eco-Tip**

Are you a compost maker? Do you add that special active ingredient that enriches and speeds up the whole process?

Perhaps you do.... In which case you will know what I am about to suggest.

Compost making is a satisfying and quite demanding procedure. All the waste, wet dry semi rotting stuff that gets layered on the heap ends up being such a fine odour-free material. But what you put on and how you put it on matters, plus turning it two or three times during the making.

Before the days of flushing water closets, night urine was collected in buckets and then put on the local midden. Some of us who are past their middle years know of the night urine phenomenon. Instead of complaining how many times we have to get up in the night we could, by saving the urine, enhance the productivity of our garden at the same time.

Unless you have an infection or are on large amounts of medication, urine should be clean and contains high amounts of nitrogen which is excellent for both compost and leaf mould. Urine helps to raise the temperature inside the heap, which speeds up the breakdown of material and kills the seeds of some of the tougher weeds.

Also by not flushing the W.C. during the night you save 4litres of water each time and it is a lot quieter for fellow sleepers to pee in a plastic container.

So between the green, brown, wet, dry, carbon rich and fibrous layers of the heap remember to sprinkle the liquid gold we all produce and make a superb quality compost!

How well do you know people in your meeting, well enough to know how they make their compost?

*Anon*

### **We do what we can... Stories from East Lothian LM**

Thank you for the reminder about sending you any info about our approach to sustainability. I guess that the reason why we haven't

replied is the feeling that we don't do anything out of the ordinary!

Yes, we do try to recycle as much as we possibly can, we try to buy local goods whenever we can, we have turned down the temperature of the central heating boiler, we are a little more careful about the amount of water used for boiling etc. but they are small things.

Awareness is probably our answer. I do not think that either of us are very convinced about the great benefits of wind farms, and feel they can be a blot on the natural "unspoilt" landscape. I am afraid this contribution is not very helpful, but it is honest!"

**Doreen and Raymond Dodd, East Lothian LM**

"I recycle as much as is possible.

Compost in my garden.

I have cut down on gas by turning off my hot water, except when I have guests.

Loft insulation, reflective silver behind radiators, thermal lining to the curtains.

I buy local produce where possible (read labels)

I try not to buy 'trash', by thinking carefully about birthday and Christmas presents *etc.*

There must be lots of other things, but I just try to make sensible decisions."

**Di Burgess, East Lothian LM**

### **Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility**

*ECCR works for economic justice, human rights and environmental sustainability*

#### **Report on work in 2011/2012**

Since my last report, ECCR has given high priority to matters related to the oil and gas industries and to mineral extraction,

where the environmental impact of these activities remains of deep concern. It is not only the catastrophic harm that has already been done to many communities (the Niger Delta, for example) but also current projects which seriously threaten fragile parts of the earth.

ECCR continues to work with local communities, with Shell and the Nigerian Government, on the implementation of agreements on the clean-up of contamination in Ogoniland and more widely. Everything depends on how the current economic and political situation in Nigeria will allow the process, likely to last 30 years, to start making a difference on the ground.

As pressures mount in the world's major economies to extend the 'peak oil' period by a few more decades, the oil and gas companies are intensifying their efforts. They are updating their technologies to exploit fossil fuel sources in deeper and deeper water in the Arctic and in the Canada and Madagascar tar sands. They are also employing 'fracking', a process based on rock-blasting through high-pressure drilling often a mile deep. Criticism of these processes are shrugged off by companies and governments alike. ECCR is publicising evidence from experts on their likely impact on environments, on humans and non-humans. Well aware that ethical considerations are often outweighed by the prospect of large profits, the Council is focusing on offering well-researched information to investors on the risk factors.

A strong emphasis on the above has not exhausted ECCR's energies for engaging with companies on a wide range of other issues that come within its remit from the churches. These include questions of vulnerable workers, human trafficking (and the links it has to businesses), bribery and corruption, tax-tracing, and more, details of which can be had from the ECCR Quarterly Bulletins.

**David Turner**

*Jane Pearn of Kelso Meeting has forwarded this Memorial Minute (Eds):*

### **Agnes Hilda Coats (née Stacey) 1.4.18 – 12.1.12**

Agnes came to Borders Meeting in 1987. Although aged 69, she said that she had really been a Quaker all her life, and she soon became an active member.

Agnes' father was a Congregational Minister: her mother came from a Quaker family, but left the Society when she married. However Agnes' first experience of Quakers was attending meetings with her mother's family when on holiday.

Her extensive book collection, donated to Kelso Meeting library in 2010, reveals a true seeker, with a particular interest in Christianity and in our relationship to God, to our fellows and to our world. She was a published writer too, and her private letters written from the heart and from experience helped many friends. She was kind and wise, cheerful and humorous.

She had needed these qualities early on, when hardship at home had made nurse training impossible and she settled reluctantly for clerical work.

In 1948 she married Wilfred Coats, an engineer from Paisley. They had two children. They were active members first of the Congregational Church and then the Church of Scotland. It wasn't until they moved to Melrose in 1987 that Agnes felt able to branch out on her own and join Friends. Wilfred died in 1994 after 10 difficult years of dementia.

As her sight began to fail, Agnes continued to enjoy radio and recordings of poetry, discussions, the Talking Newspaper, and music. One friend remembers her identifying by touch and scent even tiny individual flowers and herbs. Her undaunted spirit is recalled by another friend who said sympathetically, 'What a blow – losing your sight'. Agnes responded, 'It's not a blow, it's a challenge'.

At her funeral held at Melrose crematorium, family members shared readings she had chosen. One of the poems ended with the line "I thank thee God that I have lived".

## **SCOTLAND AND NATO**

For thirty years, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has not only opposed the siting of nuclear weapons in Scotland but has also held that an independent Scotland should not be part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), since the alliance is based on the threatened first use of such weapons. This policy has not been liked by all – Michael Russell argued during the 2004 leadership election that it should be reversed – but it has been sustained by overwhelming support among the membership as a whole. However at its conference in October the Party will be debating a resolution proposed by Angus Robertson, the leader of the SNP group at Westminster and its defence spokesman, which says in part:

*Security cooperation in our region functions primarily through NATO which is regarded as the keystone defence organization by Denmark, Norway, Iceland and the United Kingdom. The SNP wishes Scotland to fulfill its responsibilities to neighbours and allies. On independence Scotland will inherit its treaty obligations with NATO. An SNP government will maintain NATO membership subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons and NATO continues to respect the right of members to only take part in UN sanctioned operations. In the absence of such an agreement, Scotland will work with NATO as a member of the Partnership for Peace programme like Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland. Scotland will be a full member of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OCSE).*

An amendment in the name of Jamie Hepburn MSP affirms the existing policy

*... that Scotland should not remain a member of NATO, but instead cooperate as part of the Partnership for Peace programme and be a full member*

*of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.*

By the time Area Meeting comes to consider the issue, the outcome of the internal SNP debate will be known – at least, insofar as the issue will be settled by the passing or defeat of the resolution. A cynic might suggest that the party leadership would only have brought the issue forward if confident of winning, and that in particular the First Minister would not have associated himself with the move for a U-turn if the outcome were really in doubt. However an SNP MSP who opposes the resolution has suggested that one reason for raising the issue is that the more people get into the way of thinking about such things as *Scottish concerns* (regardless of whether they are for or against) the more likely they are to see exercising such choices as possible, even natural, and so the more likely they will be to vote Yes in the independence referendum. Clearly another factor in the debate is the relationship of an independent Scotland to the European Union. The notion of automatic accession to NATO seems strange – when Algeria became independent, having previously been an integral part of France and so covered by the Treaty, the relevant clauses were held simply to have “become inapplicable” – but both sides in the SNP are anxious to keep EU membership so assert that treaty obligations (and rights) continue. Some think the insistence on a non-nuclear role is intended to make Scottish membership impossible, while enabling the SNP to claim that it had sought it in good faith, so as to avoid antagonizing pro-NATO voters (70 % of Scots, according to a poll in *Scotland on Sunday*, 22.7.12); others, that it is a sop to activists and would be dropped once a pro-NATO policy were in place. (Not only would the exclusion of American submarines from Holy Loch deprive the US of a major base, but, for the British Trident force, Faslane is the only possible home, according to John Ainslie’s study for CND, *Trident: Nowhere to Go*.)

Whatever the reason for the issue being raised and the terms in which the discussion is taking place, the matter has been revived as a topic for public debate. The No to NATO coalition is a group of organisations (including Trident Ploughshares, Scottish CND, the Green Party and the Scottish Socialist Party) as well as individuals, who oppose the alliance. It has produced a statement, which individuals and groups are encouraged to sign, as follows:

### ***No to NATO Scotland Statement***

*The SNP leadership are proposing to reverse the party’s policy of staying out of NATO, a move completely at odds with the SNP’s long-standing principled opposition to nuclear weapons and aggressive wars.*

*I/we want Scotland to be free of nuclear weapons and stay out of foreign wars.*

*NATO is a nuclear armed alliance with over 5000 nuclear weapons. It was established for mutual defence during the Cold War and should have been disbanded when the Soviet Union collapsed. Instead, it has expanded and become an aggressive alliance force engaged in expeditionary wars. For nearly ten years it has been conducting the war in Afghanistan where tens of thousands of civilians have died and three million people have become refugees. It is also placing a “missile defence” system in Europe which is provoking a new arms race with Russia.*

*I/we want Scotland to stay out of NATO and truly stand for peace.*

At its meeting in Glasgow on 22 September the Northern Friends Peace Board endorsed this statement. The matter was forwarded to the last Area Meeting by Central Edinburgh LM (see AM minute 14(c)) but held over owing to lack of time. It is hoped to discuss the issue at the next Area Meeting

**Alan Frith**

## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Sunday, 16 September 2012 at 2.00 pm at The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh

**Minute 1:** We welcome today two attenders, Pol Yates of South Edinburgh, and Cathy McCurrach of Central Edinburgh

### Minute 2: Apologies

The following Friends are prevented and send their apologies: Mark Bitel; Alastair Cameron; Mary Jane Elton; Caroline Evens; Janet Grimwade; Madeleine Harding; Marilyn Higgins; . Ken Jobling; Annie Miller; Margaret Mortimer; Laurie Naumann; Sadie Paxton; Audrey Sinton; Don Stubbings; Ida Turner.

### Minute 3: Signing of the AM minutes of 30 June:

The minutes of 30 June 2012 have been published in *Sesame*. A copy has been signed by the clerk and entered in the Minute Book

**Minute 4:** Extract 13.07 of *Quaker Faith & Practice* was read during our opening worship. It was written by Roger Wilson in 1949.

### Minute 5: Matters arising:

- a) Quaker Week 2012: None of our constituent local meetings is planning an event during Quaker week 2012.
- b) Further to Minute 1 of the 14 January 2012 (a Concern "A Citizen's Income" brought to us by Annie Miller), our Friend Nigel Dower, who is the Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) link person to ESP (Economics Sustainability and Peace Subcommittee), has told us that he expects ESP to discuss this further at their September 2012 meeting.
- c) Further to Minute 13 of 14 January 2012, the Clerk has received the Certificate of Accomplishment of the Marriage between Chris Booth and Stephanie Lewis which took place on Saturday 23 June 2012. This is attached to these minutes. We wish both of them well.
- d) Further to Minute 6 of 30 June 2012 (a concern brought to us by Tweeddale Meeting), as agreed, we wish to progress this Concern both by individual local Quaker Meetings and by Area Meeting.

We have received a minute from Kelso Meeting regarding this which hopes we can speak with our distinctive spiritual voice to politicians of all parties in Scotland and that we can involve General Meeting. This minute is attached to this Area Meeting's minutes.

Accordingly we appoint **David Hume**, **Laurie Naumann** (s/c), **Phil Lucas**, **Duncan Wallace** and **Daphne Foster** to form a working group and for them to invite **Suzanne Ismail** of Friends House (or another staff member) and to plan the morning of 8 December, including her (or another staff member).

### Minute 6: Salt and Light

Jasmine Perinpanayagam has told us of her experience of "Salt and Light", the World Conference of Friends held in Kenya in April 2012.

There was much joy expressed through singing and dancing, hand shaking, greeting and smiles and prayers.

All sections of the World Family of Friends were represented, about 1,000 Friends in all. Days were planned around worship, both programmed and unprogrammed. Core and thread groups related to the theme of Salt and Light, which enabled sharing of our different Quaker traditions.

Days alternated between planned activities and excursions.

We can share deeply, accepting difference but sharing in unity. One of the differences is views on homosexuality, in which some Quakers do not accept homosexuals as members, a view which British Quakers have also changed over the past few decades.

What are Quakers known for? What is our impact?

We need divine guidance and prayer to carry out our distinctive Quaker work.

Pain, grief and loss affect us all. All these are part of the human condition. We can use these experiences in a positive, helpful way. Friends from Zimbabwe and Rwanda told of their experiences and of their work in healing and reconciliation. Change has taken place.

What does God require of us? The practice of faithfulness, to keep listening, and to receive the fire of the Holy Spirit.

The event was so nourishing and inspirational. Friends came together and shared, valuing both the silence and programmed worship.



We thank Jasmine for her report and agree to reflect further on how to carry forward the Conference. We ask Jasmine to write a report of the Conference for *Sesame*.

#### **Minute 7: Nominations and Appointments**

Nominations Committee has brought forward the following names for consideration, to serve to the end of September 2015 unless otherwise indicated:

- a) Festival Committee : **Susan Robertson** (South Edinburgh)
- b) Registering Officer for Marriages: **Alastair Cameron** (South Edinburgh), reappointment for a third triennium.
- c) Deputy Registering Officer for Marriages: **Marjorie Farquharson** (Central Edinburgh).
- d) Staffing Link: **Madeleine Harding** (Central Edinburgh), to serve to end September 2013.
- e) Overseer (South Edinburgh) **Phil Noble**
- f) University contact, Heriot-Watt: **Marilyn Higgins** (Central Edinburgh) to end September 2013.

These names being acceptable, we appoint them accordingly as above.

g) We have also received two requests for release:

- (i) Rachel Howell as Overseer, with immediate effect. We agree to this request, thank Rachel for her service and wish her well in her new job.
- (ii) Margaret Mortimer as Elder, with immediate effect. We agree to this request and thank Margaret for her service.

#### **Minute 8: Edinburgh Churches Together**

Don Stubbings is the Area Meeting representative on Edinburgh Churches Together, which has reached a crossroads presenting opportunities and challenges. A small group met to support and discuss with Don. Arising from this, we are proposing that Area meeting no longer appoints a representative to ECT (whatever form it takes in future) but that both Central and South Edinburgh LMs appoint one representative each.

We agree to this proposal and ask the Clerk to inform Don and both Meetings.

#### **Minute 9: Membership Matters**

a) Transfer out: Further to Minute 13 of 31 March 2012, we have received from Manchester & Warrington AM the Certificate of Transfer of Membership to that Meeting for **Emma** and **Gregory Norminton**.

b) Transfer out: We have received a request from **Niki Todd** to transfer her membership to Mid Thames AM, as she is now living in Didcot and worshipping at Wallingford Meeting. We agree to this request and ask Sue Sierra to effect it.

c) Transfer In: We have received a request from **Jackie Nolting**, now of 27 Stoneyhill Place, Musselburgh, EH21 6TN, to transfer her membership from Sussex AM to ourselves. We agree to this request and ask Sue Sierra to effect it. We warmly welcome Jackie, who is present today, to SE Scotland Area Meeting.

d) Resignation: We have received a letter from **W David Marshall-Brough** of South Edinburgh LM resigning his membership of the Religious Society of Friends. We accept this, and, following practice, ask Phil Lucas to write to him to suggest visiting with him, if this would be acceptable to him, solely to see if we can learn from his decision.

e) Memorial Minute: Further to Minute 7 (d) of 26 February 2012, we have received a Memorial Minute for our Friend **Agnes Coats** testifying to the Grace of God as shown in her life. This is attached to these minutes. We ask that it be published in *Sesame* and that a copy be placed in the Memorial Minute file in the library at 7 Victoria, Terrace.

f) Further to Minute 7(d) of 30 June 2012, we have received a written report from Madeleine Harding and Bill Paxton of their visit with **Ian Beamish**. We warmly welcome Ian into membership of the Religious Society of Friends and ask Maureen Anderson to do so on our behalf and to inform Polmont Meeting. The visitors' report is attached to these minutes.

#### **Minute 10: A Concern**

Duncan Wallace has outlined to us his concern regarding pensions. He has shared his personal journey and exploration over this issue, arising from his desire to have all of his life, including money, demonstrating the same integrated and ethical spiritual basis. Pensions can be a

significant part of our financial resources. The combined pension provision, invested in the stock market, is a huge part of our economy. However, almost all of us devolve the management of our pension “pot” to professionals as it is difficult to take personal responsibility for this.

Duncan outlined how he has tried to be proactive and invest in line with Quaker values. This has been done through Self Invested Personal Pensions.

Friends spoke of their own pensions but also that many of us combine with others in a pension scheme but have very little control over these combined pension investments.

Some pension schemes try to invest more ethically than others e.g. not investing in the arms trade or positive investing. The bottom line can be maximising the pension paid to members.

We were reminded that Area meeting as an employer offers employees the opportunity to be members of a pension scheme: a Stakeholders scheme, through Friends Provident which offers a pension scheme invested in ethical shares on the stock market.

We thank Duncan for sharing his journey and knowledge with us. We wish to carry forward our reflection and consider that, after 8 December, we could continue this and related themes e.g. Citizen’s Income on 12 January 2013, an all day Area Meeting. We ask Duncan to join the planning group, established by minute 5 (d) above.

#### **Minute 11: General Meeting for Scotland**

General Meeting was held on the 8 September 2012 in Nairn. A written report will be in Scottish Friends Newsletter. The morning was the usual mix of business; in the afternoon, Sandra Berry, from Woodbrooke, spoke of its work. The new Garden Lounge is lovely.

#### **12. Dates and Venues for SE Scotland Area Meeting, April 2013 to March 2014**

Already agreed:

Saturday 12 January	11 am – 4 pm	Central Edinburgh
Sunday 24 February	2 pm – 5.30 pm	South Edinburgh

We agree to the following further dates and venues for 2013-14

Saturday 13 April	11.30 am – 4 pm	East Lothian
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Saturday 18 May	2 pm to 5 pm	Central Fife
Saturday 29 June	11.30 am to 4 pm	Kelso
Sunday 15 September	2 pm – 5.30 pm	South Edinburgh
Saturday 26 October	11 am – 4 pm	Central Edinburgh
Saturday 14 December	2 pm – 5.30 pm	Central Edinburgh

#### **2014**

Saturday 11 January	11 am – 4 pm	Central Edinburgh
Sunday 23 February	2 pm – 5.30 pm	South Edinburgh

#### **Minute 13: Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)**

David Turner has reminded us of the work of ECCR for economic justice, human rights and environmental sustainability. Friends may remember that we agreed to subscribe to its valuable work last year. This year the work has focussed on matters related to the oil and gas industries, particularly where such work gives rise to acute environmental concerns.

This year, we, as an Area Meeting, and Quakers in Britain are taking forward our deepening concerns around economic justice and environmental sustainability and the integrity of God’s creation.

We agree to subscribe again to ECCR and ask our Treasurer to action this. We thank David for his report and ask that it be published in *Sesame*.

#### **14. AOCB**

**a) Assistant Warden at 7 Victoria Terrace:** Friends may have seen the advertisement in *The Friend* for the post of Assistant Warden at 7, Victoria Terrace as Tom Nisbet wishes to retire from this post. We are grateful for Tom’s work and service and wish him well in his retirement.

#### **b) Scottish Domestic Bureau for Refugees 1939-1946**

Andrew Farrar has told us the history of two minute books which he holds. These relate to the Scottish Domestic Bureau for Refugees, which was founded in August 1939 by several members of Stafford Street Meeting together with members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community. The Scottish Domestic Bureau was recognised by the National Council for Refugees as the “official” Scottish organisation for placing refugees in domestic service. The Bureau ran a hostel in Colinton Raod where young women refugees could live before

placement in domestic service. The minute books cover the life of the Bureau until it was laid down in November 1946.

Andrew brings this to us at this time as he is unsure as to where the ownership of these documents should reside. He suspects that the formation of the Domestic Bureau may be mentioned in Edinburgh Monthly Meeting minutes of the time but these minutes are not available for perusal at present. He has spoken with Paul Burton, the archivist for General Meeting for Scotland, who agrees with him that they could properly be deposited along with other Quaker documents in the National Archives of Scotland. We suggest that they should be deposited along with the next batch of Monthly/Area Meeting archives.

Meantime we record that he holds them and agree that they may be viewed for academic research.

**c) No to NATO Coalition:** We have received a minute (2012/ 9/6) from Central Edinburgh Meeting. However, time constraints mean that this will be deferred to Area Meeting of 20 October 2012, as it raises important issues and requires time. We ask that background information be published in *Sesame* to aid our reflection on 20 October. South Edinburgh Meeting, as part of their regular meetings with their MSP, have already raised this with him.

#### **Closing minute**

32 Friends from six local Meetings attended all or part of this Meeting for Worship for Business. Our next Area meeting will be on Saturday 20 October at 2 p.m. at 7 Victoria Terrace.

**Kate Arnot**

Clerk, South East Scotland Area Meeting

## **Conference of the Nontheist Friends Network at Woodbrooke, March 9-11 2012:**

### **MINUTE AND EPISTLE**

Posted by [Nontheist Friends](#) on March 25, 2012 in [Events](#), [Past Events](#)

One year after its formation, 95 members and supporters of the Nontheist Friends Network from all over Britain met as Friends together at Woodbrooke for the Network's inaugural conference and first annual general meeting.

In plenary sessions, break-out groups, workshops and worship we reflected on what it means to live with integrity as committed nontheists in the Religious Society of Friends, or as Friends exploring nontheist ways of being Quaker.

From the first of our three inspirational keynote speakers, Philip Gross, we learned to understand our nontheism not as a diminished but an enlarged and more abundant expression of our Quakerism – “not less, but more”. Don Cupitt (“a friend of Friends”) affirmed the possibility of new, adventurous religious thought and practice after the fading of the old metaphysics, offering fresh, contemporary interpretations of the Biblical metaphors of Light, Life, and the Fountain. “Radical Christian Humanism is not about glorifying humanity but identifying with the poor, weak and oppressed.” James Riemermann, from the USA, urged theist and nontheist Friends alike to “reveal our true selves”, not merely tolerating each other but celebrating our diversity. “If we all believed the same, what could we possibly say to one another?”

Throughout much of the conference we found ourselves wrestling with the paradox of “nontheism” as a *negative* term signifying a *positive* commitment to wholly human values. We heard that theism and nontheism need not be adversarial viewpoints but may be seen as different ways of seeking, finding and expressing

meaning and purpose in our lives. We affirmed the importance of listening to each other with grace and due sensitivity.

In five workshops we explored personal journeys, spirituality and sustainability, Buddhist nontheism, Humanism, and peace activism. We let our hair down in a “Quaking with Laughter” session (with “ministry” from Friends Gerard Hoffnung and Sheila Hancock) and concluded with a powerfully gathered meeting for worship.

We are confident that nontheist Friends have a place within the broad spectrum of our creedless Society, knowing that we have much to learn from each other, and trusting that we have something to contribute.

*Signed on behalf of the Conference by the NFN steering group:*

- Frank Bonner
- David Boulton
- Maureen Tinsley
- Miriam Yagud
- Michael Yates

*For more information contact David Boulton:*

[dboultondent@btinternet.com](mailto:dboultondent@btinternet.com)

<<http://www.nontheistfriends.org/>>

#### FUTURE AREA MEETINGS

**Saturday 8 December**, at 7 Victoria Terrace: 11 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

**Saturday 12 January** at 7 Victoria Terrace 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

**Contributions to SESAME are always welcome. Please send your ideas and proposals to the Editors**

### Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland

#### Every Sunday

Central Edinburgh:	7 Victoria Terrace	9.30am& 11.00am
South Edinburgh:	Open Door, 420 Morningside Road,	10.30am
Polmont:	Greenpark Community Centre	10.45am
Kelso:	Quaker Meeting House, Kelso	10.30am

#### Every Wednesday

Mid Week Meeting:	7 Victoria Terrace	12.30pm- 1pm
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#### First Sunday in the Month

Penicuik & Peebles:	Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik	11.00am
	<i>Children welcome, bring and share lunch.</i>	
Portobello:	Old Parish Church Hall, Bellfield Street	7.30pm

#### First Tuesday in the Month

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms	1pm- 1.30pm
(opposite the Weir Buildings) at Kings Buildings: <i>contact Sarah Martin 07818050853 or <a href="mailto:sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk">sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk</a> for more details</i>	

#### Second Sunday in the Month

Tweeddale:	Tweedbridge Court, Margaret Blackwood House, Dukehaugh, Peebles <i>All welcome but please phone to confirm. 01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389.</i>	10.30am
Central Fife:	Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy	10.30am
	(in Kirk Wynd opposite the Old Kirk)	
East Lothian:	East Linton Community Hall	11.00am

#### Third Tuesday in the Month

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms	1pm- 1.30pm
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#### Fourth Sunday in the Month

Tweeddale:	Tweedbridge Court, Margaret Blackwood House,	
	<i>Details as Second Sunday above</i>	10.30am
Central Fife:	Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy <i>as above</i>	10.30am
Portobello:	CHANGES Community Health Project	
	108 Market St, Musselburgh, East Lothian EH21 6QA	10.30am
Barony St Meeting	33 Barony Street, Edinburgh	7.00 pm

#### Last Sunday in the Month

East Lothian:	East Linton Community Hall	11.00am
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#### Distribution of Sesame & Scottish Friends Newsletter

The current practice is to distribute one copy of Sesame and the Scottish Friends Newsletter to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of Sesame are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer, Caroline Evens. An email version of Sesame is more ecological and is free! A large print version is available on request.

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