

A LITTLE HISTORY OF RELIGION - Richard Holloway talks about his latest book at the Wigtown Book Festival.

Since he first introduced an interview with Joanna Lumley with a remark about 'actresses and bishops', I have been a fan of Richard Holloway's writing and broadcasting. Always eminently readable, with a pace that carries the reader along, I have followed his spiritual journey with interest and identification. So I was delighted to have the opportunity to hear him again at this year's Wigtown Book Festival.

'A Little History of Religion' takes us from humans' first wonderings about life's big questions of where did we and the universe come from, and where do we go after death, through to present day secular humanism, via most, if not all, of the 'answers' that different faiths and different thinkers have come up with.

Quakers merit a chapter in the book, and were mentioned in his talk. He rates us highly: You'll like this.... "The Society of Friends may be one of the smallest denominations in the world but its influence is enormous. It remains Christianity's conscience." He is most impressed by William Penn and Friends' opposition to slavery.

In his talk, Richard seemed to find something to admire and/or respect, or at the least understand, in almost all of the faith groups he encountered, and so much common ground between them all. You'll know, I expect, that after a lifetime as a cleric in the Anglican (Episcopalian) church, he found he could no longer believe in God as presented there. He described himself to his audience as agnostic rather than atheist, and appears relaxed and comfortable with this position.

In Scotland today there are as many weddings conducted by humanist ministers as by Christian ones. Holloway wonders whether this 'secular religion' will last or fade. Apparently a common criticism is to compare it with decaff coffee or non-alcoholic beer. What's the point?

I look forward now to reading the book.

Jan Lethbridge

Dumfries Quakers

Newsletter for October and November 2016

Meetings for Worship in October

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| Sunday 9th | 11.00 am | at 17 Georgetown Drive, Dumfries, the home of Claire MacLeod. Our discussion will be about economics. (see p 6) |
| Sunday 16th | 10.30am | at Cumberland St Day Centre, Dumfries. |
| Sunday 23rd | 9.45am | Conversation, before Worship at 10.30. |
| Sunday 30th | FIFTH SUNDAY | so no Meeting in Dumfries. We are always welcome at Castle Douglas. |

Meetings for Worship in November

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| Sunday 6th | 10.30am | at Cumberland St Day Centre, Dumfries |
| Sunday 13th | | We are planning to join with other Friends from Castle Douglas and Wigtown for Worship at the gates of the military facility at Dundrennan. |
| Sunday 20th | 10.30am | at Cumberland St Day Centre, Dumfries |
| Sunday 27th | 10.30am | at Cumberland St Day Centre, Dumfries, |

Followed by Local Business Meeting

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Diary Dates:

Saturday October 8th Area Meeting in Ayr

November 13th to 20th: **Scottish Interfaith Week** (a week earlier this year)
Local event Wednesday 16th, 6—8 pm at
The Usual Place, Lovers Walk/Edinburgh Road , Dumfries

Quakers in Scotland - the website

This newsletter can now be found on the website for Quakers in Scotland: www.quakerscotland.org

From the Home page, go to 'Find a Meeting', which will show you a map of the area, click on Dumfries.

There is some basic information about times of Meetings etc, and copies of the last two newsletters, plus this one when it is finished! There is the opportunity to add to our 'page' if and when we wish, with details of forthcoming events, news, really anything we wish to share. Consultation is currently taking place about the website, so things may change in the future.

NB The next newsletter will be issued after the business meeting on November 27th, and will cover December and January. Material is always welcome.

PRISON—WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Our second Sunday discussion in September focussed on the situation in Scottish prisons, introduced and led by Bill Agnew. Bill provided some very useful statistical information for us: Scotland has 15 prisons, (including two privately run for profit), housing over 8000 prisoners of whom 95% are male and 98% white. Almost three quarters are under age 36, and in all health categories studied prisoners' health was worse than that of the general population. (July 2015 figs) . Perhaps the saddest aspect of these figures is that they are the highest since records began, and one of the highest rates of imprisonment in western Europe.

In the recent past we, as a Meeting, have visited our local prison in Dumfries, and had hoped to become involved in a visiting scheme proposed by the then governor. Unfortunately, she has now moved on, and nothing came of our good intentions.

We talked a lot around the topic, without reaching any conclusions or plan of action. All the usual reasons apply: we are few in number, ageing rapidly, have other priorities and commitments. I think too that we are mostly onlookers to the topic, we lack a genuine connection. As far as I am aware, while we may have been victims of crime, none of us has a close family member in prison. Nor do we live close to those for whom crime is a way of life with prison an occupational hazard. So we may be naïve, and could come across as patronising in any good we try to do. The discussion continues





Farewell to Jane

Our friend Jane Abbatt recently left us to move down south in order to be nearer to family and friends. The Meeting gathered for a farewell lunch at the end of August.

We shall, of course, miss having Jane among us. She had served as an Elder, and perhaps most of all we shall miss her encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Quaker, and indeed religious history in general. We wish her happiness and contentment in her new surroundings.

SECOND SUNDAY DISCUSSION IN OCTOBER - ECONOMICS

Those of you receiving this newsletter by email will also find another attachment, relevant to our discussion on October 9th. It is an article from the Friend, entitled 'Poverty is theft'. This is a description of a new strategy to solve poverty, formulated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and would be useful 'homework' for those going to the discussion. Paper copies will be available there.

Religious Society of Friends – Dumfries Meeting **Minutes of Local Meeting 2nd October 2016**

The reading was from Quaker Faith & Practice 20.26

Second Sunday Discussions

- 9th October – we will have an open discussion on economics at Claire's home
- 13th November – we hope to support Castle Douglas at their Meeting at Dundrennan
- 11th December – we will have a Christmas celebration with poems, readings etc at the Lethbridge's home

December 25th & January 1st are both Sundays this year. We have decided not to have Meetings on either day as everyone will be away or have visitors.

Collections –In October & November Linda Russell will collect for the Dumfries Salvation Army Open Door activities
In December & January Jan Lethbridge has offered to make another Big Card for us to collect for the charity Facing Africa. She hopes to invite Alison Boyes from the charity for coffee at her house one weekday so that we can join her & learn more about this charity.

John Lethbridge has checked that our Meeting is advertised in the local T.I.C. Our newsletter is on the Scottish Quaker website.

The new Quaker book of addresses will be published in 2017. Please could everyone check that their details are correct & let Claire or Jenny know if they want the G.M. & A.M. newsletter & if so, by e-mail. If you have no e-mail, Jan has offered to print out the A.M. copy & we will cover the cost.

Elders & Overseers. Since Doreen has gone to Newcastle & Jane to Bristol, Claire & Jenny are the only Elder & Overseer. In view of our smaller numbers, we feel that for the time being we will continue as we are, but trust that everyone in the Meeting will care for each other

A.M. is in Ayr on Saturday 8th October. John & Jan Lethbridge are hoping to attend & we thank them for agreeing to be our representatives.

Our next L.M. will be on Sunday 27th November before the A.M. telephone conference on Monday 5th December

If you would like more details about any of this correspondence, please contact Claire

Information about a Scottish Friends family weekend 14-16 October in Pitlochry
Quaker Activist Gathering 3rd Dec in York
New Quaker posters
Copy of "The Testimony" newspaper printed 24th August 1916
'Among Friends' newsletter
Invitation to "Creating a Just Scotland" in Edinburgh Sat 29th October
"So you've read Quaker Faith & Practice – What Next" weekend at Woodbrooke in Nov.
Minutes of G.M. held in Aberdeen on 10.09.16
"Experiment With Light" course at Woodbrooke 11th – 13th November
Quaker Service Annual Report April 2015 – March 2016
'Turning the Tide' training for social action
'Journeys of Witness' Spring conference, Swanick 24-26 March 2017
'Being Friends Together' on line
'Ideas for Remembrance' 13th Nov
Quaker Youth Work Conference 5th Nov Friends House

N.B. The next local business meeting will be on Sun 27th November

CHARITY COLLECTION IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

The Salvation Army

Linda Russell will be arranging a collection for the local branch of the Salvation Army, who operate from their building on the Whitesands in Dumfries.

The Army, and their work, need no introduction. They are renowned for their practical actions, whereby they are ...
..."committed to transforming the lives of the people in the community". They tailor their work to reflect the needs of the local community. In Dumfries they run a drop-in centre, providing food, shelter, advice and company for those in need. And of course there is a charity shop in the High Street. Lockerbie branch runs similar Services. Please give them your support.

Arrangements for when (not if) we die

As you may remember, I have led at least two discussions in the past few years on making preparations for when we die.

I have now had an e-mail from a Quaker Life representative of the End of Life Issues Working Group asking all L.M.s how they are supporting Friends with this matter & I realise that, apart from mine & one other, no one has given me any idea what their End of Life wishes are.

For the past 35 years I have had a Will, a Living Will, an organ donation card & a Quaker funeral plan. I now also have both the Welfare & the Financial Power of Attorney ready to be put in place if / when it is needed.

I cannot emphasise this strongly enough – make your plans NOW while you can do so. When a relative dies, knowing what sort of service they would like, cremation or burial, where all their essential documents such as their Will are kept, who their solicitor is makes the arrangements for a funeral so much easier.

Making a Power of Attorney as an emergency is really quite expensive – if it has been put in place previously, there is little problem to get it registered.

I have asked for an up-to-date Quaker form that can be filled in for your outline funeral plan, & I, as an Elder can keep just this one piece of paper in my file until it might be needed. I also have other information which may be of interest to you – just ask.

One other thing – it is recommended that you add a codicil to your Will occasionally to keep it up to date & likewise, the other forms can be changed as your wishes change.

Claire MacLeod

