

West Scotland

Quaker News

January 2017

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Clerk's Letter

Some of us have been taking part in study groups on 'Reading Quaker faith & practice'. Helen Rowlands of Britain Yearly Meeting's Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group sends us the following invitation:

"The Group will be holding its January meeting in Edinburgh. Members of the group want to offer the opportunity to any interested Scottish Friends to meet with some of us informally before we begin our weekend committee meeting. Some of the Group will be at the Central Edinburgh Meeting House between 3.00 and 5.00pm on Friday January 29th, and would enjoy seeing as many people as are able to join us for some or all of that time.

"Friends may want to tell us about how you are getting on with the Reading Quaker faith & practice programme, talk about possible future revision of the book, hear from us about the group's work and where we think it might be going, or simply be curious about who we are!"

The 'Red Book' is the 'spiritual autobiography' of The Society in Britain and Yearly Meeting, our ultimate decision maker, is considering whether it should be revised and updated so the experience in it reflects what we've collectively lived through since it was last revised in 1994. Part of that consideration is the 'Reading' exercise, whereby it is suggested we look at a chapter a month in groups or individually.

Some are concerned that in revising the book we may not be able to face up to how we define or think of 'God' any more – or use that name/term in how we express our Quaker beliefs. Listening to others in my study group, I'm struck yet again about how close we all are in our experience if we look beyond the words used to what lies beneath them. It occurs to me that as Quakers we don't worry about the outward, including words, but concentrate on the inward experience of what actually works: what works in worship, decision making and witness. What that is that works may not be that important in the end. Thinking about how we describe it in writing and speaking might be an opportunity for us to lead for others of faith or none struggling with expressing 'belief' in the modern world. If you've insights on this come to Edinburgh on the 29th or let me know before then.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

Report on Telephone Conference Area Meeting

7th Dec 2015

Ian Macdonald (Wigtown LM)

The evening of Monday 7th December was dark and with wild weather at the tail end of storm 'Desmond' when we gathered by telephone for our Area Meeting. Attendance was fair with some L.M.s prevented from joining us.

Our Clerk Michael Hutchison and Assistant Margaret Boland bade us a warm welcome albeit from different locations which was quite challenging for both of them.

I was in a jovial mood that day which resulted in me volunteering to write this report for WSQN when Michael sought a reporter, although he had admitted to having a backup Friend in waiting which caused some humour.

There was much thought and discussion on climate change with the ongoing international conference in Paris which was quite apt during our stormy evening, our thoughts being with Friends in the Borders and the North of England whose homes and businesses have been hard hit by flooding?

In business, I think there was much awareness of the financial situation of our Area Meeting and the need for a more cautious approach to spending in the next year or so. Our worthy Treasurer Kate, who does a marvellous job in looking after our pounds suggested wisely that we might try and offer more giving if that were possible. I do feel however that we must not put *ANY pressure*, however slight, on members and attenders to give more. It must be remembered that many Friends may have tight financial budgets at home and often give practical *SERVICE* rather than money to keep our Meetings thriving.

I am glad to see that the Clusters of Local Meetings are functioning well and that Nominations Committee seems to be benefiting from the new structure with positive results of Friends coming forward to fill posts including placements at Junior Yearly Meeting next year.

Our session by telephone was productive, informative and an evening well spent among Friends, it certainly brightened up the winter chill.

Best humour of the evening was when a Friend spotted that 'Fiends should give more for the work of Area Meeting' in the draft minutes!!! Bram Stoker would have loved that!

Who says Friends are dull and boring!

Northern Friends Peace Board – Update

Douglas Shaw, Lanark Meeting

Trident

In November NFPB met in Lancaster when the issue of Trident submarine construction at Barrow in Furness was considered. In particular the Board is exploring promoting alternatives to the production of Trident submarines, linking these to the effects of “Austerity” politics, and the issue of arms conversion. There are obvious difficulties campaigning against Trident where it means secure jobs for the local population.

Brian Larkin from the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre talked about the Scrap Trident Campaign, the planned Conscientious Objectors memorial in Edinburgh, and other peace related activities of the Centre.

The Board will be working with QPSW in their campaign against Militarisation, and against Trident renewal, the vote on which will probably happen later this year at Westminster.

Concerns

The WW1 Centenary, challenging Militarism, Sustainable Security and Peace building are the Concerns of NFPB, and information on resources, activities, and events are available from their website. www.nfpb.org.uk

Posters and leaflets have been produced for the WW1 Centenary, while the Board will be running workshops in Scotland (with QPSW) on campaigning against militarisation; the final report of the “Building peace in Diverse Britain” was given in 2015, and Statements of Concern and various briefings have been produced on the issue of Sustainable Security.

News

In October the Executive Committee met at Swarthmoor Hall to reflect and review the work of the Board and their particular role as Trustees. Also all Board meetings provide a time for members to share news and information about peace related activities and concerns, and friends from the north of England are always interested in Scottish activities and news, especially about Trident.

The next meeting is at Nottingham on 5th March.

There is a memorial on Glasgow Green to those who campaigned against World War One. The black granite stone is situated directly behind the People’s Palace near to the International Workers’ Memorial. The inscription reads “In memory of those who opposed WW1 in order to challenge the purpose of the war and the waste of lives. They also campaigned for social and economic justice and against the exploitation of those who lived in the city during the war.”

Castle or Community? Quakers' role in building a new Europe

Gisela Creed. Glasgow Meeting

This was the theme of the Quaker Committee for European Affairs (QCEA) and Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) conference in Brussels at the start of December 2015.

110 Representatives from 23 different countries came together for the weekend to consider the role of Quakers in building a new Europe. We gathered in the shadow of the “lockdown” of Brussels, only a week after the Paris atrocities and with the French and British militaristic responses against Daesh/ISIS in Syria fresh in our minds. Especially for mainland Friends the issues of the huge influx of refugees and how they are viewed in Europe loomed large.

On Saturday Rachel Bayani, Doris Peschke and Arne Springorum spoke about the Europe they'd like to see and the steps to get there. Rachel, Baha'i representative to the EU, touched on the need to create a more productive discourse on migration by complementing legal and technical approaches with a focus on our shared humanity. Doris, secretary of the Churches commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), used an example of refugees travelling to Europe to talk about the Europe she would like to see. Lastly, Arne, a German Friend living in Prague, argued that while we must acknowledge that borders are real, we can and should nevertheless choose to focus on our shared values as creative and imaginative human beings.

Following these overviews, participants were given the chance to participate in several workshop sessions, which covered a number of themes including Asylum & Refugees, EU militarism, Economic Justice and the UK/EU Relationship (in light of the upcoming referendum on UK membership).

I learned a lot in the session concerned with the refugee situation in Europe which was facilitated by representatives from the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, and inevitably came away with more questions than answers. Do we “criminalise” refugees by insisting on “papers”? Is Asylum policy guided by fear of the “other”? Due to huge unwieldy bureaucracy slowing down processes, are we driving refugees into the hands of smugglers? We need to raise these questions in our meetings, and with our governments. We can also encourage QCEA to take up particular issues with appropriate EU representatives and perhaps with the support of QCEA we can find a **European Quake Voice**. On a more personal level we can all listen to the individual stories, someone even proposed that we could solve the whole crisis if each family in Europe just invited one migrant into their home..... what an amazing thought!

/Continued on p. 9.

ERADICATING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Hilary Burrage, Ashgate ISBN 978-1-47241994-1

Book Review by Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

PEGGY Bartlett of South Edinburgh Meeting has donated to Friends in West Scotland a book on eradicating female genital mutilation. She says this is 'on behalf of my daughter, in the hope that it may help anyone concerned to hasten the end of this cruel custom'.

Hilary Burrage's monograph follows the well-known Efua Dorkenoo's *Cutting the Rose* (1994). Outraged at ineffective child protection, she provides a comprehensive, scholarly yet accessible guide. Tobe Levin von Gleichen of Harvard and Oxford Universities says it is among the best ever to deal with FGM - to professionals and all people of conscience.

To give you background, in case you'd like to borrow the book from Glasgow Meeting's library where it is kept, the cover says:

“This ground-breaking handbook details the present situation with regard to female genital mutilation (FGM) in Britain, referring also to other Western nations where FGM occurs. It scrutinises current pathways to eradicating this dangerous, sometimes lethal, form of child abuse and gender-related violence.

“The cultural and belief systems giving rise to FGM are complex. Further, FGM is an intensely intimate matter often imposed on young and vulnerable children. Approaches to its eradication therefore demand considerable human insight and a competent grasp of inter-/cross agency working.

“It is also vital that everyone concerned - whether in caring and parental, safeguarding or other roles - understands fully that, regardless of custom or belief, FGM is a serious crime. The vulnerabilities and need for protection of victims and potential victims are paramount, but these pressing priorities do not lessen the requirement that all aspects of FGM be dealt with straightforwardly in accordance with the law.

“This book makes the case urgently for developing a shared, coherent model - a multi-disciplinary paradigm articulated at the highest level – as the basis to achieve the eradication of FGM. The text will be required reading for health, legal, educational and social services professionals, as well as researchers, policy-makers, school governors, journalists and other concerned citizens.”

Revision of Quaker Faith & Practice

Verene Nicholas and Margaret Roy

Has another generation past and is it time again to revise the *Red Book*? Not all Quakers agree but the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group has been set up and a pamphlet circulated through *The Friend* (for further copies see below). A monthly programme of reading different chapters will continue through until April 2017. Glasgow Meeting is participating in this. Michael Hutchison presented an introduction on the history of the many Books of Discipline highlighting changes over the years and linking these to changes in the Society generally. Then several groups were set up to meet monthly. So far covered are chapters 21, 23 and 3, personal journey, social responsibility and general counsel on church affairs. In January the subject is Chapter 2: Approaches to God – worship and prayer.

It has been a stimulating and integrative experience. Here are some thoughts of one group on Chapter 3: General Counsel on church affairs.

How do we see the Clerk? What is his/her role in Meeting for Worship? Talking of the balance between leadership and service, we went on to discuss the Quaker business method including the search for the overall sense of the Meeting and the skill of integrating individual concerns. So supportive and enriching as a method, why is it not more widely adopted? Structure is not enough. It also needs preparation and perhaps a culture of how to relate in a worshipful way. So a Clerk is not a Chair.

What is the difference between a Clerk and an Elder? And so we got on to what it means to discern the will of God. What is the heart of the matter, the core of each person's humanity, the inner light? So what about non-theists? We went on a little on this and got to Fox: *What canst thou say? Your truth is within, we speak no doctrine.* As Quakers we recognize we are all together and do not push our own ideas. Unity is in the process, the underpinning spiritual journey. When we all play a role in deepening this sense of encounter with what is of God in everyone we all take on the role of Clerk/Elder. The truth we carry matters which is why it is important for it to be heard. That is the God within each of us, that is where the experience is embodied. The experience is immediate. But then, the first person to rise and speak in a Meeting colours all that follows. This chapters boils down our experience over more than a hundred years.

We really wanted to look at Chapter 2 before Chapter 3 as all the rest seemed to come out of our inner experience and relationship with each other.

The following notes were taken when exploring the chapter on social responsibility:

Certain passages can challenge what we do out there in the world – e.g. in certain roles we play in society, it may be important to be challenged on the very notion of punishment.

This led us to explore the link between faith/worship and social witness - why is this juncture not better articulated in QF&P? Why do so many Friends struggle to feel supported by their meeting in their social witness?

We found a lack of voices representing other groups re background, class, ethnicity etc. Why are Quakers in majority white and relatively well-off? What is the cost of this on our faith and social witness? How do we handle the issue of privilege within ourselves? How is power and structure blindness impact our social witness?

Experience of people who have really struggled in their childhood and life (e.g. abuse, poverty, unemployment) is not reflected in QF&P in its current version – Someone said, “reading QF&P, one may be led to think that all difficult things find resolution eventually”. My experience is that some issues never get resolved. How does one get to a place of acceptance through grieving and living with loss?

Above is not a full transcript, and maybe even not an accurate report but some comments and wording that was used in our exploration.

Ed: Thoughts from other groups are welcome on this important issue.

*Further copies of the programme can be had from Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ or telephone 07410 441310

Friends are invited to meet informally with some members of the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group, who will be in Edinburgh for a weekend committee meeting. Tell us about your experience reading QF&P and talk about what the Book of Discipline means to you.

Friday January 29th 3-5pm at Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace,
Edinburgh

Snowdrops

Slate skies and in the window
around Candlemas, stone earth
softens. Light filters to the ground,
in the weeks before the high leaf
canopy brings shade.

By the stand of birch, green sheath
pierces the surface with mantis-scape,
single stem, bent with its hanging milk
flower.

Tepals like the wing-case of a bleached
beetle spread in preparation for flight.

And further off, on a knoll beyond the
trees,
squadrons of snowdrops tensing for take
off.



Castle or Community Cont. From p. 5

Our keynote speaker was Molly Scott Cato, one of two Quaker Members of the European Parliament. She too addressed the issue of building the Europe we'd like to see, touching on many issues from the refugee crisis, to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the growth of corporate power. She spoke movingly of the solidarity between French and German parliamentarians in the wake of the Paris murders, standing together, a powerful reminder of Europe's clearest success – preventing war between its members since the end of the Second World War – and of Europe's failure to build peace beyond its borders. In spite of its shortcomings the EU helps to build global trust and integration related to peace, tax justice, migration and climate change.

Sunday morning turned us to action. In a dozen small groups we discussed many of the vital issues, and were challenged to bring back at least one concrete action to the plenary session. For example the group focussed on the UK/EU referendum discussed how to inform local meetings about the debates and discussed the draft of a 'Quakers for Europe' manifesto. (You will hear more about this very soon.)

A more detailed account of all the action points is still being collated, and if possible I would like to share this with you in the next edition. It seems to me there is lots of work to do before the Scottish parliamentary election and the UK/EU referendum. Thank you for sending me to this conference as your representative.

A BIRTHRIGHT FRIEND – Robert Williamson

Interviewed by the Editor.

Born in 1938 Bob entered into membership of Glasgow Meeting which was then situated in Blytheswood Square. His parents were married in the Meeting in 1937. However, he did not stay long that first time. The family moved away to Eastbourne when he was only six weeks old.

So what is a birthright Friend and what rights did it bestow? It was the practice of bringing children into membership, from birth, to be confirmed formally when the child became of age. Making such a decision for a child gave rise to controversy, such that the practice was ended in 1967. Bob says he has never regretted being a member. Indeed he is very proud to be the longest serving member in Glasgow Meeting.

The family moved to Kendal after the war when Bob went off to board at Brookfield Quaker School where he earned the nickname Ginger Bob. Classmates still meet yearly. One of the great benefits of Quaker School he says were the friendships. Indeed he has many memories and friends of Kendal and was so emotional at all the Friends who attended his mother's memorial service there. After school, he became apprenticed as a Naval Architect at Vickers in Barrow in Furness where during World War Two he became a conscientious objector. But conceded to his appointment as safety officer with the nuclear submarines would benefit Vickers' workers. He enjoyed this and thought he was doing a service for the workers. Later he would return to Scotland to Fort William to set up a centre to test underwater equipment then a diving school when they bought the pier at Fort William. His love of the sea means the summer weekends find him out in his boat rather than coming to Meeting! Through the winter you will find him a regular attender at both Wednesday and Sunday Meetings.

Bob is in creativity as an *innovateur exceptionnel* holding many patents. There is a strong feeling that he has supported others too. He is on the Committee of the British Standards Institution technical section and BSI Chairman of new Standard 'Process for the evaluation, securement of Intellectual Property Rights and Commercial Advancement of Inventors', and Innovation Advisor with the Innovators Counselling and Advisory Service for Scotland, even Innovation Advisor for Scotland. With the Scottish Development Agency, he was contracted as Director of Rosemount Development Trust. The accolades are lengthy and the above only tip the iceberg. However, Friends will be interested that Bob was a

Consultant in the Isle of Eigg Buy-out and runs a re-cycling. company out of East Kilbride.

When I saw the Quaker tapestry, I wondered where that great Quaker spirit of industrial innovation went. Well, Bob is an example. We come to Meeting all quiet as simple Quakers yet, marked by our faith, what impact do we have in the society-out-there in our work, in our committees and offices – we do seem to hold more of the latter than the average! Bob for me is the smiling face with the warm handshake that welcomes us to Glasgow Meeting on Wednesdays. Yes, he is a large man with a big smile - he and Jim are the guys for the Branston Pickle and Marmite. It was almost a disaster one Wed when we thought we had run out! But. . . . representing us on Quaker Housing Trust he brought the first two grants to Scotland, to Helmsdale, Durness and the Iona Community.

We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails.

NEWS OF MEETINGS

FLOODS Whilst Patrick Bealey reports that water was running in the streets of Castle Douglas and Gatehouse-of-Fleet, and obvious Dumfries has been severely affected at the Whitesands, as usual, none of our Friends have been too disturbed but we have still to hear from Wigton where it might be a different story.

LANARK MEETING The very good news is that Wiston Lodge now has a new biomass heating system started up on Christmas Eve, thanks to a grant from the Clyde Wind Farm and the help of the Energy Savings Trust and Social Investment Scotland. Wiston Lodge is now warm for all its visitors including Lanark Meeting, which is now able to meet in a heated and energy saving environment. As one of our members said *“it means we no longer need to go to Meeting with gloves, hat and rugs for the knees! And we might get more visitors.”*

SHETTLESTON MEETING Glasgow East End Meeting at St Serf's Episcopal Church, Shettleston, 3rd Sundays at 2.30pm.

The small satellite Meeting at St Serf's is now in its fourth year. We initially attracted about a dozen people who came to see what we were about but soon settled down with six faithful attenders and it does not look as if the Meeting is likely to grow any bigger. While size is not the crucial factor in the success of any Quaker Meeting we have to ask ourselves if we are filling a useful purpose and/or meeting some actual need. We could never find a meeting place available on a Sunday morning to give the East-Enders an alternative to Elmbank but we have always felt welcome at St Serf's.

We do have to realise, however, it is really an extra Meeting rather than an alternative. Would it perhaps thrive better if it were held on a week-day evening? We think it is time to consider our future.



Argyll Friends having refreshments after Meeting for Worship in Tarbert (Loch Fyne) in December 2015.

News: a new place to meet! We have decided that in 2016 we are going to be meeting in Minard on the first Sunday in the month at 1.30 p.m. Minard is on the A83 to the S.W. of Inverary on the shores of Loch Fyne. If you're thinking of coming along, Bobby and Edna Locke would like to hear from you on 01546 886 263. Both the Lockes and Toni Calam and Bob Dixon live in Minard and Meeting for Worship will be held in one of their homes. We continue to meet in Tarbert on the 3rd Sunday of the month, and in Campbeltown on the fourth Sunday. We look forward to seeing you there.

☀ HOLD IN THE LIGHT

Jean Oliver of Lanark Meeting whose father is seriously ill.

Bob Williamson of Glasgow Meeting for a speedy recovery from an operation.

Rob Quinn of Castle Douglas Meeting for a speedy recovery from his op and a successful conclusion to tests.

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The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 28th February. Copy should be send in Word to the editors Bryan Bowes or Margaret Roy