

West Scotland Quaker Newsletter

August 2017

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Clerk's letter August 2017

North and south

22 or so of us from West Scotland attended at least part of the great assembly of Quakers for Yearly Meeting Gathering at the University of Warwick by Coventry. Up to 1800 participated during the week and it was an enriching and stimulating time.

One little happening gave us pause for thought. On the opening Saturday evening we had introductions and scene setting as we all sat in the huge hall. One Friend from the local Area Meeting welcomed us and involved us all - to make us feel included. There were some 90 Friends from overseas, a large number of children and young people, newcomers to Yearly Meeting and old timers. Our Friend asked us where we came from: 'How many from the North?', 'How many from the South?'. This confused some of us. Where was Scotland? It isn't 'the North'. What did anyone from Wales say? Few not living in England responded, but then were enthusiastic and waved like mad when he asked 'How many are from another country?' That wasn't what he expected.

Growing up in England, I'm aware of how little was done at school or elsewhere to explain the relationships and histories of other countries and dependencies (like the Isle of Man and Channel Islands) in or associated with the UK. English people we know can sometimes confuse 'England' and 'Britain'. Identity is important and living with a large neighbour in terms of population can require some gentle reminders. It can be exasperating, and more seriously undermine relationship, regardless of views on independence. We continue to work on this one.

Advices and queries helps us reflect. For example 17:

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Being Quaker means cultivating the art of listening; to each other, to God or the Spirit, the world around us – and ourselves. When we are affected by the inconsistencies of others, can we use that experience to enlarge our own vision? How do others experience us when we talk or give opinions? What do we need to

change in ourselves? Are we vigilant to try to see the world from others' perspectives? Collectively we have much success here – as shown by our understanding and acceptance for the equal marriage for example. But we never finish.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

Area Meeting Wigtown 8th April Truth and Personal Reflection

It is quite a personal experience to be part of a meeting welcoming your daughter into membership as I was at Area Meeting in Wigtown on April 7th. I was quite humbled to hear the report of the visit read out and it made me reflect on my own journey in Quakerism. I remember being cajoled into going to the children's meeting with my brother after my father had joined Quakers when I was about 10. By the time I had left home in my early 20s I had rebelled against all religion and it wasn't until I was about Cáit's age that I found my way back to Quakers, very intermittently at first. I have to say that our other two offspring, Paul and Aoife, have not shown the same inclinations as Cáit – but there is still time.

Of course, there were other things on the agenda – a varied mix of other membership applications, financial matters, and a deep discussion about Truth and Integrity. There was another application accepted (Helen McLean from Arran) and another visit arranged, in addition to another in progress. With no deaths or resignations to report, that represents an encouraging net gain in membership.

Kate Gulliver gave us an update on finances for the first quarter of the year (both income and spending below the proportional budget, but this normally happens in the first quarter). The 2016 accounts for the Area Meeting (i.e. not including Local Meetings) showed a surplus of just over £5000 but that included legacies of over £6000, so that is a net loss.

Truth and Integrity have always been at the heart of Quakerism, but when we are challenged how do we uphold these values, not only in public life but in our own lives as well? There is a general feeling not just that standards of truth and integrity have fallen, but also that people are less concerned that they have. The matter was initially brought to our attention by the case of Alastair Carmichael MP who admitted lying about leaking a memo about Nicola Sturgeon during the 2015 election. He was challenged by a group of constituents in court and faced £150,000 in legal costs. To help meet his costs, he was given £50,000 by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT), (a separate trust from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, but with obvious Quaker links). It turns out that the JRRT, which apparently now has only one Quaker Trustee, donates regular substantial funds to the Liberal Democrat

party, which could clearly compromise our political independence. This particular matter has been raised with staff at Friends House but there is still a general concern about the lack of truth and integrity in public life..

Area Meeting had asked Local Meetings for their views on what we as an Area Meeting should do. The general feeling was that, although it was not appropriate to raise it as a ‘concern’, (which entails asking Meeting for Sufferings to take specific, identified action), we needed take some action ourselves. After a lengthy discussion and a painstaking minute, we focused on our own duty to speak out and uphold truths in our own lives and were reminded about the opportunity we will have to witness our concern at the upcoming local elections in May. Our Parliamentary Engagement Officer (Mairi Campbell Jack) has just provided Local Meetings with advice on how to engage with candidates.

It was unfortunate that the minute from Glasgow LM about this issue also raised concerns about a separate issue, communication with the Parliamentary Engagement Officer. This led to a discussion about what the PEO does and how the four current areas of her work (Trident, the 2015 Election, Militarisation of Schools and Economic Justice) were discerned. As the AM representative on the Parliamentary Engagement Group which oversees her work, I assured the Meeting that there had been proper discernment (although before my time). I have mentally noted that, although I have spoken several times at AM about the work of the PEO, I have not specifically spoken at my own meeting, Glasgow.

As with previous reports the idea of this report is to provide a personal reflection on the Meeting, but when I volunteered to write a report of the Meeting, I did not quite realise how personal it was going to be.

Martin Mansell, Glasgow Meeting

Area Meeting for Business by Telephone Conference,

During our worship period we read section 20.10 of *Quaker faith & practice* in which John Woolman wrote of the place of prayer being a precious habitation when ‘there was great stirrings and commotions in the world’.

Noted changes in our Area Meeting included marriage between Phillida Ball and John Sillince at a Meeting for Worship on Saturday, 22nd April, 2017 at Milngavie Town Hall. Another marriage between Elizabeth Mackin and Amer Syed, both attenders in Glasgow (and Aberdeen), will take place Glasgow Meeting House on Saturday 26th August 2017 at 2.30 pm.

Three Friends were welcomed into membership: Donald and Elizabeth Holmes both of Milngavie Meeting and Caroll Ewen of Dunblane Meeting. Two further applications were received from Ruth Johnston and Elspeth Smith – visitors were appointed.

We also heard a report from Ed Tyler on Meetings for Sufferings, 3rd June. Ed Tyler reported it was an intense experience; hearing what is going on across Britain with the representatives of more than 70 area meetings being present. He told us how it came to life for him when Friends spoke from the Spirit. For example, Tim Rouse talked about being a Young Friend and being part of their General Meeting. Tim encouraged area meetings to think of young adults and engage with them flexibly as they may have to move about for study or work. What could this mean for our Area Meeting? They may need to be appointed to posts for shorter periods. We can also look for opportunities to appoint them to Young Friends General Meeting itself. Ed mentioned too how Leeds Area Meeting had used *Our Faith in the Future* successfully in discerning what to do about a meeting house. The process used was very illuminating and might help us in our Area Meeting. Contact Michael Hutchinson for the documentation.

We also heard from Nominations Committee and the Treasurer. See the minutes.

Re Reflections on God and the discussion questions on God from Gretchen Castle's address to General Meeting for Scotland on 11th March 2017, these have been circulated to local Quaker meetings in West Scotland. Following this up, Rhiannon Grant from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre will lead discussion for us in the afternoon of Area Meeting to be held in Glasgow on Saturday 13th January 2018.

Something else to look forward to: Dunblane Friends are preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their Meeting during the Autumn. We will hear more on this.

Next Meeting for Worship for Business will be in Tarbert, Argyll, 26th August.

Margaret Roy, Lanark Meeting

Yearly Meeting Gathering at Warwick University, 2017. A personal account by Ed Tyler.

George Lakey's prepared ministry on Sunday was powerful in a deep spiritual-emotional way and had many Friends - including me - in tears.

Catherine West's Swarthmore Lecture did not speak to me in the same way, but Tim Gee's George Gorman lecture (which he prepared along with many young Friends) came up with an 8-point Action Plan to make the Society of Friends a more equal, diverse, welcoming community. One in which we communicate with, nurture and uphold each other in self-organising ways like base groups and affinity groups, and through the use of a range of technologies such as Snapchat and Facebook, not forgetting the good old ones like phone and email. I say: let's get on with it!

For me the whole experience was "awesome" both in a young person's sense (meaning "great", "fantastic") and in the established sense of feeling part of

something vast and unending. It is impossible to describe adequately in language, though it had something to do with being part of a worshipping community which taps into a wellspring of deep connection for which we use words such as deep emotion, love, spirit, the Divine and God. For me personally this was expressed through song, which I took part in throughout the week. Workshops included “joy”, “sacred”, “solidarity, struggle and social justice” and “flash mobs” i.e. spontaneous live performances. It included the Mamma Mia singalong, an underground YMG happening which masqueraded as an ordinary film screening.

Picture caption: West Scotland Friends having a picnic lunch together in the Woodbrooke tent.



Muriel Robertson would like to add thanks to the organization and especially the pastoral care. She states that they ‘bent over backwards’ to keep tabs on all. We don’t appreciate all the work that goes on in the background’. Special thanks to Helen Terry who organized the mobility scooters.

Annual Report of the Trustees for 2016-17

AM is a charity registered in Scotland, acting according to the guidance laid out in Quaker Faith and Practice and as such is required to have Trustees. They oversee our finances and our property and also ensure we have the “safeguarding” measures in place to care properly for our children, young people and vulnerable adults, that we abide by data protection laws, keep proper records, ensure the best health and safety policies are in place, and care well for any staff we employ. We review at regular intervals the range of risks we may encounter.

We have met three times in the past year in Glasgow Meeting House, and once, in December, by telephone to agree the budget for the coming year. As ever our responsibility

is to look after the meeting's assets and ensure we do things "in right ordering" in the way we care for staff and for all who attend our meetings. The Annual Report and Accounts are the most obvious evidence of our work, with its report into what has been achieved by Friends together and in our Local Meetings during the year.

One of our important activities is to receive each year reports from Local Meetings, subsequently published in West Scotland Quaker News. These give meetings a chance to tell us of the joys of their fellowship and also of any challenges they face. This year it has become apparent that there is a serious lack of understanding in some Local Meetings of their responsibilities, especially in the holding of business meetings and in the proper management of their finances, as described in our Memoranda of Understanding. We suggest that we spend time at one of our Area Meetings to explain the importance and relevance of these, including the clerk's checklists and annual reports.

We invite others to attend our meetings when particular matters arise. The Area Meeting clerk came to one of our meetings last year. Indeed, we keep an eye on the general running of the Area Meeting, and ensure at least one of our number is present at each Area Meeting.

The affairs of Glasgow Local Meeting have been high on our agenda this last year, especially in respect of the issues surrounding its meeting house. The Area Meeting is the owner of the property and therefore trustees have kept in close contact with the various discussions that have taken place during the year. In particular a trustee attended the group set up by the Local Meeting to investigate how any developments may be funded.

Who are we?

Sarah Brown, Bronwen Currie (as from April 2017), Robin Davis (clerk), Kate Gulliver (ex officio as Area Meeting Treasurer), Martha Hatch, Clare Phillips, David Rees, Margaret Roy (ex officio as Area Meeting Assistant Clerk) and Charlotte Wright.

A report from Glasgow Meeting to the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group.

Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings shared 5 groups for the 'Reading *Quaker faith & practice*' programme. Groups were offered at a variety of different times and places to allow as many as possible to attend. Groups varied from about 5 to 12, and most stayed the course. About 50 participated in the groups overall and this represented about half the membership/attendership of Glasgow Meeting. The groups' makeup cut across age and length of association.

We found the guidance and exercises posted on the Woodbrooke website useful, but also produced, for facilitators, our own background and suggestions sheets for each

session. We had an initial meeting for facilitators and an introductory session for all, repeated 3 times at different times, on the Book and how it got to be, illustrated by the past versions. Finally, there were 3 round-up sessions at different times and days for feedback, from which this report is compiled. 30 Friends attended these.

The sessions

The round up sessions started with worship sharing on the question ‘What have you learned from the process of reading *Quaker faith & practice*?’ Nearly all contributed. We also then had in some sessions open discussion on to what degree we had been changed by the programme. We then spent time on considering ‘what next’ for spiritual learning in Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings. We then returned to the Book, thinking about how the sessions had influenced us and general points on whether it needed revision, and if so what might be changed. Comments from each part of the sessions is enlarged upon below.

What have you learned from the process of reading *Quaker faith & practice*?

Each group picked up on the word ‘process’ in the question and made it clear it was about affirmation and identity, the discipline of reading and getting to know each other in a safe environment. They were clear we needed groups to develop our spiritual life; meeting for worship on its own not being sufficient in this. Having smaller groups in a large meeting is also invaluable. They give us better knowledge of each other.

A common thread was the concept of being on a journey together, and the process gave focus. There was a sense of unity in sharing common experience in discovering Truth. This was very different from reading it on its own. Hence the programme was a way of not only finding more about faith, but in developing and emphasising community. It provided a rooted, safe environment to speak from, yet allowed and encouraged diversity. So we found that being able to express diversity of view (e.g. on God), actually helped cement community and unity. ‘It helped us deal with Jesus’ as one Friend said.

We are a diverse set of people and we can be hurtful to each other in the way we use religious language: the groups provide safety and trust. It is safe to disagree. A caveat came from discussion of our diversity being only apparent – actually we are too homogenous in our class, language, education, race and age structure.

Many were surprised at what they learned from the Book, having thought it was familiar. Others felt it gave opportunity for re-familiarisation. Some newer Friends were surprised that those in long association with the Society didn’t know the Book

very well at all! Some owned to never having read a lot of it, particularly the church government sections, but had gained a good deal from doing so. So the discipline of reading was helpful. The programme gave many a sense of how radical our tradition is in its principles and methods, and showed the importance of Quakerism as a contribution to the world. One Friend also noted that the programme result was ‘not a comfortable place to land after these 18 months of study’. So there was ‘celebration for the thirst and commitment’ generated by the process.

There was a shared sense of belonging to a religious community throughout Britain and beyond: identity was significant outcome of the process of study. Nonetheless, being rooted in the Quaker experience showed we need a new language now to encapsulate where we have arrived at on our collective journey. Especially about God. Quakers are in a good position from which to help describe this in words that may strike chords further afield.

The way the calendar of chapters was constructed was thoughtful and helpful; much more so than starting the beginning and working through.

The following quotes enlarge the above:

I am surprised at how much spoke to me.

It opened up the Book.

It was such a privilege to be able to share with others.

It was enjoyable and inspiring.

The group process was an insight in itself and was unifying.

Process was wonderful and challenging.

I have gratitude in being able to speak spiritual thoughts with each other: knowing each other in the things that are eternal.

It was affirming to disagree within the safety of the group.

It was hard to do the reading, but it didn't matter.

A multi-dimensional experience.

Enriching.

A newer Friend found the programme just rightly placed for her journey and it was a permissive environment to ask and understand Quaker ways and process.

Are we changed by the experience?

In the main no. The process was challenging, but more in the sense of being on a journey – a metaphor to continual change in life. So it confirmed rather than changed. In Glasgow it was seen as a progression from the experience of the extensive Visioning process for the Meeting most had gone through a year or so earlier. So it held us rather than changed us. The process helped break down any

feelings of ‘them’ and ‘us’ in the Meeting, by bringing people together at a deep level. Some newer Friends ‘now felt part of the Meeting’ and most felt connected to Britain Yearly Meeting a whole, through knowing the whole YM was undertaking this at the same time and in feeling identity with its shared values.

The Book

Does it continue to serve its purpose?

How might it change in the future?

What is missing?

What are barriers to us?

On the Book itself we spent less time in these sessions.

Some sections were not resonating any more, particularly those in the more recent coverage. This was paralleled by the obvious gap of our collective experience of the last twenty years to reflect the new social context we live in, including the social media and the internet. There is not much on friendship or the transgender experience. The early Quaker experience resonated more than some of the later material, some of which may feel dated now. There was a feeling that more was needed to explain Quaker process – i.e. where it came from and some practical experience: e.g. in clerkship and in the discernment process. We lack a shared cultural upbringing. Bringing in material from other Disciplines overseas might be helpful. However, much was still fine. And ‘the poetry must be kept’.

Generally Friends felt that a physical book was very much required. Many saw this as one book like now, though others favoured two volumes. A clear suggestion was that the physical book should be the mainstay, but expanded online with references to further reading and advice, as long as it was clear what was the Book and what wasn’t.

The thread of time is important, linking us back with our beginnings and subsequent journeying’s that gained our collective experience.

A difficult one for the future in having any book is that the editions are confusing as most books in meeting houses and so on are older versions and Friends aren’t sure what is the correct text.

What next?

(For Glasgow and Milngavie Meetings – BDRPG may not need this section.)

The group spent more time on what we might do next, again emphasising the environment for spiritual development; not with too many closed groups but allowing for a variety, including ones for newcomers. This study session had clear purpose and a discipline attached that provided a focus to doing things together. It made us read

parts of the Book we might have meant to but had not; including the church government sections. It gave a more rounded view of being Quaker. It also helped us test our journeys against those of others. This content was very important in providing a real context that stimulated continued attendance. We need a challenge.

The clear message is that these particular *Quaker faith & practice* groups provided a distinct discipline and environment that was safe and structured. They encouraged participation by being a specific for a specific time and purpose. Gathering to speak on spiritual matters is invaluable as we must find others to walk with. Many of us are in transition in our lives, and sharing can provide personal conflict, so the safe environment is crucial. There needs to be a need to give focus, purpose and discipline. The context is important for study groups and opportunities. Where are we going? We need to be rooted/ be clear on the perspective. We need spiritual challenge.

So we saw a requirement for further small group sessions that cater to two needs: to develop as individuals and to develop as a community.

Some of the existing study groups may continue on new topics. It was noted that being on each other's' homes was a real advantage to the success of groups. The Sunday post-meeting group in the meeting house was described by one as time-pressured.

There was some concern on how we care for those who drop out (who were mainly affected by personal time pressures).

Suggestions for the future included:

- Start again! (ie on *Quaker faith & practice*).

- Something for children.

- Using world-wide Friends' experience to share insights from other Disciplines.

- The Pendle Hill pamphlets.

- Harvey Gilman's book on words as a focus document.

- Being Friends Together.

- A study group with a focus of 6-8 weeks would be helpful.

- Particular topics as they rise – one offs or short in time

- Longer term groups that are closed give opportunity to establish trust and sharing.

- The experience of how we test our journeys.

- What comes out of the Deep Listening pilot.

- The Question on God from General Meeting for Scotland, and the Area Meeting on 13th January 2018 as an end point for these, facilitated by Rhiannon Grant.

A real gap was seen as something regular for enquiries and new Friends to learn about Quaker experience. This should be ongoing.

In looking at what else can be offered to Friends we should encourage spontaneity – there are already several informal groups and others will continually spring up. We might aid this more specifically. The key is to make access for all possible, so there are always alternative to any continuing closed groups.

Examples of existing groups include:

Book groups.

Experiment with light.

Bible Study.

LGBT+

Renfrewshire Group.

The East End and Southside meetings

A different note was sounded in the recognition that these groups gave a heavy learning exercise, perhaps not for all. There can be other ways of building community (e.g. hillwalking, parties, outings, events, music, singing, shared crafts). Elders/Learning Group might usefully discuss with overseers the needs of meeting. The aim is to connect people. What we might do is not to explicitly put on more groups, but to help those that arise; e.g. by offering transport and making sure newcomers know what is available. We may want a variety of replacements. We should be content for some groups to continue, but don't want to see newcomers excluded by closed groups operating as a norm. Elders should keep these under review.

'In building a sense of community – we hold it and wait in the Light.'

GLASGOW ELDERS' LEARNING GROUP, 26 June 2017

Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) conference 2017
A very personal report by Alison Rimell

I have been attending Glasgow Quaker Meeting for 3.5 years and am gradually finding my way inwardly and outwardly in Quakers.

Whilst I am very drawn to cultivating the inner light (slow progress) and listening inwardly, I find it challenging to put this into outward action. I feel drawn to trying but have not heard clear inward guidance yet as to the way forward. I still have

confusion about how Quakers work in this area and this highlights the complexity and multiplicity of Quaker workings and function structures. I understand it takes a lot of time to see the whole picture! Therefore the invitation from Area Meeting to the QPSW conference was a delightful surprise (why me?) that came at just the right time.

What did I hope for from the conference? I hoped that the weekend would give me the opportunity to learn all about what Quakers are actively doing at present. This was achieved fully. The conference was extremely well run. We met the team of paid Quaker workers and had ample opportunity to hear all about the projects both formally in workshops and informally at meal times. I recommend you read Susan Mitchell's report also printed in this newsletter as it contains very useful links where you can find out all that is being done and join email update groups.

I also heard from individual Quakers about projects they have developed/supported in their areas such as the Barrow Pilgrimage for the Common Good.

All in all, I gained a much clearer picture of what is going on all over the country and what the concerns are.

One possible slight change in direction that I think I might have picked up in the ether of the conference was a desire to emphasise focus slightly more on what is happening to our neighbours and our next door streets rather than abroad.

For me, Economic Justice is of key importance. Following Britain Yearly meetings 2011-2015, the Economics, Sustainability and Peace Subcommittee of Quaker Peace and Social Witness have come up the 10 principles for a new economy designed to stimulate debate around how we could envisage an economic system compatible with Quaker values. They have also produced 4 booklets (soon to be 5) on key economic areas which are well worth reading and are available online <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/economic-justice/new-economy>

I think the main thing I have understood is that there can be some distance from the original discernment within local meeting and the Action work that is being carried out once it comes out of Britain Yearly Meeting. This is leading me to participate more in Meetings etc. in order to grow my connection to the work of Quakers as a whole.

But I still feel that some of the work that Mairi Campbell Jack the Parliamentary Officer for Scotland is doing here in Scotland comes as a surprise to me, even though I am on an email list as someone who is particularly interested and get updates, and I

wonder if it does to anyone else. This is not just about handing information on. I don't feel that I have picked up on any threads in ministry or in the announcements in Glasgow Sunday Meeting connecting the Meeting to this. How does the feedback loop to discernment with local meetings work so that the national projects remain connected spirituality to the body of Quakers? Am I the only one who wonders about this?

Finally, one of the most valuable parts of the conference that cannot be programmed or planned for is the meeting with other Quakers from all over the country (over very delicious meals in the wonderfully comfortable Hayes conference centre). This was a great way to get to know Quakers both individually and as a community. All in all a very worthwhile experience and I thank Area Meeting for nominating me to go!

Report on Quaker Life Representative Council held at Woodbrooke from 21st to 23rd April, 2017.

The theme for this meeting was "Helping Seekers Find Quakers – Being Worth The Finding." Representatives gathered from all over the UK on Friday afternoon and were given their 'welcome packs'. We gathered for a brief welcoming session and were informed of our 'home groups'. Then off for a very welcome meal sharing a table with our 'home group' members which provided us with a good chance to meet each other.

The meal was followed by a plenary session where Quaker Life staff gave us a fairly detailed description of the work of Quaker Life. The roles of QL include: Strengthening Meetings ; Supporting individual Quakers and Seekers ; Aiding Outreach ; Supporting young people ; Providing resources for meetings and organising events ; To offer support to young people. With young people in mind a family day will take place at Friends House on the second of June. The range of work of QL staff is impressive, their enthusiasm was very evident. I can only touch here on their contributions to the Society.

Saturday morning began with three speakers: Alistair Fuller, Head of Ministry and Outreach team; Kevin Redpath, member of Mid-Somerset AM; Joannie Harrison, hospital chaplain and member of Cambridgeshire AM.

Alistair Fuller gave a lively talk dealing with the issue of membership. He confirmed we are an ageing Society, attracting few new members and particularly few young

members. He was concerned particularly by the decline in the number of children attending worship. He thought he saw this lack of willingness to join as a reflection of trends in the wider society. He wished us to be creative, imaginative, open and hopeful.

Kevin Redpath spoke about Street LM which has on average twenty members and a lively children's meeting. He emphasised how shared tasks within Meetings can help draw the Meeting together. He gave us as an example the manner in which Street LM moved out more fully into the wider community in an effort to gather support for necessary maintenance of Street's historic Meeting House. The common tasks did not need to be complex. Activities such as a 'tidy-up', support for a local foodbank, providing Christmas lunches. It was he suggested up to individual Meetings to come up with their own common task or tasks.

Joannie Harrison gave a very spiritual and personal talk of her work and experiences as a hospital chaplain over a period of five years. She saw her work as having three threads; pastoral, spiritual and religious. These strands clearly interweave. She found the work challenging, tiring but rewarding. She came across as a very Christian and committed Quaker.

Later in the morning we returned to our 'home groups' to discuss our responses to the speakers. Then lunch. Following which there was some leisure time after which we were able to choose two from five workshops. One I attended, "Tending the garden of your soul" led by Gill Sewell was for me very rewarding. The evening offered a choice of watching a film, "Friendly Persuasion" or attending a bonfire. I chose the film from nostalgic and personal reasons. I was not disappointed. Sunday morning was spent in our 'home groups' trying to pull the threads of the weekend together. As might be imagined in a group of twelve Quakers there were some disparate threads but I think a cloth of many colours emerged, a sort of Quaker tapestry perhaps.

Howard Bartlem, Ayrshire

Update on the work of the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group

The PLFG, which has now been renamed the **Parliamentary Engagement Working Group**, has recently mainly focused on two areas; Increasing militarisation activity in schools and Economic justice, although some work was

done on our third area in providing support for Friends in the run up to the recent election.

Militarisation: This has involved organising a petition in the Scottish Parliament, in partnership with Forces Watch, to raise awareness of and ask for some oversight of armed forces recruitment visits to schools. The Petition asks for

- armed forces' visits to schools be recorded;
- parents to be informed of visits beforehand so that children can withdraw if they object and
- guidance to be given around creating a balance in the classroom.

The petition has now had 3 hearings and after each hearing the Public Petitions Committee has called for more views from a variety of bodies. At the hearing on the 2nd March the committee acknowledged the strength of supportive views sent in by, for example, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Young Scots for Independence, Scientists for Global Responsibility and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council as well as individuals. The committee unanimously decided to call the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, for questioning and that they would hear a briefing from the MOD.

The Committee considered the petition further on May 25th. The session was positive with the Committee agreeing the issue could not be moved forward until they had heard from the armed forces, with members pressing to have the head of recruitment give oral evidence. They also agreed to write to the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, asking for specific data on visits to be collected, and there was an acknowledgement that there was both hard and soft recruitment. The Committee also decided to request information from the Welsh Government on the work they have been doing on this issue.

In addition to this Ross Greer, the Green Party education spokesperson, has been tabling more questions for us on cadet forces.

At the same time as this work a second but separate issue has arisen which is the £50million set aside by the previous Chancellor to fund cadet forces in state schools (including Scotland) "prioritising schools in less affluent areas". This inevitably conflicts with the Scottish Government's responsibility for education in Scotland and we raised this issue through a minute from GM to Meeting for Sufferings. At their meeting in February MfS referred this concern to a number of Quaker bodies including QPSW.

Economic Justice: We followed up the very successful symposium in October 2016 on "Creating a Just Scotland: transforming our land and taxation policies" with a working seminar on 22nd April for an invited group from several bodies working in this area to thresh how we take this work forward.

Professor Michael Keating, from Edinburgh University, gave a short presentation at the seminar challenging conventional economic wisdom and in particular pointing out that economic growth depends on a high level of social investment— especially in child care, gender equality, enhancing employment opportunities and increasing the work force.

This was followed by a general discussion from which three particular areas of interest emerged.

Changing the Narrative

- Very few politicians are prepared to make the case that taxation is a good thing. It requires great courage and political will. We need to emphasise the benefits people get from tax – the number of nurses, hospital beds, schools, good roads etc.
- Small countries can do as well as large countries.
- Growth is not just growth in money – but growth in welfare, community, environment, land ownership, gender justice, care. Humankind Index (Oxfam) is a new way of measuring what makes a good life.

Better Education About Economics

- We must make economics accessible to people. More taxes collected locally rather than centrally could be a factor – also greater transparency.
- Taxation is often a neglected subject in the universities. Economics has tended to become an abstract, theoretical subject. Yet protest student movements are developing internationally about how economics is taught

Basic Income

- This is an unconditional, non-withdrawable income for every individual as a right of citizenship.
- Not means-testing benefits restores the incentive for work, and simplifies the admin and stress of the current social security system.

At the seminar we compiled a list of over 30 bodies who are working in this area and the Parliamentary Liaison Group will reflect on the day and consider further steps to recommend to General Meeting. We will also try to continue and improve our communications with Local and Area Meetings via the GMS emailing list.

For those who want to understand more about this new form of economics, I highly recommend *Doughnut Economics* by Kate Raworth, a recently published and highly readable description of what economics should be about.

Martin Mansell, Glasgow, *Parliamentary Engagement Working Group*

General Meeting, 10th June, Gender and Sexual Diversity

Our Friend Zem Moffat lead this session. See GM Minutes for report. It was a lively session. During it Zem mentioned various links and a minute sent by North East Thames AM to Meeting for Sufferings. Here is the information below:

North East Thames AM held on 18 February 2017, Minute 17.21 Transgender and non-binary inclusion received and noted by Meeting for Sufferings in April 2017, minute MfS/17/04/15.

Transgender & Non-binary Inclusion Statement from North East Thames AM
“Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age. All are heard, valued and supported both in our needs and our leadings. Everyone’s contribution is accepted according to their gifts and resources. All are welcomed and included.”“ Our faith in the future (Quakers in Britain, 2015) <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/our-faith-in-the-future>

Quakers in North East Thames Area Meeting are aware that our community is a continuing creation in which we seek to know and love ourselves and one another in all our differences, united at a profound level in our efforts to reach and respond to others in the things that are eternal.

We want our Local Meeting to be a safe place where each person can come as their own true self and find a spiritual home.

We recognise that there is a growing awareness in society, and in the Society of Friends, that the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ prove incomplete when describing the diversity of gender identity and experience that exists.

We hope that we can all grow together in our understanding of gender identity. We want it to be known that our Area Meeting is a place where all are welcomed and nurtured, including people who are transgender and non-binary.

We hope that we can share a spiritual companionship, creating a place where we can all listen to and connect with one another, and accompany one another with love. **The actual MfS minute was this...** MfS/17/04/15 Transgender and non-binary inclusion We receive minute 17.21 of North East Thames AM, held on 18 February 2017, attaching a statement concerning the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people in our Quaker communities. We welcome the opportunity to increase our

learning about this issue - non-binary people are those who do not identify as either male or female. We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee for their consideration. Further to our minute 2015/03/09, the Recording Clerk has told us that the tabular statement now contains a third column for those choosing not to be listed as male or female.

The links Zem mentioned in her talk:

- Link to her doctoral work 2008 "Queer Giving: An audio-visually guided shared ethnography of the Wotever Vision (2003-). www.queergiving.co.uk. This website includes Mirror Mirror, the documentary film she made and her written academic thesis. Mirror Mirror premiered at London's 21st Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in 2007.
- Link to Sibyls (<http://sibyls.gndr.org.uk/>) where friends can find information on and copies of the book from which she quoted 'This is my body: Hearing the theology of transgender Christians' Eds Christina Beardsley and Michelle O'Brien. Darton, Longman and Todd 2016. ISBN 978-0232532067 £14.99. A copy is also available to borrow from Glasgow Meeting House Library.
- An invitation to join the Scottish Gallivanterers - contact jarom@prontonmail.com, who is from Wigtown Meeting and the organiser.

The Light That Pushes Me

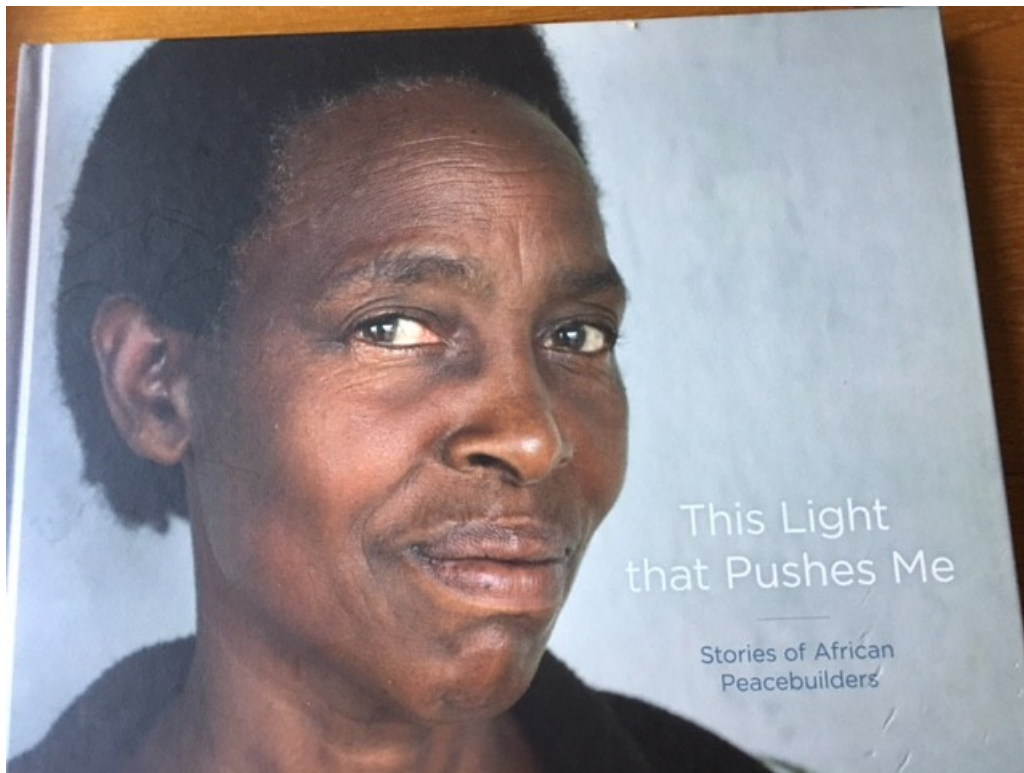
During the week of 19th to 24th June, in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and Renfield St Stephens Church, Glasgow Quaker Outreach Committee hosted the photographic exhibition "This Light that Pushes Me".

The photographs were displayed in the peaceful setting of the church with its beautiful stained glass windows casting a calming glow.

During the week we had a steady flow of visitors. I spoke to people from Brazil, Hong Kong, Argentina, Ruanda, Germany to name a few. Some took a fleeting glance while others studied the photographs and read the stories in detail. Many were visibly moved by the message of how despite being devastated by war and destruction they had transformed their lives turning darkness into light to overcome adversity.

In the words of Carolyn Hayman Chief Executive of Peace Direct:

'Extraordinary accounts of people who experienced the worst that a human can do yet turned their suffering into grace, forgiveness and healing. Each story is an inspiration,' **Liz Anderton for the Outreach Group**



The accompanying theatre double-bill by Birmingham-based Quaker company Journeymen Theatre featured 'The Bundle' and 'Feeding the darkness'. See review below.

Review

I was very glad I had the opportunity to see two thought provoking plays, FEEDING THE DARKNESS, and THE BUNDLE. Just two actors, Lynn and Dave Morris managed to bring to life a huge cast of characters who gave us an extraordinary insight into the horrific experiences of people who are forced to flee from terrible situations in their own country only to find they have more mountains to climb when they reach our own shores. The welcome these desperate people receive is so cruel and so unnecessary. We call ourselves a civilised society. It is a misnomer and I am glad that these plays can help to educate us. I also hope that people with power to change the way human beings are treated in this country get the chance to see these plays. Who could not be moved?

Sue Porter

Welcoming the Soul: creating space for deep listening in our Meetings - V er ene Nicolas

Last February, a group of us from Glasgow meeting embarked in an experiment. We gathered for a few hours every month or so (with a break over the summer) to explore the work of U.S. writer, activist and Quaker Parker Palmer. Some of you may be familiar with “A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life”. Margaret Roy (who helped organised the sessions) and I framed it as “learning ways to dialogue with our Inward Light in community and to deepen both our inner life and faith in practice.” The initiative was set up in dialogue with the Elders and the Learning group.

Although we still have 2 more sessions before we reflect on what we’ve learnt and how to share it with others in the meeting or elsewhere (as initially agreed), I am mentioning it here because I will be facilitating a similar course as part of the Woodbrooke programme, on Friday 29th September till Sunday 1st October at Swarthmore Hall. There are still a couple of places available. Anyone interested, please check www.woodbrooke.org.uk or contact me (mail@verenenicolas.org). You may also want to chat with people who are part of the course and ask them about their experience.

I invited people to share a few words that I could include here. Here’s what two have written:

“Our modern Quaker meetings are all too often gatherings of lightly engaged strangers rather than of people who know each other in the things of the spirit. Our relationship to our traditions can be shaky. It’s not clear to me that we always have the understanding or the confidence to practise discernment, collectively or in small groups, or to utilise meetings for clearness as well as we might. In life, not just in meetings, we need to be able to listen more attentively than we usually do, to ourselves as well as to others. All these things take practice, the contrivance of a trusting space in which things can be said and shared and go no further, except in the sense that what you hear, if you really listen, can change and enrich you, and you can carry that beyond the space in which you first experienced it. I was challenged and intrigued, warmed and strengthened by what I heard Friends say on the afternoons on which we met, each guided by the convener's carefully chosen questions, but all spoken more deeply from the heart than we usually manage when we talk at Meeting. I had had a sense of what most of my companions on this course were contributing to the wellbeing of the world before it began, now, I appreciate it so

much more, taking comfort and drawing courage from understanding better what they do, and a little more of the why.”

“Some of the value of what you have been doing with and for us in Glasgow Meeting has been a deepening of spiritual relationships in a group that has already worshipped together - to help us get to know one another much more deeply 'in the things that are eternal'.”

Holiness: Creating Space for the Sacred

"From *The Hidden Gospel: Decoding the Spiritual Message of the Aramaic Jesus* by Neil Douglas-Klotz, Quest Books 1999. Copyright 1999 Neil Douglas-Klotz. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved. For further information on this work, please see the Abwoon Network website, www.abwoon.org"

*Clear holy space around your Name:
Let it be the centre on which
Our life turns.*

*Focus your light within us – make it useful:
As the rays of a beacon
Show the way.*

Alternate reading of the second line of the Lord’s Prayer.
Matt 6-9 from the Aramaic (KJV:Hallowed be thy name)

WHEN WE SPEAK OF WHAT IS SACRED OR HOLY, SUCH AS THE HOLY BREATH, WE PRESUME WE KNOW WHAT WE MEAN. THE WORD “HOLINESS” IN THE WESTERN OR European sense brings up the image of something to do with religion, God, or the powers that administer these concepts. The word for holy used in the Greek gospels, *hagios*, means anything that induces religious awe. In this concept of holiness, which influences our Western one, a separate subject and object always exist. We hold something outside ourselves in reverence or awe because we presume there are unbridgeable gaps between the divine, humanity and nature.

In a Middle Eastern cultural framework, where “God” means unity, the holiness of anything has to do with the extent to which it uniquely participates in this all-pervading Unity. For instance, all breath, air, wind, and spirit return to one breath – *ruha d’goodsha*. This holy breath fulfils its purpose by being the unique essence of breath. Like a clear note struck by a stringed instrument, Holy Breath gathers all smaller, individual expressions of breath to itself before it returns to the universal silence.

The word for holy in Aramaic, *qadash*, combines two old Semitic roots. The first (KD) points to the pivot or point upon which everything turns. The second (Ash) suggests a circle that unfolds from that point with power and heat.

To become holy in Aramaic sense then means to create separate space for whatever becomes the pivot of our lives, the axis on which our universe turns. In this way, we clarify the essence of our being so that we can find our unique place in the cosmic Unity. We fully individuate – which feels like a process of separation – in order to enrich the whole texture of the reality of Alaha. Our holiness is fulfilled when we recognise and pursue the purpose of our lives, when we realise our own “I am”. This sense of *qadash* resonates with another saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas:

*Cleave a piece of wood, (the) I am is there;
lift up a stone, you will find me there also. (Saying 77.2-3)*

Gospel of Thomas/ Bible Study group will meet on 25th November 10.30 for 11am start – 5pm at Glasgow Meeting House.

Theme will be *Kenosis* – the process of emptying oneself to embrace the Divine.

All welcome. Please contact Margaret Roy at margaret.roy@btinternet.com.

A Perilous Neglect

What makes for grounded and life-giving ministry in our Quaker meetings? It was in reading *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the 1948 autobiography of the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, that my thoughts further consolidated about this question that is vexing many longer-standing Friends today.

Merton was born in 1915 of artist parents at Prades in southern France. His father was a New Zealander, his mother an American, and while neither seem to have been fully signed up Friends, Merton remarks: ‘Mother went to the Quakers, and sat with them in their ancient meeting house. This was the only kind of religion for which she had any use.’

It was taken for granted, he says, that he and his brother ‘might be allowed to tend in that direction too.’ However, on a visit to New York in 1933 he attended a meeting for worship at Flushing in the Queens district. Just as he was settling down, somebody got up and delivered a jarring piece of ministry that seemed to him devoid of any calling of the Holy Spirit. It was the straw that led him to conclude of Quakers: ‘They are like all the rest. In other churches it is the minister who hands out

the commonplaces, and here it is liable to be just anybody.... I cannot see that they will ever be anything more than what they claim to be – a *Society of Friends*.’

Now, allow me to proceed along the scenic route. Recently, while travelling in the Scottish Highlands, I found that the long-haul bus company had put in place a new system by which seats needed to be booked in advance. There was a long queue and I had to make another connection. As I anxiously made enquiries as to my prospects, a woman stepped out of the queue. She’d have been in her sixties, conservatively dressed, and her hair was tied back in a manner that I took, perhaps, to signify adherence one of the more ‘strict’ Presbyterian denominations. ‘I have a seat booking,’ she said, brightly. ‘If you can’t get on, I can give you mine.’ It would have set her own journey back by several hours. Fortunately, I got a seat, and a couple of hours later when making the connection I took the opportunity to find out more about her.

Certainly not a Presbyterian! On the contrary, she said, she was a ‘hermit nun’. She spoke it under her breath as she didn’t want the whole bus to know.

I’ve encountered several such do-it-yourself ‘religious’ in recent years. In her case, she is answerable not to a religious order but directly to her bishop. She has settled quietly in a Highland village to live in contemplative prayer away from all the hurly burly of the world. Or so I thought initially. ‘What do you pray about?’ I asked.

‘I’m a retired obstetrician,’ she replied. ‘I spent most of my life working in Africa. These days I devote myself to the study of torture in the world. I read about what’s happening and the research literature – both medical and military - and then I pray for the victims.’

‘How do you do that?’

‘Just ... *by holding them in God*.’

And that was it. Like the gaggle of Christ’s followers at the foot of the cross, helpless in every way except by dint of being loving presences, this woman held the pain of all the world. If I were ever on the torture table, I’d be glad to feel that folks like her exist.

She told me that she loved the work of Thomas Merton, but that she wouldn’t want to be a Quaker. It led me later into thinking of his criticism, and her remark that he perhaps had influenced. But as I later re-read Merton’s comments, I thought, ‘he’s missed a tick.’ And maybe too, she’d missed a tick.

If so, they’ve missed a tick because we too, we Friends too often miss a tick.

Our Quaker meetings can be only ‘gathered in the light’, our spoken words only ‘ministry’, if like the hermit nun we too are *holding them in God*.

Our name is not as Merton wrote, The Society of Friends. Such is merely shorthand. Our name, including that owned by Flushing Meeting in New York, is The *Religious* Society of Friends.

We must hold that in the light. Our elders and our overseers must elucidate accordingly. Especially those who come amongst us knowing not for what we stand. Or looking for a therapy group. Or smarting still from spiritual abuse elsewhere. Or seeking out a launching pad for ego. Ministry is not about the ‘me’, not even about the ‘we’, but an opening of the way of God. If we lose that, we lose what gives us life. That’s a loss far more than reputation.

We must welcome angels coming unawares and yet retain our watchfulness. Said As an oracle of Isaiah:

‘Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night?’ The watchman says, ‘Morning comes but also night. If you would inquire, inquire; Come back again.’

As a Friend in Glasgow Meeting put it to me many years ago, ‘It is perilous to neglect your spiritual life.’ That was where it left me, that meeting with the hermit nun.

Alastair McIntosh, Glasgow Meeting

I took the following from a sermon by George MacLeod of the Iona Community as for me it was a meeting place between the Buddhist concept of the Radiant Body and the Christian – Ed.

Take us to the mountaintop today. Dear Lord, convince us of Your radiant body, alive with light and pouring out its freshness from above to radiate the whole round world. But recall us to our allegiance. We are the only radiant body that You have got. If love does not start with us, it will never start at all. Pentecost is not some future hope. The rushing, mighty wind of peace is howling to get into the shuttered, fetid prison we have contrived, buttressed by our prejudices, barred and bolted by our fears. Give us faith in peace again, faith in your way of peace. It will never come from the Vatican, or bishops or assemblies. It will only come from You to each. It can only come through each of us right now. Take the terror from us. Give us faith.

Or failing that – give us the honesty not to pray to You for peace at all. We ask it for Your sake indeed.

Exert from ‘The Galilean Language’ in The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory. George MacLeod

Draw Breath

By Geoffrey Weeden

Breathe in the quiet purpose of this place;

Through outward stillness, seek a calm within.

Here we can find forgiveness and forgive;

Here feel the healing miracle begin.

Breathe out the busy world, the teeming mind,

The follies, fears and failures of the week;

Breathe out contention, pettiness and pride,

And wait in trust for that of God to speak.

Breathe in communion, friend with quiet friend,

Each drawing closer in this timeless hour;

As all our different needs and gifts are drawn

To the one source of comfort, love and power.

Breathe out at last, to God, the heart's full thanks

That we have seen this vision, known this grace;

Renewed through love, let us that love extend

Through all our daily life beyond this place.

NEW BOOKS IN GLASGOW MEETING LIBRARY

Elizabeth and Amer Dawes, Joycelin. *Discernment and inner knowing: making decisions for the best.* FeedARead Publishing, 2017. Q/DAW

Valenti, Devon and Atlas, Simon. *Green is not a colour: environmental issues every generation needs to know.* Lightning Lab, 2015. S/VAL

Yearly Meeting. *Tabular statements.* BYM, 2017. O/BRI

Librarian, Paul Burton will send books at cost of postage. paulfburton@btinternet.com

Local News

Our wedding is on Saturday, 26th of August, at 2:30pm in Glasgow Meeting House. We would be delighted if you could join us in Meeting for Worship. There will be tea and cakes afterwards. It would be helpful if you could let us know (through email to: amer.s.syed@gmail.com) if you are coming so we can make sure we have enough cake!



Congratulations to

Phillida Ball and John
Sillince on their
marriage at a Meeting
for Worship on Saturday,
22nd April, 2017 at
Milngavie Town Hall

Arran and Argyll Friends are holding a joint Meeting for Worship in Lochranza Village Hall on Sunday September 24 at 12 noon. This will be followed by a shared lunch. Argyll Friends plan to catch the 11.20 ferry from Clonaig to Lochranza and return on the ferry that leaves Lochranza at 15.15. Arran Friends are able to meet the Ardrossan ferry in Brodick if any Friends would like to join us using this ferry. Contact Tessa Smith 01770 830622 to make arrangements.

Letter to families and meeting clerks
Welcome all families – another family weekend

We are planning another event for Quaker families in Scotland. It is an opportunity for adults to relax and be together, and for the children and young people to get to know each other before moving on to Summer Shindig and link weekends.

The Scottish Friends Family Weekend will take place at Pitlochry Youth Hostel the weekend of 20th -22nd October 2017. The hostel offers accommodation in dormitories and family rooms for 53 people.

The cost for the weekend (including accommodation for the 2 nights and food) is:

Under 3 years of age – free

Children & young people aged 4-17 years of age - £40.00

Adults - £60.00

Please do not be put off by the price of the weekend, as we are able to offer bursary help. Please contact Madeleine Harding if you need some financial help with this event. There are a few options we can apply for.

The hostel is self-catering so we will prepare and eat meals as a community.

The weekend is open to families with children of any age accompanied by one or more adults. However, we encourage and will give priority to families with children between the ages of 9 and 11. The weekend will help them to connect with their peers in preparation for Summer Shindig. Places will be allotted on a first come first served basis.

There will be an organised programme for children and young people of all ages for some of the weekend. Outside these times children and young people are the responsibility of their accompanying adults. Please contact us if you are able and would like to volunteer in any way with the programme planning or facilitation.

If you are interested please complete the enclosed form and send to Madeleine Harding with a cheque for the required amount. (Or complete the form and contact Madeleine Harding about bursary help).

We are looking forward to a weekend of sharing, being together as families, relaxing, having fun and remembering our Quaker values through some periods of worship together.

Madeleine Harding

23c Stanley Road, Edinburgh, EH6 4SE

Tel:07990 683746

Email: madinleith@gmail.com

The weekend is organised with the support of Scotland GeneTruth and Personal
Reflection

Enquirers' Day

on 30th September 2017

at Dunblane Cathedral Halls from 10am to 4.30pm

Peace Simplicity Honesty Truth

This is a day is people who know little or nothing about Quakers, and for those who have been around Quakers a while and want to explore further. Come and discover more about core Quaker beliefs, experience Quaker worship and hear from Quakers how they live their lives.

This will be a chance to find out what it means to be a Quaker. There will be lots of opportunity to ask questions and find out why some Friends joined the Society of Friends. They will share their experience and talk about how it affects their lives.

Do let people in your Meeting know about it and advertise it as widely as possible. The cost will be £25.00 but there is bursary help from either your local or Area Meeting.

An application form is available by emailing gillreid3@btinternet.com or ringing 01292 319050.



BRYAN BOWES

Bryan Bowes, editor of this newsletter before me, attends Milngavie Meeting. He has been a member since 1986 and was an Elder for six years . He was born in Beckenham, South London in 1932, the youngest of three sons.

His father was a WW1 conscientious objector in Bermondsey, London. Before his two year prison sentence he was in contact with a Dr. Salter, who was a founder member of the Independent Labour Party in the early 1900's. For Bryan, leftwing sympathies were a childhood family influence and his middle brother was collecting funds in a local church for the Spanish Civil War at the young age of eight.

Bryan joined the Communist party when he was seventeen, just before going to London University to study botany at Imperial College. His political background had an adverse affect on his subsequent National Service stint in the Army. With a degree he wanted to join the Education Corp; however, they decided after several weeks initial "square bashing" that he would be potentially a dangerous influence amongst the soldiers with his Communist leanings. Instead, overnight, he was ordered to pack his kitbag, depart from his Carlisle camp and report to the Service Corps in Aldershot to train as a driver of 3 ton trucks! (On his first driving test, he crashed into an oncoming car but eventually, on his 5th attempt, gained his licence.). Later whilst serving in Germany, an officer noted that with a degree he was wasted driving trucks, so he was sent to the petroleum laboratory where he set about helping test the fuel supply for NATO at the height of the Cold War! *They were obviously unaware of his peculiar sense of humour – when several years later, his mother-in-law said she hated mushrooms, he ground them up to put into the stew which she later said was delicious. Just testing!*

After army service, his mother was an influence in urging him into teaching, so he returned to London University to gain a PGCE. He was offered a place as biology teacher at the school where he was attending for teaching practice. But he had decided that being a schoolmaster was not for him and instead became an Assistant Lecturer at the SE Technical College in Barking, East London. There he taught botany and general biology to all, ranging from degree level to nursery nurses. There he was a bit embarrassed to be ogled by some young female students. Was that why he moved to Birkbeck College in London University? Here he did his PhD, whilst also working at the Royal Veterinary College teaching botany/zoology to 1st year students.

After he married Ruth, a Swiss national, who was a social worker in London, they with their two young children, went to live in Switzerland. Initially he lectured (in English!) for a year in Zurich University and then moved to the Department for Electron Microscopy in the Federal Technical University. This stood him in good stead when he came back to Britain to Glasgow University in 1964, where he was Senior Lecturer in the Botany Department from 1968 until retirement in 1997. During this period he took two sabbaticals: one to Harvard University, USA and later to Queensland University at Armadale, Australia.

He states that his greatest academic achievement lies in several text books which he wrote or edited/co-authored: A Colour Atlas of Plant Structure (later updated with a co-author); Trees and Forests - Colour Guide; Colour Guide - Plant Propagation and Conservation. It may come as no surprise to those who have appreciated his photography in WSQN that the outstanding photographs in these volumes are mainly his own. He says Quakers have always loved nature where he finds something fundamental, maybe the Creator – he doesn't know. Quakerism has always been in his background, with his father knowing the prominent London Quaker (later an MP) Dr. Salter both from the ILP and subsequently when his father was imprisoned as a conscientious objector. Bryan's mother had a great admiration for Salter too.

But the death of his wife, at the age of 51, shook him greatly; pushing him to train as a cancer counsellor for Tak Tent. The weekly meetings and endless self-examination, lasting over several years, awakened his spiritual side. When he met his second wife, Diane who was a Quaker, he started to attend meetings. He found in Quakers all he needed – they were tolerant, liberal and believed 'that of God in all people'.

He has strong views. As a student he sold the Daily Worker in South Kensington. When Stalin died, various people who knew him by sight commiserated. He still doesn't trust much of what the West says about Russia, or the causes of conflict in Syria, Libya and on other flash-points. However, he is now he is more tolerant of other viewpoints. But he doesn't like that politics in Britain, for example, is often more into creating enemies than friends, that we denigrate the other side instead of looking for the good. We had a very interesting discussion about politics. Though Bryan is less active, he is still a republican "leftie" and no less emotionally involved in world events than earlier in his life.

Fall fearless into love – Cynthia Bourgeault.

Spiritual practice: just let the fear come up and fall through it to the other side.

SURRENDER is inner opening – paraphrased from Cynthia Bourgeault.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

26 th August	AREA MEETING AT TARBERT 11.30 – 4pm.
9 th September	GENERAL MEETING in Dundee.
11 th September	AREA MEETING by telephone.
24 th September	Arran and Argyll Friends joint meeting in Lochranza.
30 th September	Enquirer's Day.
14 th October	AREA MEETING IN DUNBLANE.
20-22 nd October	Scottish Friends Family Weekend
18 th November	GENERAL MEETING in Aberdeen.
25 th November	Thomas Group/Bible Study Mini-Conference
4 th December	AREA MEETING by telephone.

Future dates for General Meeting in 2018/19

10 th March	<i>South East</i> ,
9 th June	<i>North</i>
15 th September	<i>West</i>
17 th November	<i>East</i>
9 th March	<i>West</i>



HOLD IN THE LIGHT

Will Miles in prison – Glasgow members will know him.

Jerry Mullen now suffering terminal cancer.

Muriel Robertson in bed with her chest and arthritis.

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PS. Telephone 0141 248 84 93

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

The deadline for contributions for the next issue of WSQN is 15th September. Copy should be send in Word format to the editors Alastair McIver or Margaret Roy at margaret.roy@btinternet.com