

# *West Scotland*

## *Quaker News*

*September 2013*

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*The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).*

*Charity of a Beggar by Courbet*





## Clerk's Letter

We sometimes get surprised when other people don't understand how things are supposed to be done, but we don't always make that plain. Newcomers to Quakers can sometimes find the in-house language (and use of acronyms!) bewildering. Of course every group needs its own language to be precise, but we need to think about it from time to time and make sure it is accessible.

For example, I sometimes receive emails or letters from Friends, addressed to me as clerk, beginning 'Dear Mr Hutchinson'. I hope they won't mind if I comment on this. Quakers don't use titles: it is an 'ancient' testimony of ours reflecting our understanding of equality – that all are of equal worth to God and hence of equal respect to us. We don't wish to distinguish between people in terms of their hierarchical position. So as 'Mister' or 'Missus' were once used only for a certain class of people we've always avoided using such honorifics. Quakers are distinguished by addressing people by their names only – 'Elizabeth Windsor' or 'Charles Stuart'. This causes great difficulty nowadays when you have to fill in on-line forms which insist on the box for Mr, Mrs, Ms or whatever being ticked correctly before you can complete it. I've known Friends take this latter point up with various companies and government to make the point for equality. But is all this still valid? I suspect many of us do tick the box and may even, like me, find ourselves using one set of norms for Quakers and another in 'ordinary life'. We could well think about this. Our testimonies – equality, peace, etc, are not ends in themselves but reflections of our understanding of how the Spirit moves and works. All people are of equal worth (not equal as in being the same, but of equal worth). There is no distinction between 'religion' and 'life' so we act the same all the time.

As social norms change and widen, we may find though that how we act out our testimonies may no longer fit. Thus our use of equal language - using the same phrases to address all people, not distinguishing between in and out groups, got left behind. Originally Quakers used 'thee' instead of 'you' as this was fairer and more equal. It caused huge offence as social positions were challenged. Now to use 'thee' (as in the Quaker phrase I have used 'Thee speaks my mind') is nothing but an affectation in English as we've lost the use of the word thee altogether and all use the same 'you'. Similarly, we lost plain dress (the old Quaker garb) and 'hat honour' (keeping your hat on even in the presence of a social 'superior'). Quakers moved on from these as they were no longer necessary to reflect the testimony.

So if the title 'Mr' is used for all adult men and is used with the intent of respect, where are we now in not using it? I need to think about this some more. I've noticed two other changes in the way Quakers address people. We didn't use titles but we always called Friends by their full name, never just the first. That would be familiar. Even people you knew well would be still be 'Margaret Fell' or 'George Fox', never, never, never 'Margaret' or 'George'. Heaven forbid. Quakers of a certain age like me still find ourselves using the old way – I sign myself Michael J Hutchinson and address some old friends as 'Edward H Milligan' or 'David J Hall' when I write their names on an envelope. Now, I notice many Friends never use their surname, even on labels, as it seems less equal. This can be trying for Friends of little memory like myself.

But more seriously, I also noticed in the Friend recently a (very good) article which referred to a former prime minister whose actions were not thought to be helpful to the Spirit as 'Blair'. Not 'Tony Blair'. I was disturbed by this usage, as it finds that we can put down people whose actions we do not approve of by just using their surname. Is this treating all as of equal worth and potential? We have to be peaceful and act equally not just because it is 'right' but because it is the nature of love, the Spirit, God. When we are in tune with it we can do no other. It is in the intention not the form.

**Michael Hutchinson** (*Glasgow Meeting*)

## **West Scotland Area Meeting at Tarbert 24th August 2013**

As always, it was good to be greeted by a warm welcome and splendid refreshments by Argyll Friends and to have time with Friends from other Meetings. After a period of Worship during which we held in the Light, Alison Gean and all her family, and Margaret Morton, the Assistant Clerk, read section 4.02 from Quaker Faith and Practice concerning the role of Area Meeting, Michael Hutchinson, our new Clerk, steered us ably and gently through a busy agenda.

Much of the review of the Taskforce Report involved consideration of the ways in which Friends could meet or interact with other Meetings and the need for such meetings in so widespread an Area. How to help Friends attend next year's Yearly Meeting in Bath was discussed. Apparently Wigtown Meeting had already considered hiring a flat in Bath for the week which seemed an excellent idea! Meetings are asked to consider these matters and share any ideas they might have.

Kate Gulliver introduced the Annual Report and Accounts from 2012 in a lively and upbeat way that made money and the flow of it an exciting area of discussion. It became clear that the using of a bequest to West of Scotland Area Meeting from Barbara Organ, already amounting to £40,000, needs sensitive handling and Meetings are asked to make suggestions as to how the money can be spent to enhance the life and work of Area Meeting. The Trustees Report made it very clear just how much work they do and we expressed our gratitude.

Lunchtime, where three excellent soups were served by Argyll friends, provided another period of catching up and interaction. After lunch we heard the request from Tobermory Meeting that their name might be changed to Mull and Iona Local Meeting. This was agreed and we were delighted to hear of the growth and liveliness of this Meeting. Matters of Membership and dates and venues were also discussed and are fully reported in the minutes.

Arran Friends had to leave early for their ferry and were seen off with a variety of delicious cakes to eat on their journey. The slipway at Clonaig was being repaired by divers and Friends had a very interesting twenty minutes watching their efforts before boarding the ferry on a lovely evening, whilst reflecting peacefully upon a happy and worthwhile day.

**Judith Baines** (*Ayrshire & Arran Meeting*)



## AN OLD MAN PLANTS COCONUT

*An old, old man dug in his garden,  
Working hard to plant a tree.  
His grandson said: "I beg your pardon.  
What you're doing puzzles me."*

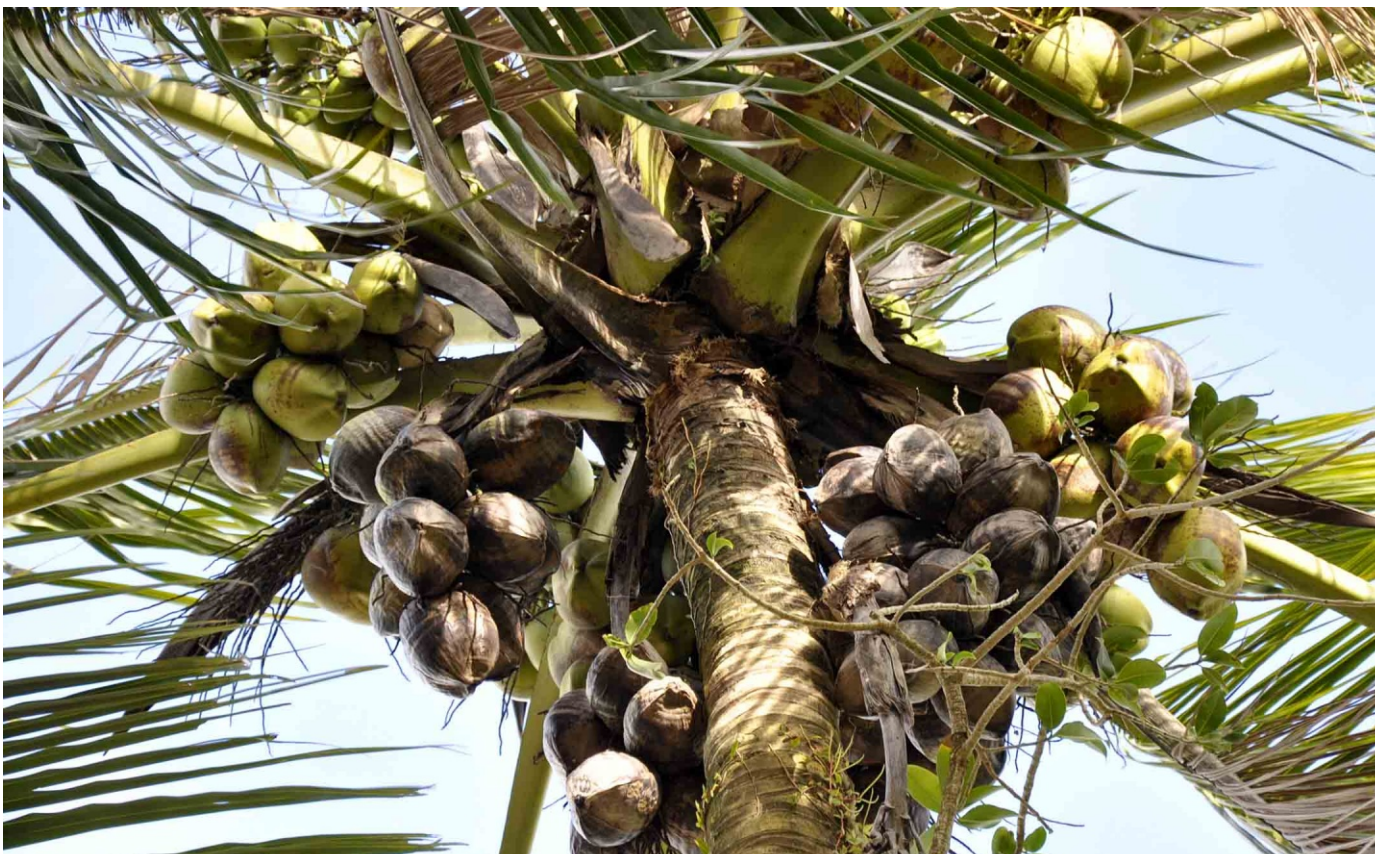
*"You're ninety now. Have you no fears  
Of dying while your tree takes root?  
A coconut takes many years  
Before it ripens and bears fruit."*

*"My boy, I'm thinking of tomorrow,  
And you must learn to do the same.  
This land of ours is what we borrow  
From those to come, and bear our name.*

*"I leave a legacy behind me  
From which, myself, I will not gain.  
There should be no need to remind me  
My labour may have been in vain."*

*If a man of ninety's growing  
Trees that he will never see,  
Today's Youth should be sowing  
The seeds of our prosperity.*

**Joe Latham (1928-2003)**  
*(Ashanti Ballads & Stories by permission of Mary Latham)*



## Cornwall Friends' Concern

*(Cornwall Friends recently wrote (see below) to all Area Meetings to ask if their concern on drug policy could be tested and supported. Chapter 13 of Quaker faith & practice reminds us how to test concern (13.02 onwards), so if any Friends wish to test support they may do so through their local business meeting sending a minute to Area Meeting. This matter will not otherwise come to the agenda of Area Meeting. Michael Hutchinson, Clerk, West Scotland Area Meeting.)*

Quaker concern regarding drug policy:

In the 18th century in England, Quakers established the first modern hospital for the treatment of mental disorders – the Retreat at York. Previously, the method was to imprison the mentally ill, often chained to walls and living in appalling conditions. Today we have people addicted to drugs who are imprisoned for using illegal drugs. We are back to the 18th century, imprisoning people because of their health problems. The churches in Britain have not spoken out about this punishment. It is time that Quakers did so.

For some three years, Cornwall Area Meeting has been examining and discussing current drugs policy. It is the Area Meeting's wish to disseminate its views and gather support from Friends country-wide. What follows is a paper produced by the Working Group appointed by Cornwall Area Meeting to take their concern forward.

“Drugs present a large scale contemporary problem which affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the UK and the lives of whole communities locally, nationally and globally. Production and supply of drugs is in the hands of organised crime and so is associated with other areas of criminal activity such as human trafficking, the arms trade, prostitution, gambling, pornography and money laundering. In 2011/12 there were known to be over 300,000\* opiate and cocaine dependent users in England. Between a third and a half of new receptions into prison are estimated to be problem drug users (between 45,000 and 65,000 prisoners in England and Wales).\*\*

Opinions about illegal drug policy are polarised and divided in a way that makes rational debate difficult. In the media, it is rare for these issues to be discussed rationally making full use of available evidence. No comparison is made with the massive impact of legal drugs such as alcohol or nicotine.

Calls for reform to the drugs policy framework have come from a number of eminent sources, some of whom conclude that the current policy increases harm caused by drugs rather than decreases it. The All Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform (APPG DPR) reporting in 2013, provides a measured appraisal of current drug policy.\*\*\* The report concludes that, in aiming to reduce the harms associated with illicit drugs, criminalisation is not only ineffective but also causes additional harms. United Nations Office for Drugs and Criminal Justice in "From Coercion to Cohesion" (2010)\*\*\*\* calls, on the basis of extensive evidence, for health based treatment for illegal drug users instead of punitive criminal justice measures. Cornwall Area Meeting focuses its concern on the individual drug user and supports the UNODC recommendations. It is not asking for the decriminalisation of the



sale/marketing of illegal drugs (legalisation) as this is, as yet, a highly contested vision. If, as the All Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform contend, current drugs policy increases rather than decreases drug-related harm to individuals or communities, Quakers should critically assess the need for policy reform. Focusing on policy will serve to enhance our concern for the individual. Quaker Faith and Practice reminds us of the links between the individual and the wider society (23.47) “Compassion, to be effective, requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and goodwill. What would be fatal would be for those with exceptional human insight and concern to concentrate on ministering to individuals, while those accepting responsibility for the design and management of organisations were left to become technocrats. What is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is”

We are not, as Great Britain Quakers, corporately engaged at the forefront of the debate about national or international drug policy. This is not a neutral position for, by our silence, we tacitly support the current policies that, some would argue, increase drug-related harm rather than decrease it.

As Quakers we should be asking the fundamental questions: is it right to criminalise a person who has a health related need? Should we be providing care and treatment or responding punitively to people’s needs? It is simply not ethical in our view to punish people for their vulnerability and in consequence have tens of thousands of people in prison. We ask Friends to examine the need to take action on this issue in order to abide by the principles of truth, equality and compassion.”

Referring to the Quaker testimonies, Chris Lawson wrote: “Finding ways of expressing the testimonies that are relevant to present times is a continuing challenge. Such expressions will not necessarily seem practical, tactful, sensible, expedient or in line with some current vogue of thinking, for they are based on what seems right in an absolute sense of inner conviction.” (QF&P 20.17) Cornish Quakers wish to share their sense of inner conviction with the Society of Friends as a whole, and to speak truth to power.

\*source: National Treatment Agency; \*\*source: Prison Reform Trust; \*\*\*APPGDPR (2013) ;\*\*\*\*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010) From Coercion to Cohesion: Treating Drug Dependence Through Health Care, Not Punishment

## Venues of Future Area Meetings

**2013**

*Saturday 12th October*

*Dunblane*

*Saturday 2nd December*

*Telephone*

**2014**

<i>Saturday, 25th January</i>	<i>Glasgow</i>
<i>Monday evening, 10th March</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
<i>Saturday, 12th April</i>	<i>Dumfries</i>
<i>Monday evening, 16th June</i>	<i>Telephone</i>
<i>Saturday, 23rd August</i>	<i>Argyll</i>
<i>Saturday, 11th October</i>	<i>Ayr</i>
<i>Monday evening, 1st December</i>	<i>Telephone</i>

**2015**

<i>Saturday, 17th January</i>	<i>Glasgow</i>
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## **Did you know about the WW1 Centenary in August 2014?**

*Glasgow has been chosen to host the focal point of the UK and Commonwealth's activities to mark the centenary of the start of World War I. Heads of state will be in the city next year for the closing ceremony of the 2014 Commonwealth Games on 3 August. The UK government has said the leaders will be invited to stay on for a special service at Glasgow Cathedral to commemorate the 100th anniversary. This will be followed by wreath laying at the cenotaph in George Square. Secretary of State Michael Moore said: "Next year's events to commemorate the First World War will reflect on the human cost of the conflict which involved those from across the UK as well as throughout the wider world. "A special service in Glasgow to remember the fallen and their sacrifice will be a fitting tribute to their memory and the attendance of Commonwealth leaders will add to the sense of occasion." The Lord Lieutenant, Glasgow's Lord Provost Sadie Docherty, will lead the service remembering Britain's role in a war. Lord Provost Docherty said: "I am delighted to announce that Glasgow will commemorate this significant milestone in our country's history by holding a range of events to mark the centenary year of the Great War, beginning with a special service at Glasgow Cathedral followed by a ceremony in George Square. "I know this is something that Glaswegians will want to be part of. They value their hard won freedoms and are extremely proud of their city's contribution. "I am also thrilled at the prospect of our Commonwealth cousins joining me, and the rest of Glasgow, on this important day of remembrance."*



## Alternative WW1 Commemoration Committee

In late June, on behalf of General Meeting, I attended the first meeting of The Alternative WW1 Commemoration Committee, Scotland. This committee apparently had its genesis in The Jimmy Reid Foundation and inevitably had a "leftie" flavour, but I felt that it was very well worth my attendance and for Quakers Scotland to be involved in presenting an alternative and more realistic appraisal of WW1 and its effects on Scotland/UK. It seems unlikely that this will be forthcoming from government and other semi-official bodies.

Various important issues around WW1 were discussed (present attempts by some historians to whitewash Britain's motives for its involvement in this War? Why celebrate a world disaster? What are David Cameron's reasons and objectives in pushing for this Commemoration?). It is planned to prepare over the summer short critiques of these matters for a publication to be distributed to schools etc.

Bob Holman - a Baptist academic/social worker in Easterhouse (who often contributes interesting letters to The Guardian and has visited Glasgow Meeting House) - suggested that Quakers should seek out the records/history of Scottish Quakers in resisting WW1 conscription and any links to the ILP and other anti-war organisations. Paul Burton has already disinterred some Scottish Quaker records from this time.

The other suggestion Bob Holman made was whether Glasgow Meeting House might host a special Alternative Meeting to be held at the same time as the Official Commemoration of WW1 - already scheduled for Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday August 3rd 2014. I thought this an excellent idea and it could, of course, be extended to Quaker Meetings in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and elsewhere.

I was quite excited and uplifted by Alternative Committee meeting last June and strongly feel that Quakers Scotland should be actively involved in presenting Friends perspectives on Britain's involvement in WW1. I spoke to the September General Meeting in Perth and Minute 5 (Alternative World War 1 Commemoration) was then agreed, which reads in part as:

*In Scotland, the Jimmy Reid Foundation has formed a committee to consider alternative ways to commemorate World War 1 - There is no memorial in Scotland to those who resisted the war on grounds of conscience. One proposal from the committee is that Quakers in Scotland host an event in August 2014 to represent non-militaristic perspectives on the centenary. We have heard that Northern Friends Peace Board have produced a pack on this topic and are hoping to work in schools to promote reflective discussion. We suggest that Bryan works with Area Meetings through their NFPB representatives to consider the matter further and how the work of NFPB can be strengthened.*

I hope to speak about this at the next AM in Dunblane - please let me have your comments/suggestions on the venue(s) and form of any Alternative Commemoration service which Quakers could offer to their local communities.

**Bryan Bowes (Milngavie Meeting)**

## Scottish Friends speak out against Trident

### *Letter sent to all MSPs & MPs by Clerk of Quakers Scotland:*

Dear -----

RE: Quaker opposition to the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons

I write to you on behalf of Quakers in Scotland. As part of our ongoing peace testimony Quakers have a long-held belief that Britain's possession of nuclear weapons is untenable because their use is unconscionable: they have the potential to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people and to cause environmental catastrophe.

While Britain's current nuclear 'deterrent' will remain operational until 2028, the decision about replacing Trident must be made by 2016. Therefore, it is now that the country has the opportunity to take a historic decision to reduce our reliance on these weapons, which no one in their right mind wishes to see used. Although the decision will not be taken in this current Parliament, we believe that it is wasteful and immoral to spend £4 billion on the procurement of 'long lead' items before the Final Gate decision in 2016. A majority of the population of Scotland oppose the renewal of Trident with its high costs, especially at this time of austerity, when the funds could be freed for peaceful purposes that would enhance the lives of us all.

Quakers assert that genuine security comes not from deterrence but from the recognition of the inherent worth of every person in a society free from the threat of violence, where human needs are met. Nuclear 'deterrents' encourage proliferation. Following the logic of 'deterrence', every nation should acquire nuclear weapons. As Mohamed El Baradei, former Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, stressed at the NPT Review Conference in 2005: "As long as some countries place strategic reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent, other countries will emulate them. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking otherwise."

We believe that Trident replacement is incompatible with our Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments, as it would run against the spirit, if not the letter, of the UK's obligation under the NPT to work towards total disarmament. Many people consider disarmament possible only in a multilateral context, prompted by unilateral gestures of cautious goodwill. By choosing not to replace Trident, the UK could play a leading role in furthering nuclear disarmament worldwide. We urge you to give this opportunity your support, and hope and pray that you will.

Yours sincerely

## Speaking to Clutter

*Glasgow Meeting House, 17th November 1-5pm*



The media portrayal of hoarders is often indecent and always distressing. Closer to home, most of us know of someone who is affected by clutter. Maybe it is an elderly friend living alone, who ought to move for health reasons, but can't because they have too much stuff that they can neither physically move or emotionally let go of; or alternatively it is a busy friend who is not coping with the emails, mail and circulars that arrive unbidden each day, causing their daily rhythm to slow down and them to become depressed; or maybe it is someone whose books, clothes and beloved collections are overwhelming their loved ones, those whom they share space and/or time with.

What do our Quaker Testimonies of Peace, Truth, Simplicity, Equality and Sustainability have to say to such sufferings? What Advices and Queries can we draw from our personal experiences? Glasgow Friend and passionate declutterer Zem Moffat invites all to a Creative Listening discernment Session on Clutter, at Elmbank, 1-5pm on Sunday 17th November. It will be an afternoon of sharing and mutual learning, out of which I hope will come some useful advices that can then be circulated to Friends further afield. If you would like to come, please let me know personally (or by phone or email, see below) in good time. It follows a shared lunch on the 3rd Sunday of the month, so it will be good to be aware of numbers!

Furthermore, on Saturday 16th November there will be a Simply Clear declutter workshop (which now run monthly). To find out more, please visit: [www.insightfulmoves.com](http://www.insightfulmoves.com); [zem@insightfulmoves.com](mailto:zem@insightfulmoves.com); Tel 07971600301

**Zem Moffat** (*Glasgow Meeting*)



## Milngavie Meeting Report for 2012

Milngavie Meeting was founded some 40 years ago in order to relieve the pressure on Glasgow meeting. It immediately attracted local attention and recently more widespread interest as a small meeting. Today it can achieve double figures at most of its meetings. But still it is ageing. We have in the past two years lost our two youngest members who were also our two successive correspondents. It is perhaps as well we do not have to advertise the post. Once a year we also greet our youngest members who hail from Seattle and spend a month in Scotland.

In unfortunate circumstances at that time our response to the vibrancy survey was restricted to seven responders, but we were pleased to note that the Friends' House summary of results gave them as percentages to two places of decimals - implying that our number was in the range 1,000 to 9,999. Obviously we are resilient! We have continued in our many Society and community interests. Although we have no specific Meeting project we do contribute to both local ecumenical activities and general communal concerns.

Our finances have been backed for over 20 years by the legacy of £8,000 left to us by Edith Garty-Jones. Of this £4,000 was loaned and later given to Yearly Meeting and the rest is generally employed in donations by the Meeting to such organisations as Loaves and Fishes. At present this fund stands at about £1,400 and will run out completely in 4-5 years. Thereafter such donations will have to come out of general income and may therefore be limited. At present this income is sufficient to cover expenses of c. £50 per month. (£36 for rooms and £15 for advert in local paper.) Using the Fraser Centre - a public centre for old people - and our regular advertisements show that our meeting is active.

**Norman Peacock**

## Area Meeting in Dunblane Saturday October 12th

*For further details, please contact the Clerk.*

***The deadline for the next issue of West of Scotland Quaker News is November 10th. Copy should be sent to the editor Bryan Bowes preferably in word or plain text email to: [botany64@waitrose.com](mailto:botany64@waitrose.com) or by post on paper or disc to: 3 West Chapelton Lane, Bearsden, Glasgow G61 2DF. Telephone 0141 942 3346***

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 8493