

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting

Area Meeting

8th February 2025

Attending:

27 Friends joined online for all or part of Area Meeting held over a morning and afternoon session. 10 from Forres, 5 from Inverness, 10 from Aberdeen, 2 from Shetland. And 1 guest speaker from Northern Friends Peace Board

Prevented:

Nigel Dower was prevented from joining in the morning due to a prior commitment to QCCIR business

Elders:

Anthony Buxton agreed to serve as Elder for the Meeting.

Minutes:

Membership:

01/25 We record the death of our Friend Marian Burrell (Skye), who died peacefully at her home on the 27th May 2024. Clerking errors have meant that this minute has not been recorded until now.

Marian brought a lot of gentle wisdom and cheerfulness to our Meeting and we miss her dearly. In the months before her death her determination to engage with life and to be present with us despite being so aware of her mortality was striking. A wonderful funeral service took place in Edinbane Hall on Wednesday 5th June 2024 and it was well attended by family, neighbours and Friends.

02/25 We record the death of our Friend Ann Galbraith (Skye), who died on Saturday 30th November 2024.

Along with her husband Alasdair, Ann kept the Skye Quaker Meeting going until Ann's ailments combined to weaken her capacity. A memorial Meeting in the manner of Friends was held for Ann on Friday 10th January, in Skeabost Village Hall. Ministry celebrated her capacity to make and care for friends, to organise things and laugh a lot. She contributed much to the local community, to the local choir and archaeology and, until ill health prevented her, she helped keep the Skye Quaker Meeting alive.

03/25 We record the death of our Friend Lis Nicholson (Shetland), who died peacefully in Lerwick hospital on Tuesday 7th January following a stroke at her home on Unst.

Her funeral was held in Baltasound, Unst, on the 5th February. It was a service that blended the practice of Church of Scotland and Quakers, opened with some live and beautiful harp music. Jill Blackadder introduced a period of 15 minutes of Quaker worship with some brief reflections about Quakers and Lis. There were also hymns of Lis' choosing and we heard a brief history of Lis' full life. The church was almost full of people and there were many affectionately shared memories of Lis and a life well-lived. Lis was buried with her husband Jim in the beautiful and remote Easting burial ground with the aid of family members and friends including Andrew Blackadder..

04/25 The Clerk is advised by the Pastoral and Spiritual Care Group that we can **resign Sally**

Blackledge's membership. She has been on our records for Aberdeen Meeting for several years without any contact, despite efforts to contact her by Aberdeen Friends. Friends House only have her on record as being associated with North Scotland, so it appears she may have moved away but has not transferred her membership and may have let her connection with Quakers lapse. The Clerk will advise Friends House that Sally's name can come out of membership records.

05/25 We record the resignation of Caroline Wilson (Forres) from membership. Caroline asked to resign her membership in correspondence with Anthony Buxton, after many months considering her membership to the Religious Society of Friends. The Clerk will advise Friends House that Caroline's name can come out of membership records.

06/25 Tabular Statement

This year we have recorded the following changes in membership:

- Aberdeen – down 3 to 33
- Forres – up 1 to 16
- Inverness – up 2 to 53
- Lochaber & Lorn – stable at 7
- Orkney – steady at 11
- Shetland – down 2 to 11

For the Area Meeting as a whole our membership has reduced by 2 to 131, with 3 Friends moving to the area and 3 joining the Religious Society of Friends. We recorded 4 deaths and 2 resignations. Our estimate for attenders is 113 across the Area Meeting.

Our Area Meeting total of members has remained largely steady, with:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
135	135		136	139	133	131

Finance

07/25 We record receipt of £77.56 from donations at Peter Heald's memorial Meeting. Donations were taken to be split equally between Area Meeting, the Quaker Housing Trust and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). (Andrew Collins – Aberdeen Meeting Clerk – has been copied a letter of thanks from BTO for the donation.)

08/25 The book of members and attenders in Scotland is an important means by which we network and maintain contact with Friends across Scotland. We approve the Area Meeting paying for the cost of our allocation & distribution of the book to Friends in North Scotland.

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) – Philip Austin & Liz Stanyer

09/25 We have heard from our Friend Philip Austin who has summed up the work of NFPB, and from Liz Stanyer, our representative on NFPB about her experiences of engaging with the organisation. The role of NFPB is to advise on and encourage peace in all its breadth. Philip notes that the breadth of where peace is or is not found is almost limitless, and combined with the scale of conflict around the world, the challenge is daunting. We are reminded to remain in the struggle, to hold onto a vision and to work in solidarity with others in the moment. Philip read the following quotation:

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it”
("Pirkei Avot" 2:16)

NFPB works collaboratively with a range of organisations and networks. Liz told us about the encouragement gained from networking with people across the north of Britain, that it is heartening

to hear the stories of voices that counter militarisation. We have been encouraged to develop the resources that will encourage us all to raise our voices for peace to challenge the narrative of endless conflict.

For further information and inspiration we can visit the following online resource:

- NFPB: <https://nfpb.org.uk>
- The Peace & Service network hosts monthly online gatherings, open to all. Next ones are 13th Feb and 13th March. Times vary. More info: <https://fwccemes.org/emes/peace-and-service-consultation>
- Re-thinking Security: <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/#:~:text=Rethinking%20Security%20is%20a%20network%20of%20organisations%2C%20academics,for%20security%20based%20on%20justice%2C%20cooperation%20and%20sustainability.>
- The Network of Christian Peace Organisations: <https://ncpo.org.uk>
- Peace Pledge Union: <https://www.ppu.org.uk>

We thank Philip and Liz for joining us this morning.

10/25 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group – Carolyn Burch & Richard Raggett
We were referred to paper A, circulated in the weeks prior to AM.

We are asked to contribute to discernment on the future priorities for the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group 2026-2028.

We are supportive of the current list of priorities.

We acknowledge there is a great diversity of need in our society. That while we are limited to PEWG working with a devolved government, to work on big issues we, as individuals, may have to address our MP's but we can still ask MSP's to raise a Scottish voice on them. PEWG does collaborate with the Quaker Parliamentary Advocacy team in Friends House. The Quaker UN office has also done work on Carbon Capture and this is useful for the Scottish context (e.g. Peterhead natural gas power generator). We also acknowledge that we have had our voice heard by Scottish Enterprise in relation to support for arms companies and the human rights standards for exports and we know others campaign on this issue too.

There is desire to do more on Community Justice and PEWG is picking up on this in partnership with the Quaker Community Justice Working Group.

We have concerns for the cost of living crisis, cut backs on additional support services in schools and other local government cutbacks, the failure to listen to communities and mitigate the impacts of, for example, a UK wide energy strategy. We are hopeful that in addressing the development of community energy projects we might help mitigate the cost of living crisis and reduce the burden of large-scale energy distribution infrastructure.

With respect to communications, the Clerk invites anyone receiving the PEO's updates to pick key issues to rely on for distribution with the weekly North Scotland notices.

With respect to the impression of Quakers that government might take from our interactions with them, it might be summarised as: thoughtful, credible (well researched), representative and speaking with one, confident voice.

11/25 Events for Young Friends 2025

Anne Hitchen has provided the dates of events for Scottish Young Friends this year:

- 8th of March - Shindiggers welcome for a catch-up at GM
- 2nd - 4th of May Family Weekend in Pitlochry
- 13th to 15th June - INFORMAL get-together at Comrie Campsite, Braincroft, Crieff aimed at

giving Shindiggers a chance to catch up. Anyone wishing to attend needs to book their own campsite pitch.

We note that this year's dates for Junior Yearly Meeting have clashed with the Scottish exam period, which has caused some consternation for Scottish Young Friends and their Meetings. We acknowledge that the JYM planning group have a big challenges to find a best fit for JYM and that this year it is some Scottish students who will miss out. We hope that this can be rectified in future years so that Scottish students are not disadvantaged.

12/25 The Future of British Quakerism – Lynden Easterbrook & Sila Collins-Walden have reported back from the Future of British Quakerism conference held at Yarnfield in Staffordshire and online 18th-20th October last year.

They gave us a flavour of the presentations and some of their thoughts that they came with. There are many question, many unknowns, the statistics are not encouraging, but both Sila and Lynden came away hopeful inspired.

More information on the key note talks by Ben Pink Dandelion and Paul Parker can be found on these links:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/FoBQ. These resources are password protected, as they are currently intended only for those who attended the conference and the wider community of Quakers in Britain. The password to access the resources is: **FoBQ2024**

Following Lynden & Sila's presentations we had a period of open worship to consider the following questions:

- What do we need to let go of?
- What do we need to grow?
- What can we offer to the world?
- What is our vision for the future of British Quakerism?

There is a role for Quakers, the way we do business, the way we seek truth in our lives and offer respect, the way we are fully present in Meeting. Quakers can provide a welcome to all comers, we have a great strength in openness, a strength in diversity, we are a network of ideas and beliefs that finds unity by joined practice.

We must be open to change and take opportunities to free the spirit and turn burdens into a joy of service. Breaking up a role into smaller tasks can share a burden and provide opportunities for other Friends to share in a commitment. We might find new ways to use a Meeting House or find a new venue that is more welcoming, and open in the community. We live in hope that a unified Area Meeting for Scotland will release a new energy to our Meetings.

We can be imaginative in our Meetings, to tailor the need to those within our community, be that in being more family friendly or building greater contemplation and study.

We have heard this morning that we are not shy about engaging politically, we are demanding of a fairer, more peaceful society. Do we in our secular service let others know that it comes from Quaker foundations? Do we preach what we practice as well as practice what we preach?

We can be bolder in speaking out and in making our presence know. In whatever way we can stimulate a conversation about Quakers we have an opportunity to open someone's perceptions, be that in wearing a badge, explaining why we might not buy a raffle ticket or why we are upholding an Area Meeting instead of going out for the day.

Nominations:

13/25 We appoint Jane Booth to serve as Membership Clerk from this date to 31 December 2027,

or as required.

14/25 AM Nominations is still seeking names to serve with the Pastoral & Spiritual Care Group

15/25 Alastair Simmons and William Purser are being released from their roles on AM Nominations Committee. Can we ask the Spiritual Care Team to bring forward names of friends to replace them and we hope the matter will be reviewed by AM in May?

Future Area Meetings:

16/25 Pluscarden – Area Meeting Weekend

This is scheduled for 29-31 August 2025. The Clerk will schedule an evening meeting within the next three weeks to invite anyone to help organise the event and conclude on a theme for the weekend. One suggestion is to explore the resources mentioned by Philip from NFPB.

17/25 AM on 17th May, the clerk will make arrangements with Inverness Meeting to explore options for venue, etc.