

# The Northern Quaker

Autumn 2017

## North Scotland Area Meeting



Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemoration.  
Fisherman's Hut, Ness Islands, Inverness

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### Area Meetings for 2017

November 11th – Aberdeen

### Area Meetings for 2018

Feb 10 – 2018 – Inverness

May 5th 2018 – West or South; TBC

August 25th 2018 – residential AM

November 10th 2018 – Aberdeen

### General Meetings for Scotland in 2017

November 18th /19th 2017 North residential - Elgin

## Comments [^back to top](#)

Welcome to the latest edition of the Northern Quaker.

As you will notice, we are slightly out of sequence, for which I apologise. This is partly due to my own commitments, but also the lack of material; we thank everyone for their contributions, however, we always welcome more “copy”, so if you have read a book, watched a play, attended a meeting, or anything that you think might be of interest to others, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com).

I hope you enjoy the edition; if you are receiving this in the printed edition, please consider if you might wish to switch to the email version which contains coloured photographs as well as a “clickable” contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to [harrydhorsley@gmail.com](mailto:harrydhorsley@gmail.com).

## Notices [^back to top](#)

General Meeting for Scotland has circulated this letter in preparation for GM to be held in Elgin on 18 November:

Dear Friends,

The reason for this contact is to ensure that you and your meetings know how important it is to me, and GM Committee that you all know that GM (on 18th November in Elgin) is planning on having its main morning session titled Listening to North AM. I know that you have been thinking about how things are going for you all and I would like the rest of Scotland to know about your joys and difficulties. I would like you to feel supported, cared for and listened to. I hope that as a GM we can learn from how you overcome the distance issues etc.

As I read this it sounds a bit patronising. (It's not meant to be) I can't think of another way of saying, please consider how you would like to share at GM in November your unique situation as Quakers spread over such a wide

geographical area and any/all other thoughts you would like heard at GM. We will have some guests with us who may be able to add to our considerations. I know that your AM is in Aberdeen the week before and can't imagine that 2 trips are possible for all of you. I wonder if you have decided which one to go to, or who goes to which, or even if you are going to either!!

My plan is for the session to be held in a worship sharing way at first. We may then move to discussion. I would rather keep the plan simple and flexible so as to be able to be as useful as possible. I hope you feel able to reply with your thoughts or questions on this. I'm happy to talk too. 01738 583 108.

Best wishes, Adwoa Bittle, GM Clerk

## Mental health survey

Quaker Life would like to learn how meetings respond to challenges that arise in Quaker meetings that relate to mental health or illness. Please respond as a meeting or as an individual. There is not a limit to the number of responses from each Quaker meeting and individuals are strongly encouraged to send in their own response as well as elders or overseers responding on behalf of the meeting community. Please visit, <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/ql-mental-health-survey/>. The form should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete online.

## Quaker forum for mental health

10am–4pm, Saturday 9 December, Friargate Quaker Meeting House, York, YO1 9RL The Retreat, the Quaker provider of mental health services based in York, is holding its first annual forum. The theme of the event is ‘Dementia...our shared journey’. The forum is open to all with an interest in dementia. Shirley Torrens, [shirleytorrens1@gmail.com](mailto:shirleytorrens1@gmail.com), 01782 750 689

## Quaker meetings engaging with families

In the autumn there are two days being held on Saturday 11 November at Friends House London and Saturday 2 December at Lancaster Meeting House. These days aim to bring together elders, overseers and others from Quaker meetings to

explore how meetings might engage with families. The days will include short presentations with opportunities to take part in open and creative conversations in small groups. A new resource to help meetings to consider this further will be launched at these days. More details and booking information are available at [quaker.org.uk/cyptraining](http://quaker.org.uk/cyptraining).

### **Divorce and relationship breakdown in Quaker meetings**

A request for Friends to contribute to an enquiry and learning project. Would you be willing to share in confidence your experience of the ending of a relationship in your meeting? This could be your own relationship or what you observed or experienced happening to others. Perhaps you were in a role, such as elder or overseer, which involved you in addressing the consequences on individuals or couples, or on the meeting; perhaps you were caught up in issues of divided loyalties or damaged friendships; perhaps you are a registering officer with concern for marriage preparation. From whatever viewpoint or involvement, we'd be very interested to hear from you.

Woodbrooke and Quaker Life are supporting a project exploring the effects on individuals and meetings at such a time. The project's purpose is to promote understanding of the particular stresses of these often traumatic and complex life events in the context of a Quaker meeting and to provide meetings with some guidance or resources to aid their response. Do Friends respond more or less caringly/effectively/judgementally than other communities? How do Quakers feel when a marriage made 'in the care of the meeting' fails? Do we respond differently if only one partner attends the meeting?

In addition to this request for written accounts, there will be further opportunities for Friends and meetings to engage with these issues for better understanding and support of all those involved. These opportunities include a residential course at Woodbrooke on the weekend of 22–24 June 2018.

There is no charge for the event at Friends House. If you would like to attend this day gathering please book using the link in the Network email. There will be the usual residential fee for the Woodbrooke course, which your meeting may wish to contribute to. Full Information will be included in the 2018 Woodbrooke brochure in due course.

Written replies to this request will be received and held in confidence by the

project leaders, Zélie Gross and Laurie Michaelis, who will make no use of anything you send without first contacting you for your permission. Your name or meeting will not be referred to in any context or in resources produced. It is also sensible to omit names or identifying details from your account to further protect individuals. Your contribution to this enquiry will help shape the day consultation and the Woodbrooke course and inform the development of guidance or resources for meetings.

Please reply in confidence to either Friend:[zelie.gross@googlemail.com](mailto:zelie.gross@googlemail.com) or [laurie@livingwitness.org.uk](mailto:laurie@livingwitness.org.uk) Zélie Gross is the author of *With a tender hand: A resource book for eldership and oversight*. She is a member of Cardiff Meeting and an associate tutor for Woodbrooke. Laurie Michaelis is Coordinator at Living Witness. He is a member of Oxford Meeting and experienced in eldership, oversight and working with conflict.

### **Engaging with Families – an event for elders, overseers and other interested Friends**

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Friends House, London & Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, Lancaster Meeting House

An event bringing together elders, overseers and others to explore how meetings might engage imaginatively with families and encourage them on their spiritual journeys. Each day will include short presentations with opportunities to take part in open and creative conversations in small groups. We don't aim to provide simple answers or identify the 'next new thing' to do. Together we will think deeply about how our Quaker meetings might reach out to, connect with and be enriched by families. The day is free, including refreshments and lunch.

Advanced booking essential: book by 30 October for London and by 20 November for Lancaster. For booking details see <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/families> or contact 020 76631013, [cypadmin@quaker.org.uk](mailto:cypadmin@quaker.org.uk)

**North Scotland Area Meeting August 26<sup>th</sup> 2017 at Pluscarden Village Hall** [^back to top](#)  
(I thought it best to include the full minutes instead of paraphrasing - Ed.)

ROLL: Aberdeen:8; Banchory:2 , Forres: 10, Inverness: 9 , Lochaber & Lorn:1 , Orkney:2 , Westray/Papa Westray :1,

Reps: Aberdeen: Eva Deregowska, Nigel Dower, Orkney: Robert Wilson;  
Inverness: Eleanor Fairclough, John Melling; Visitor Michael Elstub: Craven &  
Keighley AM

Attendees; Kathleen Maciver, Issy Fairclough, Alastair Simmons, Lynden  
Easterbrook, Harry Horsley

Prevented: Marian Burrell, Roger & Kathleen Quinn

## MINUTES

33/17 During worship our assistant Clerk read QF & P 106 – 1972 edition

34/17 We record the deaths of Jim & Diana Troup who attended Orkney LM. Jim  
died on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017, Diana died on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017

35/17 Report for Northern Quaker; We thank Harry Horsley for agreeing to write  
a report of this meeting and of the residential weekend for the Northern Quaker.

36/17 Meeting for Sufferings

Jane Booth has reported on Meeting for Sufferings held on June 3rd 2017. M fS  
considered how the 'Our Faith in the Future' document was being used. Some  
AMs have used it as a framework for discussions. There was a concern received  
from Kingston & Wandsworth AM that the original purpose of MfS to produce a  
long term plan and direct our work has been overtaken by central committees  
and BYM Trustees. This issue will be discussed further. Jane also told us  
something about YFGM which  
appears to be thriving and expanding. We are reminded to try to appoint a  
representative to YFGM and consider donating to their chosen cause. Jane's  
report will be published in The Northern Quaker.

37/17 Report of Visitors.

Claudie Ruxton of Banchory LM was visited by Jane Booth and Mavis Jones on 11<sup>th</sup>  
May 2017. Claudie attended MfW in Northampton some years ago, and more  
recently in Inverness and Aberdeen. She attends Banchory MfW with the help of  
local Friends and feels supported there. We welcome Claudie into membership of  
NSAM.

38/17 Area meeting trustees report; David Sanders, Clerk to AM Trustees,  
introduced the report.

Derek McLean, AM treasurer spoke to the accounts; our financial position is  
good, our donation to BYM has increased to an average of £150 per member. We  
are maintaining our level of giving and financial assets. Our Treasurer and  
assistant treasurer are now working together.

Derek explained how small LMs need not have their own bank account, as their  
cash book could be held by AM treasurer.

AM trustees support the treasurer's recommendation to accept Heather  
Hartman's quote of £500 for preparing annual accounts for 2017. We therefore  
agree that Heather Hartmann should be appointed to prepare the annual  
accounts for 2017.

We accept the AM Report & Accounts for 2016 which has been previously  
circulated. We thank our treasurer and AM trustees for their work on our behalf.

39/17 Listening Group

Diana Brockbank has described the work of the 'Listening Group' that has  
travelled to visit all the LMs in NSAM and also talked to isolated Friends over the  
telephone.

Phyllida Sayles, standing aside from the table, promised to circulate the Listening  
Group's report for discussion before our November AM. We agree to ask Rosie  
Carnall from Friends House to attend November AM in Aberdeen. Rosie Carnall  
will facilitate a discussion at November AM and we ask LMs to consider in what  
format they would like this held and to inform the AM clerk by early October.

40/17 Report from North Scotland Quaker Trust

The current clerk of NSQT has reported on the work done to clarify the title deeds  
and ownership of the Aberdeen properties on behalf of NSAM.

We ask the trustees of NSAM & NSQT working together, to arrange the title of the  
Aberdeen properties and the burial grounds in the best interest of AM, and to  
bring this back to AM on November 11 2017.

#### 41/17 North Scotland Quaker Trust Report & Accounts

The clerk of NSQT Nigel Dower, spoke to the NSQT report & Accounts 2016. There is some concern amongst Friends that other LMs outwith Aberdeen are not receiving as much support as Aberdeen, and we encourage NSQT to consider more radical ways of using our resources for the benefit of the AM as a whole.

#### 42/17 membership matters

Transfer: We have received a request from Margaret Brown, of Westray & Papa Westray LM to transfer her membership to NSAM from York AM.. We accept this request and ask our membership clerk to take it forward.

Application: The clerk has received an application for membership via email from Maggie Trevelyan of Inverness LM. We appoint Cluny Conochie of Inverness LM and Piers Voysey of Forres LM. and ask them to support and help the applicant in preparation for this important step and for all three to report back to the Area meeting when the time is right.

#### 43/17 Nominations; Nominations committee brings forward the following names:

AM Treasurer: Anthony Buxton from January 2018 until January 2021

AM Assistant Treasurer: Derek McLean from January 2018 until March 31st 2018

We ask our Nominations committee to bring forward names for the following posts which all become vacant from December 2017:

AM clerk, four assistant clerks

One ex-officio Trustee

1 assistant treasurer ( from March 2018)

1 newsletter editor

AM clerk of trustees, AM trustee & NSQT trustee, 2 AM trustees

1 safeguarding co-ordinator

1 assistant safeguarding co-ordinator

1 AM archivist

Children & Young People advocate

44/17 GM for Scotland dates amendment. North : June 16 2018. We accept this date.

Meeting for Worship for Business ended at 12.45 .

Meeting for Worship for Business Sunday August 27th at 9.15 am

#### 45/17. Nominations Search Group report

The existing members of the Search group are: Mary Dower service ends : 31/12/2017

Sandy McEwen first term ends : 31/12/2018 for Northern Isles David James first term ends : 31/12/2019 for South & West area John Wragg first terms ends :

31/12/2020 - Moray Firth Area

We appoint Penny Selbie to Nominations Search group for North East region to serve from 1/01/2018 to 31/12/2021

#### 46/17 AM dates for 2018

Feb 10 – 2018 – Inverness

May 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 – AM will be in West or South. Clerk will bring further information on these possible venues to November AM and confirm the date.

August 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 – residential AM

November 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 – Aberdeen

#### 47/17 Residential Area Meeting August 2018

Piers Voysey spoke about the possibility of moving our venue for residential AM to Lagganlia. As this centre is in an isolated area, all Friends would need to be residential and there is no camping.

Friends are unsure but we feel that we should live adventurously and try Lagganlia for one year. We ask Piers Voysey and our clerks to bring more detailed information on costs and catering to the clerks and AM trustees as soon as possible so that a firm booking may be made. Pluscarden may still be booked if Lagganlia is not available or other factors rule it out.

#### 48/17 Residential AM organising Committee

We appoint: Piers Voysey, Penny Selbie, Lynden Easterbrook, Sandy McEwen & Robert Wilson to work together to arrange the residential AM for August 2018. We ask Es & Os to be aware that a theme for residential AM may emerge from Local Meetings or from the current concerns of Meeting for Sufferings, and to bring this back to November AM.

49/17 GM for Scotland Dundee September 9<sup>th</sup>; We appoint Con Tonge as our representative.

## 50/17 Impressions of BYM 2017 Gathering

Juli Salt & Lynden Easterbrook gave us their impression of 2017 BYM gathering. We were all encouraged to attend.

Closing Minute; We thank our 2017 Residential AM organising committee for their hard work.

Signed in and on behalf of NSAM Phyllida Sayles, Clerk

QF & P 1988 reprint pp 106:

So much of life is just going on and going on, long after the excitement and stimulus has faded....there is so much to ask for that I get very lost. And then I just come back to the simple longings, the simplest prayers of all; that Christ may be in those we love that our love may be more Christ-like, more unmoveable, that we may be kept sinless by some immense miracle, and by God's side whatever happens. We must give up trying to hold His hand, and just stretch out our hands- even if they are just fists- for God to hold. There is all the difference....between holding and being held. 1912

## North Scotland Residential Area Meeting Pluscarden August 2017 [^back to top](#)

It had been several years since I had been able to attend AM at Pluscarden, so there was both the familiar and the new; familiar surroundings, since I had visited and stayed independently, but many new people to meet and get to know.

For those who have never visited Pluscarden, it is a Benedictine monastery dating back to 1230 but from the 1560's until 1948, was a ruin until a contingent of monks from the Benedictine community of Prinknash returned and started to rebuild the Abbey and establish a thriving community. In 1974 the monastery was elevated to the status of an Abbey.

"In this place I will give peace" is the motto which greets visitors, and the location itself – nestling in a wooded valley – lends credence to this promise. Men and boys are accommodated in the guest house adjoining the Abbey, whilst St Scholastica's is the guest house at the entrance to the grounds where women and families are housed, and where the group eats and socialises.

The day of arrival, Friday, saw some torrential downpours and the evening was one of gathering and greeting between dodging showers. Friends arrived in the common room of Saint Scholastica's from near and far and brought the makings of their own meal as well as sharing with others.

One of the events I always look forward to is attending the evening office of Compline in the Abbey. This marks the end of the monastic day and the beginning of the "Great Silence" observed by the community until Vigils at 04:30 the following morning. In August the light is beginning to fade during the service and the whole atmosphere is one of contemplation and settling after the day's activities.



The road to Saint Scholastica's



Mist on Saturday morning

Saturday morning dawned misty and murky after the night's rain and a casual observer would have wondered where the individuals and small groups strung out on the road to Elgin were headed. In fact, our destination was the venue for the Area Meeting, the village hall, which over the years has been gradually

upgraded, but still retains the original fireplace and the painting of Rabbin Burns. I've often mused about the scenes this hall must have witnessed over the years – weddings, Hogmanay ceilidhs, pantomimes etc., but the only scars are a few stiletto heel marks and cigarette burns on the floor. However, despite its age the facilities have been upgraded, the most recent addition being ceiling mounted, thermostatically controlled infrared heating panels which, although very efficient, did present their own challenges. Although I had to resort to reading the instructions, by lunchtime on Sunday, just prior to departure we had just about mastered the controls.

The agenda for the Business Meeting was busy, and the contents sometimes weighty. However, I am always impressed by the Quaker way of doing business which is such a contrast to some of the work meetings I attend where competition is everything, every gap in speaking is immediately filled and being seen to shine takes precedence over achieving the best outcome. Perhaps, there's a business opportunity for a management guru to promote "the Quaker Way".

The Minutes (above) record the detail, but one thread running through several of the topics was the dwindling numbers of Friends and their geographical dispersion. This is apparent in the number of vacancies Nominations Committee are seeking to fill, and the viability of smaller Meetings. As I have mentioned previously, there is a fine line between avoiding proselytising, and becoming extinct.

One benefit of using the Pluscarden village hall are the breaks provided by having to walk between the hall and St Scholastica's (provided the weather is fair) for meals. Once again small groups of individuals strung themselves along the Elgin road.

The afternoon began with a short interlude of the parable of "the two mules" acted out with aplomb by Halszka (7), Malina (4) and Fay (?), admirably coached by mothers Emma and Anna.

This charming performance provided the introduction for the guest speaker, Michael Elstub of Craven & Keighley AM, and a member of the York branch of Veterans for Peace UK. Michael signed up for military service as a way of supporting himself through university and rose to the rank of colonel in the Royal

Army Dental Corps, serving for a total of 16 years, including deployments in Northern Ireland and other areas. He described suffering a particularly traumatic experience in Brunei when he was attacked with a knife.

Veterans For Peace UK describes itself as "a voluntary, open and democratic ex-services organisation of men and women. All of our members have served in the armed forces, many of us on operations around the world. Our oldest members fought in WW2 and our youngest members in Afghanistan. As a result of our collective experience we firmly believe that "War is not the solution to the problems we face in the 21st century".

We are not a pacifist organisation, we believe that we should be capable of defending our islands against foreign attack. We work toward increasing public awareness of the cost of war and to restrain our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, for the larger purpose of world peace." (<http://vfpuk.org/about/>)

Using his own personal experience and journey, Michael described how the United Kingdom has become an increasingly militarist nation, evidenced by events such as "Armed Forces Day", the introduction of the "Military Covenant". The number of visits by Armed forces to schools was also highlighted; Arbroath Academy and Dunfermline High School each received 31 visits during a 2 year period, almost all made by the Army. 31 schools were visited 10 times or more during the period and between them accounted for nearly one third of all visits to state secondary schools in Scotland

([https://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Armed\\_forces\\_visits\\_to\\_secondary\\_schools\\_in\\_Scotland\(FINAL\).pdf](https://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Armed_forces_visits_to_secondary_schools_in_Scotland(FINAL).pdf))

As well as awareness raising, every Remembrance Sunday Veterans For Peace UK walk to the Cenotaph under the banner "NEVER AGAIN" and hold a ceremony to remember all of those killed in war including civilians and enemy soldiers.

Michael also spoke of the action planned for the (then) forthcoming DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) exhibition, which is the world's largest arms fair. They subsequently conducted a vehicle check point on the route into the Excel Centre during the setup of the DSEI Arms Fair, in order to search for weapons for sale at the fair that contravene the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (landmines, booby traps, incendiary weapons, blinding laser weapons) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.



Among the many stands the team found on display a prototype laser weapon system in the 50kW class, known as [Dragonfire](#). As the UK / MoD cannot guarantee that Dragonfire will not be used to cause permanent blindness then the weapon is clearly in breach of the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons and should be withdrawn from the DSEi Arms Fair immediately

Michael delivered a powerful testimony as to the effects of violence, both in his presentation and personal openness, and the gathering was left in no doubt as to his commitment and passion for the cause he had embraced.

Sunday morning was a continuation of Business Meeting followed by Meeting for Worship. One topic discussed was the venue for the 2018 residential AM, and the agreement, subject to further investigation, of moving to Lagganlia, an outdoor centre run by Lothian Council Schools, located at Feshie Bridge, about 8 miles from Aviemore (<http://www.lagganlia.com/>). It was felt that this venue might prove more attractive for families with children, and Piers Voysey agreed to provide more detail on costs / facilities

so a final decision may be made.

A wonderful Sunday lunch followed by clean up marked the end of the weekend followed by goodbyes until next year, or sometimes longer.

Many, many thanks to all the organisers, and especially Ruth and Lyndon and team who provided seemingly endless supplies of wholesome and delicious food.

Harry Horsley, Aberdeen LBM

**Quaker Life Rep Council: October 2017** [^back to top](#)

### Shape Shifting – New Models of Quaker Meeting and Community

‘Take care of not getting into a form without the power, for that will bring deadness, and coldness, and weariness and faintings.’ George Fox

There was sunshine, blue sky and white clouds, golden Autumn leaves and early morning misty rain that quickly cleared. There were over ninety of us, gathered at Woodbrooke to spend the weekend exploring how much our current structures still support us, and to what extent the cost of serving them is too high. We celebrated what we do well, and expressed frustration that at times we can be slow to change. There was stress expressed because committees and procedures take up so much time and leave too little space for joy and spiritual life. We hoped to learn from others in Britain Yearly Meeting and in Yearly Meetings overseas how we can enrich our Meetings and simplify our structures so that they serve us better.

Paul Parker and Deborah Rowlands told us about their recent visit to America to see what we could learn from the various forms of Quakerism there. They used the analogy of a three-legged stool, which gives balance and support, to describe the three main areas of Meetings: the inward life of worship and discernment, the functioning of Quaker communities, and our social testimony.

Inward life. In the USA some Meetings have programmed worship, where the pastor provides spiritual learning. In the UK we need to find other ways to hand our traditions on to each other. American Meetings regularly use Clearness Committees, Meetings for Discernment, and Care Committees to support and uphold post holders. This raised the questions, do we delegate enough? Can we support each other better? Some unprogrammed American Meetings had experimented with extended, untimed or outdoor Meetings, and others began



with a period of communal singing, falling silent when Friends arrived for the Meeting. Could we try any of these ideas?

Functioning of the Quaker Community. Deborah described how in Philadelphia several committees have been reduced to two main committees, both headed by young Quakers. They have a team of three clerks; the Recording Clerk writes the minutes and brings them to the Meeting half an hour or so later when they are ready. Deborah reminded us that in Britain, Young Friends have a changing and renewing community as younger members join and older members leave the group, and they constantly train and teach each other about Quaker methods of working. She asked, can we learn from this for all our Meetings, especially as we attract new members who have not grown up in Quakerism?

American Quakers speak of naming each other's gifts, rather than simply asking Friends to serve on committees without explaining why they were thought of. People feel encouraged to contribute, rather than picking up a sense that they 'ought' to serve.

Social Testimonies. We heard about a scheme that was set up for young Quakers in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. They shared housing, and did voluntary action four days a week, spending the fifth day on 'spiritual formation' activities and learning. They were taught the skills of lobbying, and then took up a Quaker concern. It is much more common for young Americans to take up leadership roles in a Quaker Meeting. We were challenged by their social action to explore what we think Quaker Meetings exist for, and to look at what difference we can make to the world around us. Putting faith into action could become a standing agenda item for our Business Meetings.

Finally, Julia Ryberg talked to us about her work as Ministry and Outreach Worker for Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section. A lengthy job title, but what she described was a sense of excitement in small and developing Meetings throughout the area. Some of the different ways Friends operate there include Swedish Friends having central committee meetings once a year with no agenda, and having a comprehensive curriculum of learning including online modules. In Russia, Friends can give ministry more than once in a Meeting, and people come and go during Meeting for Worship (they do the same in Russian Orthodox services). Their Business Meetings are often held online.

Julia explained that European groups see Britain Yearly Meeting as the 'Mother Church' and find our structures both a resource and a burden – for example, in Budapest there are only four Quakers - how can they possibly fulfil all the required roles? They concluded that our structure is not relevant when their small community can manifest simplicity, community, equality and peace. Everything is relative; Sweden Yearly Meeting were delighted that their membership was growing – they had increased from 100 members to 105.

On Saturday afternoon I attended a workshop run by Alison Mitchell from Exeter Meeting, where they experimented with running an all-day Meeting for Worship. Because of the long duration things were organised a bit differently; there was a need for breaks for coffee or lunch, and people came and left throughout the day. Friends served as Elders for an hour each, and had a rota for door keeping. Altogether thirty people attended, and four stayed for the whole six hours. Many participants described a sense of peace and depth, finding it a retreat from their busy lives. In the workshop, we asked about ministry during the Meeting. Interestingly, it was no different from ministry in an ordinary Quaker Meeting. We wondered whether it would be different if everyone were to stay all day, or if the restrictions of only speaking once, and for a short period, were lifted. Overall, Exeter Meeting found the whole experience very inspiring and they plan to have another similar day. Another group involved in the discussion had experimented with different ways of centring down; walking, singing, listening to a reading, and using various methods of clearing the mind.

On Sunday, in our home groups, we summarised what we felt were the principles underpinning everything we had heard and discussed. These were:

1. Acknowledging what we already do well.
2. Using our Quaker discipline to create freedom, and helping people to see the value of this.
3. 'Sweeping away the dust' and finding the beating hearts of our Meetings.
4. Trying new ideas, and not being afraid of failing; upholding small groups who experiment with new things.
5. Rediscovering the power and purpose of older Quaker practices which have worked well; remembering that early Friends were radical.
6. And within all of these, naming and supporting spiritual gifts.

I realised how extraordinary we are in North Scotland where we are prepared to travel all day to meet with each other. But what is perhaps a greater challenge to us than anywhere else in Britain is for Friends to feel actively engaged with other Quakers in our Yearly Meeting, sharing our views and concerns. I can't overestimate how important I have found Quaker Life Rep Council to be in this process, particularly at this time of challenge and change. For me, it is not just thoughts and ideas that we exchange, it is the inspiration of Quakerism today.

Lynden Easterbrook, Forres LBM

### Why Am I A Quaker? [^back to top](#)

At first glance the title suggests an entirely personal saga. This article intends to use the title as a jumping off point for a *crie de coeur*.

Coming from a staunchly Anglican background, both parents had cousins in the missions. The more adventurous one had the experience of being among the first Europeans to enter the Forbidden City, in the aftermath of the Boxer Rising<sup>(1)</sup>.

Although the beautiful language of both the Authorized Version of the Bible and that of the Book of Common Prayer continue to enthrall me to this day by age thirty the main services of Matins and Evensong had become so memorised that they had a parrot like feel. Other influences, from reading<sup>(2)</sup>, to intuitive understanding of the Bible, played a part.

Together with a growing distaste for the glorification of war on Armistice Sunday and the view it is possible to misinterpret evidence in murder trials<sup>(3)</sup>, all these convictions had taken root some time before I came across Harold Loukes' book *The Discovery of Quakerism*.

Thus began six years of attending Meetings, mainly in Brighton. Also wherever one happened to be on a Sunday – Bath, Jersey and work camps to name a few.

It was the outspoken Christian message of Irish Friends that opened the Way to membership. That message continues to resonate today, forty nine years later. For Churchtown Meeting was the home of such spiritual giants as Victor Bewley, Winifred Lamb and her son Charles B. Lamb. All these Friends ministered

regularly.

On returning to what was then London Yearly Meeting, the way opened to live and work within the large Monthly Meeting area of the north of Scotland. This covers everywhere fifty miles north of Perth, right up to the most northerly island of the Shetland Archipelago.

So, why am I a Quaker? Finding what I sought, not only in the deep pools of the silence, but also in the spoken ministry. For does not "deep call to deep", and thereby bring forth the Word.

Each Christmas Day, we Christians gather to hear the words of St. John's Gospel reminding us of the Light (or Spirit) which "Lighteth every Man that cometh into the World". For it was that Light which shone so brightly on Firbank Fell and continues to inspire seekers to become finders.

Today, many who seek do not have the inheritance of biblical teaching of earlier generations. How does one teach the "tenets of our creed"<sup>(4)</sup> when there is no credal statement? This is a question which needs to be addressed soon. Was it not said of George Fox that if the Bible was lost; he could supply it from memory?

For myself, membership means commitment to serve the Master in ways not possible within the Established Church.

That is why I am a Quaker.

Roger H. Quinn June 2017, Forres LBM

### NOTES

1) Roland Allen "The Siege of the Peking Legations" 1901

2) The philosophy of the biblical novelists Lloyd C. Douglas, Frank G. Slaughter and others played a large part in forming the ideas and ideals on which the Rock of my Faith is founded.

3) P. C. Wren "The Mammon of Righteousness". The author of *Beau Geste* wrote this uncharacteristic anti hanging novel, in which he showed that a vindictive suicide could end up hanging an innocent man.

4) The Rt Rev Dr Roche MHF sometime Catholic Bishop of Burma retired to the pre seminary of his order in Co.Kilkenny where two of his brothers lay buried in the little cemetery of the Order. While working there I came to know this truly humble man. Suffering from chronic hay fever he washed his handkerchiefs so that the overworked nuns were relieved of this chore. He also wrote poetry from whence the phrase "tenets of our creed" is taken.

#### Live Adventurously. Drama [^back to top](#)

Recently I went to our local cinema to see the film "Victoria". I am amused how proud I am that Judi Dench is a Quaker! Another similarly creative well known Quaker is Sheila Hancock, and I love her book "Miss Carter's War" which I was given, at Quaker Life Rep Council, to review for "Quaker voices".

It is not so very long ago in our Quaker story that all forms of the Arts were totally frowned upon. Thank goodness those days are past. I love drama. Over the past 30 and more years I have been in pantomimes; participated in drama workshops including clowning; been on stage "straight" acting our Community co-founder Eileen; done sketches by myself and with others; been part of a women's group, "The Fanny McTartans", putting on shows of humorous sketches..... I have put on my clown persona at Quaker events and others, and just for fun in daily life. Last week I took it a step further and went for an audition for a paid part in a panto. Result? "We regret to tell you..." but it was a great experience and was fascinating writing the C.V. (We didn't write C.V.s when I was young!) and seeing just how much I had done.

For more than a year now a local drama teacher; Quaker lassie Emma; has been running wonderful drop in improvisation sessions, and some workshop evenings in devising theatre. Those, together with a morning learning a bit about forum theatre, have led me to a present activity. A small group is presenting a forum theatre afternoon for a Community care group. Yes the concept is new to me too. I will attempt an explanation. We show a wee scenario of a caring situation designed to challenge the audience. When we run it a second time the audience are invited to take the place of one the actors at any point(s) to suggest another way of doing it. Did it improve the situation? Maybe and maybe not. The idea is to get us thinking and drama is a great way. I am excited by the possibilities.

I am also in a group working with a visiting teacher creating a look at the Findhorn

Foundation Community as it is now with its ups and downs, its dark and light, hopefully bringing up, in an interesting way, issues to be looked at. It is not meant to be comfortable; it is meant to engage and be thought provoking. It is still being written as we work and play with it, while also creating our own small community. I love her dramatic idea of and use of conflict. This is not negative as we immediately tend to think. She talks of any action between 2 or more people involving conflict; a meeting and engaging. Without conflict there is no movement...how boring!

Our (Italian) teacher has also presented a play here about Italian immigrants in the 1940s. I hear it was brilliant.

Wow! I have learnt so much and have the time to do more, get more involved; living adventurously!

Oh and by the way, I also love to sing; enjoy writing; play recorders. Maybe these will also get more priority in my life; as well as scooting around (incredible exercise!) on the push scooter my children gave me for my 73rd birthday. That is really living adventurously.

Diana Brockbank, Forres LBM



Diana (in baseball cap) on her birthday at Pluscarden

## **Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemoration. Fisherman's Hut, Ness Islands, Inverness** [^back to top](#)

Every year on August 6th a commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki takes place at the Fisherman's Hut near the Ness Islands in Inverness. The Highland Coalition for Justice Not War, together with Inverness Quakers restarted the tradition of Highland CND many years ago to mark this important day. All those present are invited to bring and share a picnic lunch. A speaker is usually invited to speak at the commemoration, this year it was John Finnie MSP a Green Party politician.

Every year a Peace Dove (bio-degradable) is made by Jim and his wife Gerry from Justice Not War along with wreaths of flowers arranged at the waterside. A ceremony is held with a speech and maybe some poetry is read out, then we watch the dove and flowers sail down the River Ness with a message of peace and hope.

It's important to remember this event to remind us all, especially at the present time because of the increasing rhetoric between the US and N. Korea how dangerous the world can be, even more so with the amassing of nuclear weapons. Since the beginning of the nuclear age many nations have sought to eliminate or control the spread of nuclear weapons. Recently the Japan marked 72 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki was bombed. The Prime minister Shinzo Abe called for a move towards a nuclear-free world as never before had such devastating weapons been used upon its people.

Every year at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan (Genbaku Dome) thousands of people gather at 8.15am on August 6th for the striking of the peace bell. In the evening colourful lanterns, "The Flow of the Lanterns", sail down the river each one representing a life lost in war.

Our world faces many challenges, oppressive regimes, poverty, violence, climate change and the threat to world peace. One only has to look at the photos and the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to see what "Fire and Fury" really looks like!!

The commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is important. We need to make more people aware of this event that takes place every year. Promote it

nationwide! We must challenge militarism, engage in more peace education and more peace building together as a nation. Hiroshima was a horrific event in world history and must never be allowed to happen again!

More publicity is needed for this event in the Highlands, not just engaging with faith groups, or peace groups but people who want to live in a world free of nuclear weapons and without the fear of war. Friends, perhaps you could come and join the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemoration next year near the Fisherman's Hut in August 6th 2018. Make this a really important event. If you do wish to come contact:

Sila Collins-Walden and Eleanor Fairclough Inverness LBM

## **Media Training: Getting Our Message Across** [^back to top](#)

Rachel Officer attended this event in Glasgow and reports on it here:

Most importantly, remember that most people do not realise that 'Quakers' are a religious group but lobbyists.

Consider how we communicate: instead of focusing on the speaker, focus on the listener:

- Why should they want to hear our message?
- What language do they use – most people do not understand the nuances of church language?
- Where will they find our message – may require us to speak in uncomfortable places.

Press releases were considered, this is an example of where we spread our message being very important. It is no use putting our message in The Independent if those we wish to reach read The Sun or The Daily Mail.

Emphasis was placed on thinking like a journalist - how many words do they need, what are their deadlines. A reputation for being reliable is invaluable.

Interviews were also considered – is this an in depth discussion or does the listener want a sound bite?

Can you explain your point in 30 seconds? If not, then it will either be cut off or edited by the journalist and you will have no control. Lobbying was briefly touched on – who and how to lobby. Knowing who has responsibility for a topic and the process of decision making in the responsible body is crucial.

Finally, it was recommended that each Meeting (Local and Area) have their own policy of who will be responsible for different aspects of working with the media – no one person can do it all.

Rachel Officer, Aberdeen LBM

### **The Quaker's grave** [^back to top](#)

Rachel Officer found and shared the following extract written by Dr Fiona-Jane Brown (see end for details):

“I have an overactive imagination. I know this after having recently jumped to the most ridiculous conclusion. London's Newgate Jail, now demolished, had a corridor linking it to the courts called Dead Man's Walk. The grisly name indicated the dumping of executed criminals between the cavity walls, rather than a pauper's burial. Only initials carved into the walls indicated the locus of individual remains in this hidden burial site. So, seeing two sets of incised letters on the wall of St Nicholas Kirkyard near the Back Wynd gate, I thought I had stumbled on a murderer's grave!

I established from the city archivist that the wall of the Mither Kirk on what was first called 'Westerkirkgate' was built in the late sixteenth century, so would have almost been the edge of the city as it existed then. It added up, a criminal, a despised person, buried just out of the kirkyard. But no!

When I returned to take a closer look, I found a grave slab on the ground below the wall, which informed me this was the resting place of Margaret Smith, who died in 1669, and her husband, Gilbert Mollison, Bailie of Aberdeen, who died twenty years later. The letters were GM and MS. Duh! So, it was an ordinary grave after all.

Yet on further research I discovered not only was Bailie Mollison a magistrate, and thus well respected, but his wife Margaret was a known member of the

Society of Friends, a Quaker.

Sadly the Friends were persecuted in the city, despite having many prominent members, including Provost Alexander Jaffray and poetess Lilian Skene. Quakers did not see the need for memorial markers, much to the annoyance of others. Bailie Scott notoriously had the walls of the Friends' burial plot in Kingswells destroyed, believing it to be an 'improper' graveyard.

Mrs Mollison, though missing the worst persecutions in the later 1600s, was facetiously described during her lifetime as 'wearing thin her knees' due to the frequency of her devotions. Gilbert remembered her as she wished with only her initials carved in the wall of the kirkyard. Their family added the father's initials later. But the children of George Mollison, hosier, decided they deserved better. In 1834, when George died, the lost grave of Margaret and Gilbert was reinstated with a large tombstone. The family's affection was clear in the motto: 'the memory of the just is blessed, they rest from their labours and their works follow them'. Now far from despised non-conformists, the Mollisons were celebrated by their descendants.”

Reproduced with permission from “Hidden Aberdeen: history on your doorstep and under your feet” by Dr Fiona-Jane Brown, ISBN 978-1-84502-634-9, publ 2013.

### **Aberdeen – City of Sanctuary?** [^back to top](#)

As a result of the welcome which Aberdeen has offered to the Syrian refugees over the last year, interest from a number of people and directions is growing in the possibility of Aberdeen becoming recognised as a City of Sanctuary. These include the Syrian Project Partners' Group, GREC, (Grampian Regional Equality Council), ACVO (Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations), Aberdeen City Council, the newly established Interfaith Forum and other interested individuals. This is a UK and Ireland wide movement. Their website [www.cityofsanctuary.org](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org) gives detailed information of this initiative:

“City of Sanctuary is a movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Our goal is to create a network of towns and cities throughout the country which are proud to be places of safety for people

seeking sanctuary and helping them integrate into their local communities.” This involves all levels of society across the city – e.g. businesses, voluntary organisations, education, arts, sports, police, council and government, faith groups and individuals interested in this proposal. It is a way of raising awareness by way of education, building relationships and shared activities so that Sanctuary becomes a recognised norm in the city of Aberdeen. It is vital that people who are actively seeking sanctuary in Aberdeen or have done so in the past will become part of this movement. After all – “anything about us, without us, is not for us.”

There was a preliminary meeting to discuss the way forward on Thursday 11 May which Penny Selbie and Eva Deregowska attended.

We heard from the experience of Glasgow and Edinburgh City of Sanctuary groups and met with other Aberdeen organisations, groups and individuals who, by virtue of what they are doing now, might already be prepared to help spread this initiative right across the city under the umbrella of City of Sanctuary. The presentation from Esa Aldegheri from the Edinburgh group was very dynamic.

The steering group there had prepared very well for their gathering last year and it sounded like a major brainstorming event with many groups and individuals participating. She talked about mapping the requirements for a City of Sanctuary in Edinburgh. It seems that sharing of information was a high priority for them and one of the outcomes was the development of a web site with the aim that it should be kept up to date, hence a webmaster.

One of the aims of the meeting was to form a core group and have a “mapping” exercise (to establish the needs of those seeking sanctuary). Those aims were not, as far as we could ascertain met, at least not at this meeting, but no doubt the very energetic Joan Lyon will ensure that some follow up takes place. Maybe it will only be once others have identified the form of a City of Sanctuary for Aberdeen that Friends might have something to contribute.

The event was organised by Joan Lyon, priest at St Ninian’s Scottish Episcopal Church, who also arranged the previous meeting last year, which Penny and Eva also attended, and as a result of which our Quaker Meeting collected for Aberdeen Syrian New Scots Resettlement Fund in January this year.

Penny Selbie and Eva Deregowska, Aberdeen LBM

### the Quaker Council for European Affairs [^back to top](#)

Derek MacLean suggested this leaflet from QCEA for the newsletter. He thinks it’s important that the work of QCEA is better known and supported by Friends particularly in the current Brexit situation.



# Introducing the Quaker Council for European Affairs

From the failure to protect refugees to the Brexit vote, Europe is facing challenging times. As our continent increasingly turns inwards, with populism and xenophobia gaining ground at the ballot boxes, it's more important than ever that Friends speak up in favour of compassion and cooperation.

QCEA makes these Quaker voices heard in Europe. Now more than ever, we need your help to do so.

*Some examples of QCEA at work*

## WHO WE ARE

Since 1979, QCEA has worked to bring a Quaker vision of just relationships to the European institutions. From our offices in Brussels - the diplomatic capital of the world, home to the EU, NATO and almost 200 embassies - we advocate for a Europe which is peaceful, compassionate, open and just in its dealings both at home and in the wider world.



## WHAT WE DO

We build relationships with decision-makers at the European level, allowing us to ensure that the Quaker message is heard by those who influence the world around us. We also undertake research to explore and identify workable policy alternatives to militarisation and injustice, and we provide a space for like-minded civil society actors, government officials and scholars to come together.



## How you can help

QCEA can only confront populism thanks to the generous support of Friends across the UK, Europe and the world. Your donations help us to put Quaker values at the heart of European policymaking whilst allowing us to remain politically neutral, meaning we can advocate for peace and human rights with integrity. Every penny counts - now more than ever.



### Donate easily online

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## Thank you



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