

The Northern Quaker

**Winter
2013**



North Scotland Area Meeting

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Welcome to the 2013 Winter edition of the Northern Quaker. Sadly, this edition is dominated by the loss of our Aberdeen Friend Peter McCaffery who died suddenly on Saturday 2nd November.

David James began the North Scotland Area Meeting with a reading from the Letter to the Galatians, reproduced below followed by David's own tribute to Peter;

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, against such there is no law."

"We remember our Friend, Peter McCaffery whose life amply demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. We give thanks for the service he has given to Friends, prisoners and many others. May we be found faithful in following his example."

As well as tributes to the life and work of Peter, please find in this edition reports from contributors of their attendance at meetings / conferences and, as promised, a summary of their QPSW work from the two young guest speakers at Pluscarden residential AM in August.

Many of you will welcome the Northern Quaker in its printed edition. However, the email version now contains coloured photographs as well as a "clickable" contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. Previous editions are available on the North Scotland website www.quakerscotland.org/north. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

As usual, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgowrie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

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Owen from ForcesWatch (see article on page 30) invites people to join the email list for the Education Campaign that he runs.

The Education Campaign largely focuses on our Military Out Of Schools (MOOS) campaign. The campaign seeks to document military and military-oriented activity in UK schools and colleges - from Armed Forces visits to the Combined Cadet Force, and the new Military Ethos in Schools programme (which covers various initiatives including the Troops to Teachers scheme) - and get people (from the general public to decision-makers in schools, government and elsewhere) to question whether this is appropriate.

The Ministry of Defence acknowledges that the two main outcomes of Armed Forces activity in schools is recruitment of young people into the Armed Forces, and 'providing positive information to influence future opinion formers'. Is it in the best interests of the young people?

The ultimate aim of the MOOS campaign would be to have schools becoming 'military-free', but the short-term focus is getting a balance of views put across so that there is more critical thinking going on - after all, the 1996 Education Act demands a balance of opposing views whenever pupils are exposed to a 'political' view. For more info on the MOOS campaign go to

www.forceswatch.net/projects/details?quicktabs_3=2#quicktabs-3

The Education campaign also includes looking at the presence and influence of the military in UK universities, exploring conflict resolution, and alternative ways to develop the core skills that the military are presented as being the best providers of, within the UK Education system.

The email list usually involves a roughly weekly update on the campaign and links to any relevant articles in the news.

If you'd like to be added, or if you have any questions, please reply to this address (education@forceswatch.net). If you want to add yourself, go to www.forceswatch.net/stay_in_touch.



Tribute to Peter Gabriel McCaffery 1935 – 2013 [back to contents](#)

Peter who we all knew and loved as a family member, friend or work colleague has left us all with our own special memories of him.

Born at Stoke Newington, London on the 11th November, 1935 to devout Catholic parents Philip and Dora, he was their only child. His father died when he was just two. Peter said he had a happy childhood, although his mother struggled financially. He had a sheltered, lonely upbringing but a close loving relationship with his mother. After education at a Jesuit school, Peter read Greats at Corpus Christi Oxford University, then joined the Jesuits for ten years training in England, Holland and Germany where he studied Philosophy and Theology. This time included three years in Africa near Harare teaching children in a school for whites, then by his request in

a school for black children. Peter was above all a committed teacher.

Peter left the order in 1972. His spiritual journey led him to the 'Religious Society of Friends', the Quakers, where he became a very active member for the remainder of his life. Peter was a natural and true Quaker, teaching us much about practising the presence of God. His whole life was one of walking in Divine Light and we all appreciated it when he gave Ministry during Meeting for Worship.

Peter's Quaker concerns and interests were many, and if anything needed done or a representative was asked to attend a conference or special interest Group, Peter was always willing to volunteer. He was an Elder, led study groups, and was very interested in End of Life Care Issues. His pastoral care visits to those at home, in hospital or care homes were much appreciated.

Quaker Meetings for Worship began being held in Peterhead Prison in June 2001 and continued on a monthly basis since then. Peter's faithful attendance and support for prisoners here and on occasion at Craiginches prison resulted in him being asked to act as a Quaker Prison Chaplain.

Peter was very involved with Inter Faith issues and was a real 'people' person although at heart he was basically shy. He would quote from George Gorman in Quaker Faith and Practice "I do not think that I am alone in my certainty that it's in my relationships with people that the deepest religious truths are most vividly disclosed."

Whilst Peter was studying for a Maths Degree in August 1983, a Jesuit friend introduced him to Teresa, a Surgeon, who was studying for a Theology Degree. They married in October in London before coming north to Peter's house here. By this time Peter had attained a Doctorate in Sociology.

Four years later John was born and Martin followed two years after that. At this time Peter didn't know how to react to babies and children but as they grew up this became much easier. The children in the Quaker Meeting all loved Peter's company. The story is told of when John was 3 and electrical work was being done at home he asked what the hole in the wall

was for. Peter gave him a long session on DC and AC currents. John just sat quietly through it all! Peter was very proud of his sons, now both PhD students at St. Andrews University. He was proud of their independence and outlook on life and often said to me that all thanks should go to Teresa for her excellent mothering skills. Sadly Teresa had two miscarriages early on in their marriage and Peter never forgot the children he did not get to know in this life.

We are grateful that Peter and Teresa were able to celebrate their 30th Wedding Anniversary last month. Teresa was the perfect partner for Peter and he often spoke of his gratitude for all she meant to him.

Peter was a fascinating conversationalist and had many international friends. He was a prolific reader and would often recommend or lend books for me to read. Other friends speak of his compassion and being so generous-hearted. He had a wonderful sense of humour, yet was a very humble unassuming person. He could be forgetful on occasions being rather too involved in too many interests and activities. Careful driving was not his particular strong point!

In the last few years he co-edited with Ben Marsden a book for use by University Students in their first and second years called 'The Routledge Reader in Cultural History'. This Peter saw published just before he died. The idea for this came from when Martin went to Bordeaux for a 3-month language course in 2007 and Peter met with a French Academic about the next step for Cultural History. From then on he wanted to write a book combining Philosophical, Historical and Sociological elements of Cultural History. Although not an academic, I was privileged when Peter invited me to read and comment on the draft copy of the published book.

Since 2006 Peter and I met frequently to share our faith journeys, their doubts, hopes, fears and insights. Peter was a man of prayer and we would uphold in the Divine Light all those known to us to be in need. Our last time together was special. In July Peter had been admitted to hospital as an emergency for which successful treatment was given. At the same time however an Aortic Aneurysm was discovered. Because Peter was a very private person, very few knew of this, but Peter knew he was living with a time bomb and was determined to continue living life to the full. We spoke

a lot then about death, which had no fears for him, and he asked lots of questions about the three 'Out of Body' experiences I had had when very ill and he had been a wonderful support. He then spoke of arrangements for his own funeral, including where he would like his body to rest before its burial. He wanted to make things as easy as possible for Teresa, John and Martin when the time came. He had come to the same conclusion as the 17th cent. Quaker William Penn that "Death is a turning of us over from time to eternity."

Thank you, Peter, for your friendship. Your life has been a challenge to us all, to keep active and involved in society, and to use our God-given abilities to enjoy life and help others to do so. May all our love go with you, Peter, for your new spiritual journey now beginning.

From *Christian Faith and Practice*, our Quaker Book of Discipline:-
"*The dead are not lost to us; they are still our friends in the service of the Eternal*".

Isobel Bracewell, Aberdeen Meeting

Peter McCaffery: some appreciative thoughts [back to contents](#)

(The following contribution from Nigel Dower is taken from his academic appreciation of Peter undertaken three years ago for an academic conference—hence the present tense. Nigel has selected the passages more likely to be of interest to Friends but if anyone wants the full text which goes into much more detail about his wide academic interests, especially his involvement in Cultural History, please contact Nigel. This is the full version; a slightly shortened version appeared in the print edition - Ed).

Peter McCaffery: an appreciation

Explorations in Cultural History: Essays for Peter Gabriel McCaffery

edited by David F. Smith & Hushang Philsooph

The Centre for Cultural History, University of Aberdeen, 2010

I was asked to write this by the Cultural History group to mark the occasion of Peter's 75th birthday. It is largely (particularly in the first two sections) based on an interview I did with him for the University of Aberdeen Oral History Project in the summer of 2010. (The transcript and video held by the University Library will give a much more detailed account of Peter's reflections on Cultural History's origins and development.)

An overview of Peter's academic career

Peter was born on November 11th 1935 into a Catholic family in London. He went to school at a Jesuit School in Wimbledon. He remembers particularly the teaching in classics, mainly because of the quality of his teachers. He then went on to Oxford where he studied Greats from 1954 to 1958 (a four year degree in which one studies classics followed by the study of ancient history and ancient and modern philosophy). He recalls vividly some of his teachers at the time, such as Gilbert Ryle and his tutor Bernard Williams. But he remembers being most excited by taking part in a philosophy discussion group led by two postgraduates for both undergraduates and postgraduates. He then in 1958 became a Jesuit and took up a noviceship with a view to entering the catholic priesthood. After a period of two years he attended Heythrop College, then located in Oxfordshire, where he continued studying philosophy taking courses in medieval philosophy, marxism, linguistic philosophy and a little existentialism, much of which went beyond the Greats syllabus – thus extending a grounding in philosophy which has always informed his theoretical and academic engagements in other areas later. He was then sent to Zimbabwe for three years to teach in schools both at St George's in Salisbury (later Harare) for whites and later at his request in Chishawasha for blacks – and his experiences there proved to be another important influence in his later interest in the third world and development. Whilst he was there he tried to learn Shona the local language (he claims with little success though as a language it fascinated him!). He also had a colleague there from South Africa who was interested in anthropology. Peter's own interest in this field was awakened though it remained in the background over the next three years when he was concentrating on theological studies. This period included a year spent in Frankfurt in 1967-8 which to anyone who knows his or her recent European history means that he was there at the time of the Prague Spring and student riots (in Frankfurt as

well as – rather better known – Paris). He found the teaching of theology there very helpful because it put more emphasis on the history of Christianity. Amongst his fellow students in Frankfurt was an American who really encouraged Peter to take up sociology and this led to Peter's doing a two-year taught BPhil in Sociology in Oxford (1969-71), with, as his supervisor, Bryan Wilson whom he found really inspiring. Peter's dissertation for that degree was on Dutch Catholic pressure groups – illustrating another abiding interest of Peter's in the sociology of religion.

By then his interest in becoming an academic was clearly established. Meantime, it should be explained, he had decided that he would not proceed to ordination as a catholic priest. The catalyst to this decision was the publication of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (July 1968), in which the Pope continued to maintain a steadfast opposition to contraception – a position Peter felt he could not uphold. By the time he came to Aberdeen in 1971 (as described below), his spiritual journey had led him to seek a rather different kind of religious community and he started to attend the Quaker meeting in Aberdeen (where I first met him), and some years later became and still remains a member of the Religious Society of Friends. But he remains deeply conscious of the debt he owes to his catholic upbringing and training for his intellectual and spiritual approach (and he sees his interest in cultural history as partly stemming from this, given the immense impact that the catholic church has had on European culture).

In 1971 he was applying for numerous academic posts, and somewhat to his surprise, partly given the problems of the postal strike at the time, he found himself called by telephone to interview in Aberdeen for a post in the fairly newly established and rapidly expanding Department of Sociology, then headed by Raymond Illsey. He remained in the Department of Sociology for the next 19 years when he took an early retirement package when he was only 55 in 1990. ... This was not however because he wanted to give up academic work – as we will see, it continued and continues to this day twenty years on. ...

He had married fairly late in life in 1983 to Teresa, and they had two boys – John and Martin – in the next few years. Teresa was a doctor and Peter says that when getting to know her 'he took good care not to mention my interest in the sociology of health and illness so as not to appear to be

muscling in on her work' – though as it turned out she was also very interested in the issue of authority in medicine (see below for more on this). They had a terraced house in Erskine Street and are still there today: it has a fairly large garden with an attractive balance of flowers and vegetables – largely thanks to Teresa's efforts rather than Peter's, one should add. Interestingly Teresa was and is an active Catholic - and the combination of her liberal Catholicism and Peter's Quakerism with a catholic background has proved a fruitful one. Peter says that with retirement he had hoped to spend more time of writing, but as things turned out he remained a very active teacher.

To return to the academic story, Peter reckoned that with the package and his wife's employment they could manage financially if he took early retirement, and this gave him independence to do what he most wanted. This in the next few years included of course helping with the development of cultural history. ...

Peter was not particularly focussed on publications – his strength lay and lies in his being an inspiring teacher, enabling colleagues and being a great inter-disciplinarian. He has however published in various fields, he is currently working on *A Reader in Cultural History* which he is co-editing with Ben Marsden, and hopes one day to write a book on the idea of reasoning and inference which take seriously its non-cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Cultural History

Peter was one of the key figures in the development of the cultural history programme. Though he was not in on its origins, once he had joined the group in 1985, he put his heart and mind into it – precisely because it represented the inter-disciplinary engagement with the cultural and intellectual forces that have shaped the modern world. This inter-disciplinary engagement very much suited how his own mind – trained in various fields – liked to work. ...

Peter as an academic

By the conventional standards of academic achievement – high status and a

mass of publications – Peter has not been nor did he seek to be a particularly high flyer, but he is and always has been one of most genuinely academic peoples I have ever met. I count three things as central to being in this sense a genuine academic: a lively search after truth; a willingness to share that search and enthusiasm with others, whether colleague or students; and a recognition that truth is not well understood as partitioned into separate boxes corresponding to well defined disciplines. Peter has these qualities in high degree.

Whilst Peter might have reservations about whether there is a large timeless Truth – his interest in the sociology of knowledge and his thorough knowledge of intellectual history and of other cultures would caution him – he is not a relativist and the earnest pursuit of truth and the questioning of shallow or false views are hallmarks of his quest. But this search for truth is something he has done with both heart and mind. Certainly it has been with the head by which he is guided by reason and argument and a willingness to pursue the argument wherever it takes ones. But the search is one also guided by the heart in the sense that human beings matter and what one is concerned about academically should reflect the importance of understanding humans beings and advancing their well being, and also in the sense that what one is looking for is, so to speak, the heart of arguments and positions – for instance in what others are saying – rather than their literal outward form. He quoted Newman who said 'cor ad cor' – 'heart speaks to heart' – as one of his favourite sayings. (I might mention in passing an interest both he and I have had in 'the heart' as a possible source of insight/intelligence/memory – something researched by e.g. the Heart Math Institute.)

Peter is a gifted communicator whether with colleagues or with students. At the heart of this gift is an acceptance of everyone as equal. Part of this means being willing to listen carefully to what others are saying. He has been a good listener in that conversations with him tend to draw thoughts out of others. Academics are not always very good at doing this, especially with regard to their students. But Peter, it strikes me, has always seen students as important sources of insight – both because, even though they may be at rather different stages in their intellectual journeys, they may well come up with insights from which one learns, and because it is important to ensure that what they are asked to learn about is grounded in

their experiences and also in relevant hands-on examples taken from the real world. He sees it as part of his Quaker approach in teaching 'to bring out what is latent in students' interests'.

I recall how when in the early 2000s I convened a first year course on Global Citizenship, Peter contributed lectures and was keen to get students to look at concrete examples of global citizenship in action – for instance in ethical consuming as a stance against the pernicious effects of the global free market and big business. For this he got them to look at various web-sites. ... One of the things I recall over the last few years are the various emails that Peter sends to me and others with interesting links – to do with, for instance, prison reform, the sins of multinationals or little known horrors in Iraq.

This last point leads me to the third academic quality Peter has – a willingness to see academic issues as not divided into separate boxes. His own interests have been very wide ranging, as has been illustrated in what I have mentioned. He once said to me that he feared that because he has had so many interests, he was really not expert in any. But this image as a jack of all (academic) trades and master of none just does not fit Peter. His grasp of these many fields – and of their inter-connections – has been impressive. In any case we need academics – rather more in my opinion than we actually have – who are willing to straddle academic boundaries and see the big pictures. Indeed he remarked that 'he liked to see links between the way a topic is handled in different disciplines'. One can do this by oneself operating in several fields, but also, perhaps more crucially, being willing to listen to and engage with the academic perspectives coming from other disciplines – something that is crucial to the whole Cultural History ethos – which is why Peter was attracted to it like a wasp to a honey pot.

Conclusion

In this brief chapter I have endeavoured to give a little background to Peter's academic development, outlined his work in the sociology department, described his contribution to the development of Cultural History and reflected some of his comments on that, and assessed his academic strengths. I hope I have done justice to a person with an immense

breadth of attributes and interests. When I asked him (at the end of the interview) what, in looking back on a long academic career, he took most satisfaction in, he answered without much hesitation 'my contribution both to Sociology and to Cultural History', and he added, almost as an afterthought, 'oh, and reading lots of really interesting dissertations' (including such esoteric topics as 'the cultural history of tea drinking'!)! These of course were the dissertations of many students who had been exposed to Peter's style of teaching which opened up their minds to new possibilities of thought. And it is perhaps this enduring influence in the minds of countless students, now all over the world, for which we should be most thankful for in Peter's academic life.

Postscript

At general meeting several weeks ago we heard a quotation for Martin Luther King about compassion not being enough, we need to change the system, and later a report from a Friend about how Quaker were responding to the cuts, and she said that Friends were living faithful lives rather than trying to change the world. This set me thinking and next day I ministered about what faithful living meant as a Quaker. I felt that actually faithful living means three things; first, being faithful to our testimonies – truth, simplicity, equality, peace - and not adjusting to normal standards, second responding to that of God in particular others with compassion, and third, trying to mend the world, in William Penn's memorable words, by bringing about change towards a fairer and more peaceful world. It was only after I had sat down that I realised that in fact Peter's life had been an example of faithful living in all three ways to a high degree!

Nigel Dower, *Aberdeen Meeting*

Peter McCaffery- Thoughts on his Funeral [back to contents](#)

Peter was a dearly beloved member of Aberdeen meeting and held many roles in our community not always formally appointed ones. One of his roles, which has been mentioned more than once over the past weeks, was as a teacher and for me this carried on with his funeral. His was the first Quaker funeral I have attended and I understand that Peter thought carefully about his funeral arrangements. There was a Requiem Mass held in Aberdeen which unfortunately I didn't manage to go to, then a Quaker meeting at Cloverly Woods of Rest followed by his interment.

Just as the spoken ministry given at the meeting will stay with me, so will my picture of the coffin, ministry for the eyes it seemed to me, and aren't the eyes the windows on the soul. Peter's coffin was made of basketwork and it was lovely. In the woven strands I could follow the hands that had made it with care and attention. It was not a hard, rigid, unyielding box, highly polished and repelling my touch but a basket like the basket that holds the fresh, dry, clean clothes off the washing line or the basket that holds treasured mementoes or the Moses basket that holds the sleepy baby. These everyday practical and domestic objects are what speak to me of love. So a coffin or a basket? For me a basket like the ones at home, the lid held on with wooden toggles reminding me of the duffel coat I had when I was little and my Mum doing up the toggles for me because I could only do them very slowly. Another image filled with love.

In particular I found myself comparing the images of the Moses basket and the coffin basket. Were these the images of a life led from the cradle to the coffin? Possibly but to my mind, they were images of two beginnings: the baby beginning its life here where we can watch it grow and develop; and Peter, beginning anew, beyond our watchful eye but going with our love and hopes and prayers.

Pamela Affleck, Aberdeen Meeting

Meeting for Sufferings 5th October 2013 [back to contents](#)

As the alternate for North Scotland Meeting for Sufferings, I have been following the meetings for the last year while David Sanders has been attending as our representative. We have aimed to discuss the agenda before each meeting, and the minutes and report afterwards. This has helped me keep abreast of the issues, but the meeting in October was the first I attended. It was slightly unusual in that I was accompanying two young people to the consultation on Quaker Faith and Practice at Friends House (the only ones from Scotland to be there). (page 21 -Ed)

The main items on the agenda are ones which should be familiar, namely the boycott of goods from Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories, the welfare cuts and our Quaker commitment to becoming a low carbon sustainable community (the Canterbury Commitment).

The boycott of settlement goods, started in 2011, was reconsidered in the light of a number of minutes from Area Meetings. Some had expressed a hope that the boycott would be extended to all Israeli goods because of an increase in illegal occupation and the deterioration of living conditions for Palestinians in these territories. Others felt that an extension to the boycott would jeopardise Quaker work such as international advocacy by QPSW and its management of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). EAPPI's stance is that of 'principled impartiality' and its scope is being developed, including a pilot of placements in ordinary Jewish households at the end of visits and meetings with young Israeli army recruits. We heard reports about local dialogue groups between Quakers and Jewish communities in the UK. Discussions are often very painful and bitter, especially in areas where anti-Semitism is rife, but usually regarded as useful. Some groups find that it is necessary to explain repeatedly that the boycott is not against Israel or the Jewish community, but the illegal settlements. This focus would be diluted if the boycott were extended, and the decision was made that it should continue as it is. Updated advice about taking action can be found at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Trade-with-Israeli-settlements-Updated-April-2013.pdf>. There is still an issue with accurate labelling of settlement goods which might lead individuals to choose to avoid all Israeli goods, but there is a list of products known to come from illegal settlements at the end of the document above.

Government reform of the welfare system continues to be of concern to Quakers. The recent survey about this about showed that 58% of respondents considered their meeting already actively engaged with the issues. In July, MfS asked QPSW to explore possible areas of work and projects but nothing has yet emerged. Their Economic Issues programme continues to research and address underlying structural issues, working with other churches on ethical investment ('Your faith, Your Finance') and providing information. The online 'Economic Mythbusters' course, run in conjunction with the New Economics Foundation, was oversubscribed but materials can be found at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/mythbusters> and is well worth a look.

In the meantime, local Quaker response to the cuts has been wider than for most other issues and the groundswell of concern was likened to a movement. Responses in local meetings include supporting food banks, credit unions and Citizens Advice Bureaux, speaking out to MPs and writing to local papers. Wanstead Quakers have launched the 'Fair Penny Campaign' <http://thefairpenny.org.uk/>, 'I'd pay an extra penny per pound in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from austerity cuts'. The main appeal of this campaign to me is its emphasis on equality and fairness rather than charity.

Related to the welfare cuts, we heard the triennial report from The Quaker Housing Trust, which supports housing projects for those who are particularly vulnerable, with grants and interest-free loans. There is a growing divide between those who are well housed and those who are not. Action is not cheap and even the long list of projects in the report is a drop in the ocean, but it is an important witness, and of course invaluable to those who benefit from it. The report can be found at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/MfS-2013-10-05-2013-QHT-report.pdf>

BYM trustees had asked MfS for guidance about whether BYM should divest from its investments in companies involved primarily in fossil fuel extraction. Of £20m invested in the stock market, some 2.94% resides in BG Group, and 1.23% in Statoil. Is this consistent with our Canterbury Commitment to become a low carbon community? QPSW is a member of Operation Noah, an ecumenical Christian organisation concerned with

climate change that has just launched the 'Bright Now' campaign calling for church disinvestment from fossil fuel companies (<http://brightnow.org.uk>).

Discussion was cautious at first, acknowledging our reliance on fossil fuels and the possibility of stakeholder engagement. However the opportunities for the latter are somewhat limited with companies whose primary purpose is extraction. Then one Friend recounted the gasps of horror round the room when investments in oil companies were listed in her area meeting's annual Treasurer's report. It was as if the mood of the meeting changed, and the decision was eventually made to recommend divestment. Some Friends suggested transferring investments to renewable or energy-saving technologies instead. It was explained that many such companies are not FTSE-listed or do not meet other current criteria for BYM investments, but the trustees are to conduct an overall review of investment policy in the coming year so this may change.

Still on the topic of becoming a low carbon community, the Canterbury Commitment group is working out how to monitor BYM's response to our commitment. It had already been decided that there should not be an annual obligation for meetings to complete the carbon calculator or checklist (which three LMs in our Area Meeting submitted in 2012). Instead the group is working on a Yearly Energy Survey (YES). Plans are at an early stage and we did not receive any details, but it was indicated that this would be less onerous than the carbon calculators and might only involve those meetings with premises. A gathering of AM representatives is also being planned to discuss the Canterbury Commitment to help the group prepare its report for YM in 2014.

Work is beginning on the successor to 'A framework for action 2009-2014' which will describe the vision for Friends in Britain. The terms of reference for 2015-2020 were accepted by the meeting and a group will be put together in December to develop the consultation with LMs and AMs. It is anticipated that the long-term framework will be ready towards the end of 2014.

It has been really interesting following the centrally managed work as David's 'understudy' for the last year, and I found my first experience of MfS very intense but satisfying. More detail can be found in background

papers and minutes at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/sufferings> but please do feel free to contact me at ghlo@live.co.uk for more information or if you wish to comment.

Jane Booth, Aberdeen & Banchory Meetings

North Scotland Area Business Meeting held at Ness Bank Church Hall, Inverness 9th November 2013 [back to contents](#)

Area Meeting met in a very large Church Hall in Inverness. I liked this venue, there was plenty of room for Friends to gather and gossip comfortably! During our opening worship, David James remembered Peter McCaffery with a reading from Galatians 5:22. Thank you David, I am inspired to take up that end of the Bible, I had no idea it was so lively.

Membership. We began with membership matters, there have been 4 transfers out of our area and one into our area, a net loss! There were nominations of elders & overseers, two safeguarding co-ordinators and a trustee for the North of Scotland Quaker Trust.

Nominations. There followed a discussion about nominations and John Melling explained that at present there are 4 members of the Nominating Group, this group is appointed by AM and its function is to bring forward names to AM for the nominations committee. John eloquently as ever, stressed the importance of the nominations committee to the life of AM, as they search for the people to lead us, inspire us and do the work that we require to hold our MfW.

Accounts. The AM accounts were presented by Nigel Dower and our treasurer Derek McLean. These accounts have already been approved and sent to BYM as there is now a strict timetable for financial matters. I was most impressed by the new format of these accounts, altogether much clearer and understandable than in previous years. I recommend a study of the colourful pie charts, to see where your money goes.

The treasurer explained that there was a surplus of funds for the financial year 2012, and he felt that we should donate this money.

Tom Sayles pointed out that some of this money had come from the NSQT

which might not be able to give so much in future as the Trust needed to do major repairs on the Aberdeen buildings. There followed a discussion about our two AM accounts. The North of Scotland Quaker Trust has the responsibility of the Aberdeen properties and provides funds for the expenses of Friends traveling in the Ministry.

The North of Scotland Area Meeting is responsible for the financial transactions of all the meetings in our area. If a Friend is appointed by the AM to attend a meeting or conference, then the expenses are paid by AM. If an individual wishes to attend a Quaker event, then they can apply to the NSQT for funds. This is obviously my simplified summary, and does not give the whole picture. (see following article—Ed)

Donations from AM. Derek pointed out that at present the Northern Friends Peace Board demands a quota from every AM of £500. Moreover, they have just asked that this quota be increased to an amount equal to £7.50 for each member – this would make approximately £900 from our AM. No other Quaker body demands a quota – BYM gave up the quota system some time ago. What does the NFPB do?? – They produce “barrow loads of publications” (according to our representative to that body). I, along with several other Friends protested that we should not give them any more money. I personally believe that we should not give them any money – there are many other bodies that do practical work for peace on far less money!

We agreed not to increase our donation to NFPB, and of the £4600 surplus we agreed to donate £2000 to Britain Yearly Meeting, £600 to Friends World Committee for Consultation and £1,000 to the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine. I do hope that we may have an opportunity to debate our donation to NFPB at another AM.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness. After a splendid lunch provided by Inverness Friends, our guest, Elizabeth Allen from Lanark Meeting talked to us about the work of QPSW. Elizabeth talked movingly about how the work of QPSW is rooted in our testimonies and is an expression of our faith in action. There are many different aspects to the work of QPSW, but all the programmes are based upon real practical experience and evidence of need.

Crime & Community Justice. Peter McCaffery was a member of the Scottish crime & community Justice network, (one branch of the work of QPSW) so it was appropriate the Elizabeth should lead us through a discussion of our views on the reason for having prisons.

Through Local meetings, stories had been collected from people directly involved with the prison system, family members experiences of trying to visit prison as well as prisoners stories of how going to prison affected them. These stories have been edited and will be available to use for discussion. In small groups, we debated the question “what is prison for?”, then we were given some of the real life stories and descriptions to consider. This was enlightening and enjoyable.

After thanking Elizabeth and returning to face the table, we received the reports from Northern Friends Peace Board and Quaker Life. AM ended with silence, followed by tea and cakes.
Phyllida Sayles, Orkney Meeting

The North Scotland Area Meeting and the North of Scotland Quaker Trust [back to contents](#)

Nigel Dower, as Clerk of the Area Meeting Trustees, presented this paper at the last AM in Inverness. He was asked to have it printed in the Newsletter so that Friends can read it, including those not present at AM. It may be discussed at the next AM.

This has been written because there appears to be some uncertainty amongst some Friends about the relationship between these two bodies and about where funding for various activities comes from. It may help Quakers in North Scotland if we explain briefly what North Scotland Area Meeting does and what the North of Scotland Quaker Trust does as well as explaining what each will fund. Their work is closely related but it is not exactly the same.

The North Scotland Area Meeting (NSAM) is the Quaker body to which all the local meetings – some 12 of them in the area – belong. It is in turn a constituent meeting (one of about 70) of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). It has four meetings each year. These meetings transact necessary business,

including admissions to membership and arrangements for Quaker weddings. Sometimes a minute expressing a ‘concern’ may be accepted which is passed on to other Quaker bodies such as General Meeting for Scotland and Britain Yearly Meeting. Often there will be a visiting speaker. Throughout the year the Area Meeting provides support and guidance to local meetings through its office-bearers, its group of elders and overseers and its trustees.

In 2005 NSAM changed its name from North of Scotland Monthly Meeting to North Scotland Area Meeting and for the first time adopted a governing document (constitution). This move reflected what was happening throughout Britain, namely the recognition of each Area Meeting as a separate charity in law. Although in fact in Scotland Area Meetings had been separate charities for over ten years beforehand, the adoption of a formal governing document involved the setting up of a trustee body of six members appointed by the Area Meeting. This trustee body looks after what are now called ‘governance’ issues: it acts as a finance committee for the Treasurer, and it produces and approves each year the report and accounts of the Area Meeting. It also looks after other governance issues like protecting children and vulnerable adults, data protection, insurance, health and safety. This trustee body is quite separate from the North of Scotland Quaker Trust. Having two groups of trustees can be confusing (especially as one person is a member of both!).

The North of Scotland Quaker Trust (NSQT) has always been independent of what we now call the Area Meeting. It was set up in 1912 by Quakers in the northern half of Scotland as the Aberdeen Two Months Meeting Trust. Although it is an independent charity, its relationship with the NSAM is an intimate one in that all five of its trustees are appointed by Area Meeting and its sole purpose is to support Quaker activities in the North of Scotland one way or another. Apart from a few shares, it owns two buildings, 100 Crown Street and 98 Crown Street in Aberdeen, and looks after two Quaker burial grounds at Kingswells and Kinmuck. 98 Crown Street is the Aberdeen Quaker Meeting House. Most of 100 Crown Street is commercially let and the rent provides the main income for the Trust. The Trust’s four main purposes are to maintain meeting houses, support people ‘travelling in the ministry’ (which is these days interpreted to mean attending courses and conferences), supporting the education of Quaker children and young

people, and giving support to Quakers in need.

What does the AM fund and what does the Trust fund?

The AM: If the AM appoints you to attend an event such as a course or conference, then the AM will pay. Simply apply to the AM treasurer for the funding. The AM pays for its office bearers (Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer etc.) to attend meetings. Similarly, the AM will pay the costs of Friends who travel to attend AM and General Meeting for Scotland. If travelling to your local meeting is expensive, please do not hesitate to ask for funding to make that journey. We know that many Quakers in North Scotland have long journeys to get to their nearest meeting.

The Trust: If you would like to attend a Quaker event and you are doing it on your own initiative (i.e. you have not been 'appointed' (= asked) by AM if you would like to go), please apply to the Trust for funding. You might want to go to a Quaker course or conference, or your children might want to go to events such as a link weekend or Summer Shindig. There is now a standard application form that the Trust trustees encourage people to use. It is straightforward to complete and makes sure that the trustees get the information they need to review the application. An applicant is asked to supply the name of another Friend – an office-bearer like the local meeting Clerk or an elder/overseer for instance – who can write a letter/e-mail of support. The Trust tries to give a reply within two weeks. **THE TRUST DOES NOT GET ENOUGH REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT!** So Friends are encouraged to consider applying for funds to attend events of interest. Please remember as well that the Trust is willing to help Friends who are in financial difficulties. You can make that sort of application on the same form as is used for attending Quaker events and this will be treated in complete confidence.

Postscript: Some of you may be aware that, towards the end of each year, the AM applies to the Trust for financial support for some of the activities the AM has funded during the year. You are welcome to ask if you want to know more about it but, for all practical purposes, it is not something that you need to worry about. The AM trustees and the Trust trustees sort it out between them.

Nigel Dower & Marion Strachan, Aberdeen Meeting

Quaker Faith and Practice Consultation Weekend [back to contents](#)

On Saturday the 5th of October we were lucky enough to get the chance to represent our Area Meeting at the Quaker Faith and Practice consultation. I (Gillean) was interested to go because my mum had mentioned it to me, and I was intrigued to see what others thought and put out my ideas and thoughts to the group.

We arrived at Friends House at 9:50am on Saturday 5th of October. It was Gillean's first time at Friends House and she was astonished by how big it was! When we arrived we were welcomed with pastries and something to drink before we headed up to the George Fox room. In here we had a short Meeting for Worship with the Meeting for Sufferings Representatives.

After Meeting for Worship the children, aged 11-18, were taken to the William Penn room where we first did a quiz on how much we knew about the Quaker Faith and Practice. This quiz let quite a few of us learn more about the book before we started discussing it. It also got us into the whole talking about the book, like we would be doing for the rest of the day. The rest of the morning, led by Paul Parker, was spent in small groups discussing whether 'Quaker Faith and Practice' needed to be revised, and if so how we thought it should be. This was done by having a question on each table and answering it. The questions were related to how we could revise the 'Quaker Faith and Practice'. There were lots of suggestions including making a version for children by having pictures in it, making it easier to read, and making it more accessible as an eBook and online. After lunch everyone re-grouped and spent the afternoon exploring life as a Quaker today through drawings or writing, most of these were based around the Quaker testimonies. As every person is unique, everyone had different ideas and different ways to express themselves. To finish off the day we all completed a feedback form about the day. Many people felt that there should be more days like this for young Quakers, in future, to discuss everything from university fees to current affairs.

In the whole, the day was a great experience and we both enjoyed it thoroughly. We are both glad that we got the chance to do this, something a bit more serious but still enjoyable for us young Quakers. We hope there will be more days like this one, which we can take part in again.
Brianna Fletcher and Gillean Palmer, Aberdeen Meeting

Practising Discernment: Listening with our Whole Selves. Woodbrooke-on-the-Road, Inverness, Sat 5th Oct 2013 [back to contents](#)

The day covered the main elements of the practice of discernment, and developing its use in Threshing Meetings and Meetings for Clearness.

Discernment: how do we know what it is ? Is it the ability to decide with wisdom at key moments, and recognise the key moments when this wisdom should be exercised ?

How often have we wished to grasp that unique moment of a calm mind, a cool head and vision unclouded, and recall that moment to mind, in times of need, to act with wisdom and discernment?

Practising discernment, a true Quaker quality, needs to be developed and worked at regularly, but can help produce this wisdom when required.

Tutor, Helen Rowlands, led the day. She is Head of Education at Woodbrooke, and a regular leader of Woodbrooke-on-the-Road courses. Helen and the group numbered 23, representing Skye, Elgin, Forres, Nairn, Inverness and Aberdeen Meetings.

The group was guided through a day of workshops, aimed at improving discernment, in the individual, in our Meetings and as a way of communally interacting. It aimed to strengthen our ability to be together as a community of faith.

In early Quaker writing, there is a lot of description of business conducted through the process of discernment: “a finding of the Light”; an asking “Is this of God?”. Only recently has Discernment been given a name, but we are finding that many people’s interest in living a well-grounded life, of being mindful, rests on this process.

Personal discernment grows from three individual elements:

Willingness, to open yourself to life.

Attentiveness, to become aware of your life.

Responsiveness, a readiness to make changes in your life.

These three threads need to be plaited together on a daily basis to make progress. The use of a Personal Compass allows these important elements

in your life to be brought to the front of your mind, as elements of North, South, East and West:

East, the direction of the rising star, what you are being prompted to embrace, something new.

West, the line of the setting sun, things to let go and set down.

The North, the North Star, your guiding light, your spiritual values and mentors.

The South, the sunny uplands, what you long for.

Try writing down the compass-points of your life as quadrants, laid out as a compass on a page. When completed, spend some time contemplating them. Which areas are the areas of push and pull, which parts of your life are you saying yes to, where are there conflicting energies? Make decisions only after this period of personal reflection.

In our Meetings, discernment can also be developed. A Threshing Meeting can be useful, helping to separate the preparation needed to make a decision, from the meeting to take a decision. All the information and knowledge required to make a decision is gathered, and threshed separately, ahead of the decision-taking meeting. This threshing process ensures all members’ views are heard, and strongly held feelings examined and perhaps let go.

A threshing of the facts is often vital, to ensure clarity before the next step towards making a decision, or holding a Meeting for Clearness. Practicing a meeting for Clearness, the group were taught the steps of active listening and supportive questioning, followed by Reflective Silence, perceptive open-ended questioning, and then transition, to end the Meeting well.

Finally, being a discerning community works best when we all do our own practice in ourselves. It brings support and strength to the community. Do it well, and the whole Quaker community will grow. In so doing it will also help our whole democracy to flourish.

Only a small flavour of the day has been outlined; if it draws you to read on, then try Nancy L. Bieber, ‘Decision Making and Spiritual Discernment: the Sacred Art of finding your way’. Helen Rowlands also left a number of short booklets with Inverness Meeting to provide further reading.

Thank you to John Melling, Inverness Meeting for facilitating the day, and to all who joined to create the joyous bring and share lunch, including our f(F)riend Peter. This record is offered in memory of Peter McCaffery.

Issy Fairclough, Inverness Meeting

Quaker Life Rep Council [back to contents](#)

I joined a wee choir at Woodbrooke and at Area Meeting sang the songs we gave to the entertainment in the evening. Those present nobly and beautifully joined in one with me. The other has a sentiment I love. Some of you will have heard it before.;

“Walk a mile in my shoes,
Walk a mile in my shoes,
Before you throw the stones of judgement,
Walk a mile in my shoes”

The Council “is an inspirational opportunity for sharing issues, experience and good practice with each other, for disseminating information, and linking local and central work over the course of a residential week-end twice a year”. - just to remind you !

We had home groups and members of the Central committee came round explaining their work. One snippet I like is “Outreach is no longer “doing” it is who we are. How do we become the sort of Meeting which will attract others?” What about having a “Bring a friend” meeting. Include cake..! !

The main theme for the week-end was membership. Simon Best talked about the value of membership. Throughout Britain the number of attenders is going up and the number of members down. Should we have members at all? He said we need to look beyond names on a list to the value today, which he saw as;

Belonging; Membership is a way of saying “I belong”. Through membership people belong to the Community which is different from the sum of its parts. George Gorman said that religion is about relationships with each other rather than me and God.

Convincement; An old definition of this was “Sins revealed by the light”. It is a personal revelation. There are some convinced Friends who are not in membership. Membership shows a desire to recognise the sense of belonging; to say “I am convinced now that this is my faith community; where I belong”.

Discipline / Discipleship; This is to do with following our Quaker disciplines:

- Of worship
- Of how we make decisions
- Of Quaker Faith and Practice

It is saying we will try; we will support each other and we will accept challenge and help from others. It is about shared experience, which may be in worship, in a peace vigil or in working with children. Quaker Faith and Practice is a collective expression of our experience.

Making a Contribution to our Quaker Life; If I am not actively engaged in something of which I am a member it means less to me.

Accountability;

- Numerical
- This is who we are
- The need to be in the world but not of it
- Those we appoint to speak publicly on our behalf are accountable to all
- A.M. has the authority to terminate membership if somebody is really anti. (that was said a bit differently. I hope you get what I mean). We hold all our members accountable.
- There is personal accountability within the context of the community. We are called to live as if the kingdom of God were here now. We need to lovingly challenge each other and be accountable to each other and to our Quaker community.

Incidentally, somebody later said that all sorts of groups are now having people NOT join, even golf clubs! It is a current trend. I wonder where that is going to take us.

There is a new Chapter 11 for The Red Book. We were each given a copy...a sneak preview? The main changes are about admitting children and young

people into membership. However we talked about the “how” for everybody. I had not known how flexible we could, and are being encouraged, to be. As 11.04 says in its first paragraph; “ An individual, of any age, becomes a member of their area meeting, and through it of Britain Yearly Meeting, by a simple process agreed and adopted by the area meeting. Variety and flexibility in procedures are needed to reflect individual and local circumstances. Each area meeting will develop one or more of such procedures.”

Processes should be simple and as undaunting as possible. We encourage area meeting to experiment within the spirit of QF&P. Be Flexible...Be Inclusive. Involve the potential member whatever their age or ability. Nurture and support. Support people on a journey towards membership / deciding whether to. Continue the support afterwards.

We were given lots of ideas for how an application could happen:

- There may be a group within the meeting and the application come from the group with a report to area meeting.
- Applications can be by a telephone conversation... or even a face to face one !
- A meeting for clearness could be held with the individual to explore if becoming a member is right for them, then somebody could get back to area meeting.
- A letter could come from the local meeting. Membership may be grounded in participation in the meeting. We were told a story. A mum of 3 was asked “Would you like to be a member? Would you like us to do something about it for you?” “Oh what a relief” she replied “I have wanted to but not got round to it”.
- A.M. could decide “just” from the letter of application. Perhaps it is a long letter, or the person is already very well known.

There could be verbal reports of people’s experience of the applicant. Information could come from other groups, for example Young Friends’ General Meeting (YFGM), or some other national group.

Other points that came up were;

- Anything written has to be seen by the applicant. The whole thing should be discussed, not just to check facts. It is about conversation. It

is about listening

- Do we ask the local meeting for their experience of the person in their group?
- We may encourage the applicant to be at area meeting to speak for her or himself.
- Query is it right for the individual and for the whole Quaker community.
- What info does area meeting have?
- Who is present when it is talked about?
- Is it right for now?
- Can attenders please be allowed in to hear membership applications so the whole thing is not so daunting.

Area meeting needs to have a nurturing group for before and after. FINALLY (WOW!) The acceptance of a new member should be a joyful occasion and may be marked by some kind of celebration. Yeh! Diana Brockbank, Forres Meeting

Northern Friends’ Peace Board (NFPB) 28th September 2013 Edinburgh [back to contents](#)

This meeting is open to anyone who is interested.36 attended the day. This was my 2nd meeting, the 1st being the Centenary Celebration of the NFPB- I’m still finding my way here. Like all Quaker bodies its aim is to impart as much news as possible to Friends about what is happening and what information is available (masses!!!)– liaising with other bodies too. The word “Peace” has a wide interpretation which makes sense to me, including sustainability, economic justice etc.

Shared news from all our meetings was interesting – what a lot other meetings are doing, especially those in the more populated areas- so wide in subject and style that I hesitate to report back individually. A mixture of notes and minutes were taken over the day (7 pages worth of précised info came)– and I notice how thorough these have been e.g. I reported that a member from my meeting was taking part in the conference on Forgiveness at the Findhorn Foundation- and on the “minutes” – there is the web site too! (not given by me) So if these if Peace issues interest you I would suggest you tap in on the internet to the web site to see these or write and

ask me if you don't use a computer re a specific issue.

Izzy Cartwright Peace Education Project Manager, from QPSW was the main speaker talking about her work with the same lovely energy of our guest speakers at Pluscarden this year. 4 strands to her work:-

Supporting Quakers and others to do Peace education work.

Creating Peace education resources. She has worked with *the Peace Education Network* to produce a **"Teach Pack" of assemblies and activities for use in Primary schools**, from a range of organisations, partly as a result of concerns from NFPB members. As a result of her work she was invited (and did) organise a Peace Week in a Catholic primary school (I think in London). The pack Costs £5- I have given packs to Inverness, Aberdeen and Westray/Papa Westray. Copies of the pack are available from the NFPB office or via free download at <http://tinyurl.com/pt7ybfx>. There are hopes to produce a pack for secondary level in the future.

Supporting the Peace movement

Challenging the militarisation of children and young people.

There's going to be loads coming up about the Centenary of the start of WW1. We meet again in November.

Juli SaltForres LM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Peaceworkers' workshop Pluscarden August 2013 [back to contents](#)

One of the many excellent programmes run by Quaker Peace & Social Witness, on behalf of Quakers in Britain, is the Peacemaker scheme. It is essentially a one-year placement in a peace organisation, allowing QPSW to support work they cannot do themselves; allowing the individual Peacemaker to get experience and develop skills, often taken on projects of significant responsibility; and allowing the organisation to do work it may well have been unable to do otherwise. In recent years there have been three Peaceworkers in UK organisations, two in Burundi organisations, and two at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. Last year's cohort made a film on the Peacemaker scheme, which tells you more about how it works, and shows you some of the sorts of placement organisations that the scheme involves – to watch it, and read more about the scheme and current and past placements, go www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-placements

[and-peaceworkers.](#)

Rhiannon Redpath and I were two of last year's Peaceworkers. The Peaceworkers are expected to talk to a number of Quaker Meetings during the year, to inform Friends of the work being done on their behalf, and to encourage donations to the scheme, as it is partly dependent of Meetings' and individuals' generosity. In the penultimate weekend of our amazing, challenging, placement year – 23-26 August - we did a 'tour' of Scottish Meetings, speaking at Highlands and Islands Area Meeting in Pluscarden, Castle Douglas Meeting, and Edinburgh Meeting, which was a lovely way to spend some of our last days in post.

Pluscarden was special, because we stayed there two nights, and rather than 'just' talk for an hour and a half – as we are used to – we had over three hours! We felt very welcomed by the Area Meeting, and were struck from what a big area people came from. In our session, on the Saturday, we did a 'spectrum' exercise to see where people stood on some of the challenging questions we have faced in our work ('Should the children of the accused be taken into account when sentencing someone to imprisonment?' etc); introduced the Peacemaker scheme; talked in turn about our placement organisations and the work we have been doing; and after a break and questions, we did an exercise getting people to reflect upon their own peace journeys, because one of the main things learned during our Peacemaker placements is that peace work can mean so many things: from collecting signatures for a petition urging government departments to work together to prioritise tackling violence against women and girls in Afghanistan, to blockading a nuclear warheads factory, to raising children, teaching, and many other things; we are all peaceworkers.

To give a very brief overview of mine and Rhiannon's placements: I was at two organisations: ForcesWatch and War Resisters' International. ForcesWatch (<http://forceswatch.net>) challenges the ethics of military recruitment in the UK, and questions the sense of uncritical pride in the Armed Forces– my main jobs there were: writing a report on the influence of the military in UK universities, fundraising for a documentary on what teenagers in the UK think about the military's engagement with young people (from recruitment adverts to visits to schools - <http://wefund.com/project/young-people-and-the-military-a-documentary/p57343>), and organising a conference bringing together

academics, activists and others who are working on – or concerned about – the privileging of the military and military approaches in different areas of society (www.forceswatch.net/content/militarisation-everyday-life-uk). War Resisters' International (www.wri-irg.org) is a global network of pacifist and antimilitarist groups, which focuses on using nonviolent methods to question war and the preparation for war, especially through supporting conscientious objectors to military service. At WRI my main project was editing a book called 'Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth, and How to Counter It' (www.wri-irg.org/SowingSeedsOnline).

Rhiannon was placed at Gender Action for Peace and Security. Gender Action for Peace and Security (www.gaps-uk.org/index.php4) is a network of organisations with experts in fields of gender, peacebuilding, humanitarian, development and human rights issues – it was set up in 2006 to build on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which “recognises that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and effective institutional arrangements to guarantee for their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.” (www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps) One of Rhiannon's main projects was running GAPS' 'No Women, No Peace' campaign (www.nowomennopeace.org), which is currently focusing on women's rights in Afghanistan, calling on the UK government to honour its commitment to women in armed conflict, and reporting on progress. She was part of representations to the Department for International Development, and ran workshops on the issues for other NGOs, school children, and peace groups.

One final thing to mention is that during our Scotland tour, Rhiannon and I kept a video diary, much of which is on the joint blog that our cohort of Peaceworkers set up to tell Quakers and others about our experiences, and which the current lot of Peaceworkers have taken on from us: <http://poboxpeace.wordpress.com>. Four of the videos were filmed at Pluscarden: 'Back stage', 'Gooseberries', 'Scotch Mist', and 'Quakers and Haybales'. You have to scroll down a bit to find them. I'd encourage you to read/watch the other things there too.

In Friendship, Owen Everett.

Joseph, Carpenter of Nazareth [back to contents](#)

It is said that deeds speak louder than words. But what does one do when the person of whom one is speaking, is not recorded as saying anything at all? This is the conundrum with which Frederick Suarez⁽¹⁾ starts his little book *Joseph, Carpenter of Nazareth*. This treatise is helpful to the Protestant in that it allows him space in which to submit thoughts that could otherwise be misinterpreted. For in the circumstances it is only possible to surmise much of what transpired.

The New English Bible makes it clear that Joseph is very upset when he finds that his fiancée is already pregnant, and shows that he is considering setting the marriage contract aside as allowed by the Law. (Suarez suggests that the consequences of doing so are too terrible to consider). So it is that Joseph shows love, compassion and charity; which might or might not be shown by the inhabitants of Nazareth. Especially the women as they daily gather by the village well for a gossip. Thus the prophecy of Isaiah begins to be fulfilled. “He was despised and we esteemed him not.”⁽²⁾ It must have been a relief to Mary when the edict of Augustus reached Nazareth. For it gave her a reason to get away from the gossip and speculation that would be inevitable in this small out-of-the-way town. Of which someone once begged the question “can any(thing) good come out of Nazareth?”.

The little donkey, so beautifully portrayed in the song popularised by a Danish nobleman and his wife⁽³⁾ is made ready for the three day journey to Bethlehem, in the neighbouring province of Judea. For nothing, absolutely nothing must hinder the collection of taxes due to be rendered to Caesar – certainly not the imminence of a baby!

Fortunately, we are not privy to the thoughts of Joseph as he surveys the only available accommodation in Bethlehem – these would have been anger, frustration, and humiliation. Anger at the arbitrary way in which he had been forced to make the journey at all, to fill the coffers of the occupying power. Frustration that his wife, who had been jiggled about on the back of a donkey for three days, is not able to receive more than very basic shelter, as she goes into labour. Surely it is humiliating enough to be a Nazarene, in this the city of his greatest ancestor, without all these added burdens. It is after the birth of Jesus and the two recorded groups of

visitors (the latter having caused great consternation in the court of the despotic Herod) that our speechless hero rises to the occasion. For rumour has it that the king has ordered the slaughter of all children who might be a threat to his dynasty. So it is that the small still voice of the Divine is heard, "saying get out, get out for the rumour is true". Once more the little donkey is made ready, this time for a far more hazardous journey⁽⁴⁾. A journey into the land from which Joseph's forebears had fled many centuries earlier. A country and civilisation which would have use for the skills of a carpenter. A skill which knows no national boundaries and is demand the world over.

After a long sojourn, the family return from Egypt to settle back in Nazareth. Here, before the start of Jesus' ministry, I like to think of Joseph and the son of Man as partner in trade. For in trade one meets and has dealings with all sorts and conditions of men, from the rich man in his castle to the lowliest crofter, from the arrogant to the saint.

References

⁽¹⁾ Frederico Suarez. Sometime Dean of the Faculty of the Arts at the University of Naverre

⁽²⁾ Is. 53 v.3

⁽³⁾ Frederick and Nina

⁽⁴⁾ A journey of some 250 -300mls across the Sinai desert.

Roger H Quinn., inverness Meeting

Area Meetings for 2014 [back to contents](#)

- **15 February Forres**
- **17 May Lochaber and Lorn**
- **Residential AM:** depending on availability of Pluscarden this will be held on one of the following weekends, 22-23, or 29-31 August, or 5-7 September.
- **8 November Aberdeen**

General Meetings for Scotland in 2014

- **March 8th: Glasgow;** the afternoon session will be devoted to the independence referendum and to a consideration of the values we would wish to see in Scottish society after the referendum.
- **June 14th: Edinburgh**
- **September 13th: North Scotland. Venue tbc**
- **November 15th/16th: West Scotland. Venue tbc**

Online newsletters: *Tayside Quake; West of Scotland Quaker News Northern Quake; Scottish Friend* are available on the GM website: <http://www.quakerscotland.org>

Courses and conferences; *Remember North of Scotland Quaker Trust has funds for attendance at these events!* Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at www.woodbrooke.org.uk or tel. 0121 472 5171

The contents of The Northern Quaker reflect the opinions of the contributors and Editor and do not necessarily represent the views of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Contributions will be most welcome to future issues of *The Northern Quaker*

**The deadline is two weeks after Area Meeting. Please send contributions to Harry Horsley
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