

SESAME

Number 199: November 2015

Dilemmas / QCCIR: Interfaith Peacebuilding / W.W.II C.O.s – An Appeal / A Pathway to Freedom / The STIRy so far (an interim report) / Wm Penn – Voltaire's verdict / 2016 Conferences / The Trip (D.I.Y. Relief Work) / NFPB / AM October Minutes (including proposed meeting dates for 2016)

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
yours are the eyes through which Christ's
compassion
is to look out to the earth,
yours are the feet by which He is to go about
doing good
and yours are the hands by which He is to bless
us now.

St Teresa of Avila

Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to the Editor, Alan Frith (email: ar.frith@btinternet.com) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 29 December**. The Editors reserve the right to condense articles. If possible, please submit articles by email, sending as an attachment *and* in the body of the email. An email version of *Sesame* is available in PDF format. Contact the Editor.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Our next area meeting will be hosted by Portobello & Musselburgh Meeting and will be held at Portobello Old Parish Church, Bellfield St, EH15 2BP, at 2 pm on Saturday 28 November. The agenda will include:

- the host meeting, our most recently established Local Meeting, sharing with us something of its life;
- a consideration of how Quakers engage (or perhaps how we *might* engage) with other faith traditions;
- a report from Janet Grimwade about the work of the Edinburgh meeting house management committee;
- a reflection from Henry Thompson on how Meeting for Sufferings carries forward the work of our Yearly Meeting during the year;
- deciding dates for Area Meetings from April 2016 onwards.

Please come, if you are able.

Phil Lucas, clerk

The distribution of *Sesame*

We were unable to post the printed copies of October's *Sesame* (issue 198) to everyone, and so they were sent in batches to Local Meeting clerks; we are sorry for the inconvenience to those who received their copy late.

We are looking to update the mailing list, so please tell us as soon as possible if you would like to get *Sesame* in a different way. It can be had as a printed A5 copy sent to your home (copies are also available at meeting houses), as a PDF version sent by email, or by going to <http://www.quakerscotland.org/south-east> and downloading it. Large print or other versions are available on request.

To change how you get *Sesame* please contact Alan Frith – giving your name, Local Meeting, and how you wish to receive it (from the list above) – by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, or email ar.frith@btinternet.com.

An emailed or downloaded copy is the greenest, cheapest and fastest way to receive *Sesame*. If readers who can do so picked up their paper copy at meeting the cost of direct mailing would be cut, and we looking into how this might work. However, we want to ensure you receive *Sesame* in a way that is most suitable for you, including the option of receiving both print *and* electronic versions.

The Editors

“If you would be good enough . . .”

The envelope was saved, I suppose, for the stamps: one (upside-down) of President Hindenburg; and an airmail one showing Count von Zeppelin. On the front, the unlikely address – “The Rector of the Church, Preston-Warwick, Scotland, England” – has been augmented in purple pencil: *Try Preston-on-Stour*; a censor’s blue pencilled crosses, front and back, mark it as opened. It reached my grandfather, the rector of Whitchurch, in Warwickshire (to whose parish Preston was joined), in September 1938. The letter inside is inexpertly typed on cheap paper, now blotchy and discoloured, and reads:

I should be most grateful if you would be good enough to let me have a copy of the certificate of baptism of J o h n E g b e r t B e n g o u g h born in 1778 in Preston son of parents we do,nt know.

Please let me know the charges for the same, so that I can refund them.

Should you be unable to assist me in the above case I should be pleased if you could let me know to whom to refer to.

I am undertaking pedigree research for Frau Ktunes- Hochstetter in Wien

A little googling reveals that John Egbert Bengough (1808-88) was a Viennese *Gaswerksdirektor* – *Generaldirektor der Imperial Continental Gas-Association*, and also *Direktor der städtischen Gaswerke in Wien* – and, given the dates and their identical unusual names, it would seem a safe guess that the subject of the letter was his father. Justine Elisabeth, the gas man’s daughter, married a Carl Christian Hochstetter, and *their* son, Ferdinand, became a scientist, famous enough to rate a page on German Wikipedia (he taught Konrad Lorenz), but not to be confused with the more eminent Ferdinand *von* Hochstetter, a geologist, after whom is named a peak in Antarctica. On the Ktunes family, the search engine is less helpful (no I did *not* mean *folktunes*), so of them I can say nothing; except, of course, that they were not Jewish. For the role of the agency that sent the letter, the Genealogical Research Service (*Familienkundlicher Forschungsdienst: Fa-Fo* for short), was to check the Aryan purity of a person’s ancestry (before marriage, for example); if Frau Ktunes-Hochstetter was checking that side of her family she must have been confident of the other. (Not that she must herself have been anti-Semitic, necessarily – merely, in Vienna at the time, law-abiding.)

I have no idea how my grandfather dealt with this request. It is more than likely it had come to the wrong place: Preston-on-Stour had been in Gloucestershire until 1931, and was never, needless to say, in Scotland. (Ought they to have written to Preston in East Lothian?) *If*, however, the baptismal records of 160 years before *had* listed a baby Bengough, would it have been worse to blight the lives of those concerned in 1938 by refusing to supply details; or to collude in a system of institutionalised racism by providing them? Then too, Bengough *might* mean ‘red head’ (Welsh *pen goch*) but what if there were evidence it had been the anglicisation of something else? (Presumably that *Ben* must have caused a sharp intake of breath at the Fa-Fo office in Berlin.)

Probably I would remember, I think, if my own assistance had been asked for by an agency of a foreign dictatorship; and I don’t. On the other hand, I *do* recall instances of tenderer consciences than mine being troubled by official curiosity from closer at hand. In the 1990s, for example, when the South Yorkshire Probation Service started a partnership arrangement by which their clients were referred to C.A.B. workers like me, some advisers refused to tell referring officers *anything* of the resulting interviews, even whether a person had turned up or not: for them, client confidentiality was an absolute. To me, that seemed (and seems) silly – but so, perhaps, must adherence to any principle one doesn’t share or interprets differently.

As Friends, we grapple with issues where principles collide. ‘Fighting militarism’ *could* mean taking up arms against it (and of the members of the Society of Friends of military age during the 1914-18 War, 33.6 % enlisted) though most of us, now as then, would see challenging militarisation [*see p. 21*] as the truer way; a ‘peace tax’ [*see p. 22*] is a logical extension of the principle of conscientious objection, but also a denial of democratic rule (would we allow others the right to object to their taxes being used for (*e.g.*) road-building? – or overseas aid? – or the NHS?) Then there is the difficulty that arises when taking a public stand on, say, equality affects how we are heard on other concerns [*see pp. 8-9*]; how do we balance (perhaps “juggle” is an apter word) different priorities?

As we near the foot of the page, you must be bracing yourself to be told there are no easy answers. Well, indeed; but Quakerism is based in the confidence that there *are* answers and together we *may* grasp them; since (as William Penn [*see pp. 16-17*] wrote) *True godliness does not turn men [sic] out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it.*

Alan Frith

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations Day Conference 2015: Interfaith Peacebuilding Programme

About sixty participants attended this conference at Friends House in London on 26 September; disappointingly, I was the only representative from Scotland. In the morning there were two talks, the first by Jane Clements, Anglican Director of the Council of Christians and Jews, who began by referring to the recent tragic deaths at Mecca. After pause for reflection, she described the ethos of the CCJ, where all views are heard and respected, anti-Semitism is a shared concern, and the reclamation of Jesus the Jew is promoted by both religions. She spoke of the very positive reaction from within the Jewish community to the CCJ review, published in August, *If Not Now, When?* This examines the widespread persecution of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa, and suggests possible educational and spiritual responses. She then considered how Christianity is seen as idolatrous by some Jewish settlers, a view which has resulted in the destruction of churches in the Holy Land.

She also discussed the worsening relations between Quakers and Jews because of the Palestine question. Dialogue has almost petered out and there has been an unpreparedness to listen to deeply-felt concerns. This has been exacerbated by Britain Yearly Meeting's 2014 call for action, urging the UK Government to recognise Palestine as a nation state and calling for a comprehensive arms embargo on all sides in the conflict, and an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza and the occupation of Palestine. She recommended the book *Uncivil War* by Keith Kahn-Harris which explores the causes of conflicts between different groups in Britain and the USA and evaluates the history of civility in society through an examination of the different methods used by international organisations involved in developing dialogue within Jewish communities. Kahn-Harris describes how, using these techniques and with expert help, he brought together more than seventy prominent, diverse British Jews for a series of encounters. He concludes that dialogue and civility *are* possible; but no change in behaviour will have serious consequences for the Jewish communities of the world.

Jane detected glimmers of hope, for example through a series of conver-

sations hosted by the CCJ in which Zionism was explored and facilitated dialogue enabled people to get beyond the diatribe to the person. However much work still needs to be done and time is still required to break through the ideological barriers that exist between many Christians and Jews. She concluded with another book recommendation: *Not in God's Name* by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in which the author shows how a tendency to violence can subvert even the most compassionate of religions. Through a close reading of key biblical texts at the heart of the Abrahamic faiths, he challenges those who claim that religion is intrinsically a cause of violence, and argues that theology must become part of the solution if it is not to remain at the heart of the problem. The time has come for people of all faiths and none to stand together and declare: Not in God's Name.

The second talk was by Masuda Shaikh, Community Heritage Officer for Kirklees Council, who is a UK government advisor on the Cross-Government Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred, and the Muslim Family Specialist at the Christian Muslim Forum in London. She spoke about her work facilitating the sharing of heritage, including religious and cultural beliefs, within a widely diverse community. Her own background she described as traditional Muslim but with a strong emphasis on the value of education. From an early age, she rejected stereotypes for Muslim girls and was determined to make a difference by going to university, then helping to empower other Muslim women. Her family supported her in this. Her job has evolved from "visiting museums" to engendering discussion and action within and across different community groups. She was involved, for example, in the recent project to collect buttons symbolising those who died during the Holocaust, and at once encountered suspicion on both sides: 'Why is a Muslim getting involved in a Jewish project?' This did not deter her; indeed she used it to encourage further debate!

Her job also involves challenging the current rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: extremely difficult work, as people are unwilling to have their viewpoints questioned. Among young men there is disaffection with older Muslim leaders who in some cases speak English as a second language and are perceived as out-of-touch. The 'My Country, My Vote'

programme is intended to tackle some of this alienation by encouraging young people to engage locally in the wider community. She also supports an underground programme to shelter Muslim women fleeing domestic violence, and said that achieving equality for women in Muslim communities is a big issue as attitudes are very slow to change.

She went on to discuss the Government's Prevent programme in schools with which she is also involved. While the Home Office is insistent that certain messages are routinely delivered, she finds that engaging with young people informally, with no agenda and without the presence of teachers and other perceived authority figures, can be as effective. Participants are then willing to open up and share their opinions – often nuanced and well-informed – on Syria and Palestine, for example. She has been piloting a similar approach with young women.

At a personal level, she calls herself an atheist - "but if I were tempted I'd go to Quakers"(!) She believes in the value of people of different faiths and none engaging with each other on conflicts which affect all humanity, and that the Interfaith movement needs people of no faith to come on board, as well as believers.

After lunch participants divided into smaller groups to attend two out of five workshops; I went to 1 and 4.

Workshop 1 was led by members of the Kingston Quaker-Jewish dialogue group which has been meeting since April 2011. Its beginnings were tense – the Quaker boycott of goods from the West Bank settlements had just been announced – nevertheless, the members have recently held their thirtieth meeting. Their dialogue does not discuss the Israel/Palestine conflict but works to promote reconciliation and peace. A highlight for the group was its visit to Israel and Palestine in 2013 when they jointly decided which groups to contact, an exercise which itself helped build mutual trust.

Ten members – five Quakers and five Jews – were included in the main party. Three Quakers travelled earlier and met additional organisations in the West Bank. During the visit they had a day excursion to Ramallah, but the rest of their time was spent in Israel. This was because (a) they found it impossible to identify any organisation in the West Bank

apart from One Voice (which operates in both Israel and Palestine) that they could agree fitted their defined purpose; and (b) Jewish members were unwilling to stay overnight in the West Bank out of concern for their personal safety.

Today they give talks in their local area and continue to support groups they contacted in 2013. However, to some extent they feel they have reached a critical impasse, because having agreed to disagree on certain fundamental issues, they can go no further in their dialogue. The process then becomes one of understanding the other's reality rather than attempting to change the other's perceptions.

Workshop 4, led by a returned Ecumenical Accompanier, was entitled "Confronting difficult issues from an interfaith peace-building perspective: the experience of EAPPI and its application in the UK." Ecumenical accompaniers include people of different faiths, mixed faiths (e.g. Muslim Quaker) and non-believers. This in itself leads towards greater cooperation and understanding. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to have more Jewish and Muslim applicants. Their stance is that of "principled impartiality" in partnership with individuals and other agencies on the ground. They support human rights recognised in International Law and work towards an end to the Israeli military occupation inside Palestine (the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip), now in its fifth decade. They also co-operate with peace-promoting groups such as Rabbis for Human Rights and support the Haifa Mare Nostrum Initiative, one of whose aims is "encouraging conflict mitigation and intercultural dialogue". Israelis living there express fear of Palestinians who they believe want to kill them.

Meeting people of other ethnic and religious backgrounds and hearing about each other's lives helps to reduce the sense of threat on both sides. "Enemies are people whose story you haven't heard or whose face you haven't seen" (Dr. Irene Butter). The real dividing line is between those who believe peaceful coexistence is possible and those who do not.

In summing up the day's discussions, reference was made to the deep offence felt by people of other faiths towards two recent Quaker statements: that supporting equality in marriage in 2009, and the boycott of

settlement produce in 2011. This has affected interfaith relations, forcing Quakers into a discomfort zone. Faith communities typically take a long time to adjust. From the floor, the need was expressed to declare our faith positions honestly and openly, and to engage with young people wherever we live. The final observation, made by someone who had not previously spoken, encapsulated that spirit of tolerance for which all people of goodwill strive: he said prophets and peacemakers are equally valuable and both groups need to respect each other.

Lynne Barty

WERE YOU OR WAS A MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR DURING WORLD WAR II?

We are searching for diaries, letters and unpublished manuscripts written by Second World War conscientious objectors and hoping to find people who would be willing to share their memories with us. This information will be used as part of a research project at the University of Edinburgh entitled *A Comparative Anthropology of Ethics, Conscience and Human Rights*.

If you can help, or for more information, please contact Laura Major:

Email: l.major.ed.ac.uk

Telephone: 0131 6511 329

Or write to:

***Laura Major, Department of Social Anthropology,
15a George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD***

The project as a whole examines both the lives of those who make claims of conscience during times of war and violence, and the conditions within society that permit or restrict those claims. The information collected on conscientious objection during World War II will be fed into publications and a museum exhibition.

A Pathway to Freedom

The article “A Hidden Gem and a New Social Witness” in the last *Sesame* was of great interest to me; I hope soon to sample the menu at the Old School Café, and was particularly intrigued and enthused by what the author felt “sets it apart”: that the project provides experience, training and qualifications for young people who leave formal education with little to show for it in employability terms.

I read this the day following a meeting of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network at which the keynote speaker was Matt Fountain. He had described a social enterprise project he had set up in a prison, H.M.P. Low Moss, near Bishopbriggs, and I was struck by the common elements. Like the Old School Café, the Low Moss project – the “Freedom Bakery” – is designed to transform lives: to provide, for those who volunteer and are selected, a pathway to sustained freedom, when the alternative is the “revolving door” of prison, release, failure to find work, and return to prison – usually for short periods in which neither education nor training is offered.

Early life experience brought home very pointedly to Matt the high cost to the families of such offenders: living with constant instability, many just break down. He became convinced he could make a difference, and help to break the cycle of failure with a project, initially in one prison, but which, if successful, could be replicated in others, to provide skills that would enhance employability on release.

Having experience in baking, a wide range of contacts, and a credible business plan, he was able to negotiate a four-year contract with the management at Low Moss to take over a vacant former kitchen, and to procure promises from wholesalers (some of them also social enterprises) to distribute the bread that would be the main product. With the kitchen equipped, prisoners selected, and two professional bakers employed full-time, he launched the Freedom Bakery in July. There are places for eight trainees – six taken up so far – and, if there is high demand, for four more at another location. Prison rules prohibit their being paid more than inmates who work as kitchen staff, which actually is helpful: no-one will apply for training just for immediate gain. The

current intake is a mix of short-term and longer term prisoners. Matt has contacts among prospective employers in the baking trade, which gives reason for optimism, although it is still very early days.

There is the possibility of diversifying into the production of other baked goods, such as oatcakes; Matt also has in mind the preparation of sandwiches and snacks for sale to visitors (some coming a long way to see a relation, so travelling over mealtimes) and this too seems feasible.

Questions at the end of the talk brought out more information than can be detailed here. What was clear is that the project appeals very strongly to Friends, and there was a commitment to make it as widely known as possible in our Meetings and in other circles which share our deep concern for reducing re-offending. Matt would be keen to speak to such groups.

David Turner

The Freedom Bakery has a website: www.freedombakery.org. Before it opened, Matt Fountain was interviewed in The Guardian and on STV News; both reports are still available online.

Two books, likely to be of interest to Friends,

have recently been published by Common Weal, the think-tank (or “do-tank”, as its Director, Robin McAlpine, would prefer it):

Objectors & Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland, 1914-1918 by **Robert Duncan** (£7.99, ISBN 978-0-9930965-1-8) may seem rather short to be described as “the first comprehensive history” of anti-war activism in Scotland during World War I, but its six chapters do include much information, some of it concerning Quakers; in particular, Andrew and Sybil White, parents of our Friend Sylvia Marshall.

A Book of Ideas, 2016-21 (£8, ISBN 978-0-9930965-3-2) aims to stir up our thoughts ahead of next May’s Holyrood elections: the hope is to show that “Scotland’s future does not need to be the same as Scotland’s present”. Themes discussed include ‘Tax, Investment and the Public Realm’; ‘Democracy’; ‘Quality of Life’; ‘National Infrastructure’; and ‘Economic and Social Equality’.

Interim report to Area Meeting of the STIR group, October 2015

Purpose of this report: to note progress; identify emerging themes of the STIR process; seek advice on the way ahead.

Background: STIR was established in October 2014, with its remit agreed the following month, and the members appointed in January 2015. While the process was stimulated by concerns over difficulty in finding people to accept nomination for roles, and over financial challenges to AM, it was agreed that a wider review of how AM relates to local meetings was needed.

Remit: The remit was twofold:

1. To explore and record what is being done well in Area Meeting and local meetings in relation to: individual and collective spirituality; Quaker testimonies in action; meeting the needs of members and attenders; and service in the community; and
2. To develop a vision of how AM can work with local meetings to do these things more effectively through: new ways of working with a focus on 'what matters most'; laying down ineffective ways of working; changing existing patterns of structures and meetings, 'radically if necessary' to match this vision.

Membership: The STIR group comprises Deirdre Armstrong; Alastair Cameron; Rachel Fitzgerald; Justin Kenrick; Jane Pearn; Don Stubbings.

Process and progress: The group has met on seven occasions to plan activities; recognising the importance for our work of Ben Pink Dandelion's 2014 Swarthmore Lecture, *Open for Transformation: Being a Quaker*, we spent most of our second meeting watching it. We agreed to attempt to meet each local meeting and each of the committees of AM to gather views: this implies a total of nineteen meetings – nine local meetings; two worship groups (North Edinburgh and Midweek Meetings); eight committees. It was agreed that the views of people who rarely or never attend AM in session, including young people, should be particularly sought, though this has proved difficult.

To date, we have held fourteen of these conversations: those we have not yet managed are Polmont, Central Fife, and Tweeddale LMs; and the AM

Treasurer's Team. Meeting the Library Committee has also not proved possible, although the views of its members have been sought individually and noted. At each, we have invited people present and absent to submit their own responses to our questions: in addition, two individuals have offered their thoughts in very helpful written responses. In discussion with the AM Advocate for Children & Young People, it was agreed that it would be hard to convene a session with children and young people specifically to discuss AM.

Our conversations with LMs have generally taken place after Sunday worship, and have focussed on identifying people's perceptions and experiences of Area Meeting. Participants have been invited to make their own suggestions for improvement. All these have varied widely. We have adapted the structure of the conversations as they have progressed, though the questions have not changed much. We have had a lot of difficulty, particularly with local meetings, in finding the time to cover things fully within the time constraints.

Emerging themes: The key theme underlying our questions is the dual aspect of 'Area Meeting': it is both the embodiment of the community of Quakers in South-East Scotland and a series of meetings – currently eight – held throughout the year. We characterised these as 'AM as community' and 'AM as event'. Some we spoke to see these aspects as complementary; others describe them as contradictory or confusing.

We encountered a clear difference between the value people find in Local Meeting – where 'silence', 'community', 'space for spiritual exploration' and so on, were often mentioned – and in Area Meeting as an event. Many recognise that AM in this sense needs to exist, in order to do those jobs that are not appropriate or possible for local meetings. But some expressed the view that 'it's not for me'; others spoke of its being a frustrating experience, remote, failing to make decisions, and with too many reports. One said (as if this were a bad thing) 'it's really become a social occasion'.

Related to this is the time commitment – more than once, we heard comments about spending sunny Saturday afternoons in AM, with the implication that another activity might have been more enjoyable that day...

Our conversations with the AM committees had a flavour different from those with local meetings. We sensed that the AM committees seem to be

working reasonably well – that members feel reasonably happy in their roles. It was more in our conversations with local meetings that discussion generated a feeling that change is needed.

The imbalance of meeting size is seen as significant. Some felt that Edinburgh dominates – not necessarily Central Edinburgh LM, but the three Edinburgh LMs together, because more meetings are held in the city and it is easier for Edinburgh people to get there. On the other hand, it was seen of value that AM takes place in the different locations where there are Quaker meetings.

At Central Edinburgh, one participant expressed the view that AM is of more importance to the smaller meetings, since without AM, Central Edinburgh would have sufficient momentum to exist. It was noticeable, however, that this was not a view shared by all who heard it: the largest meeting has struggles of its own, which it needs others to be aware of.

The question of who participates was a recurrent theme. The assumption is that Quakers with commitments to children find it difficult to give over weekend time to AM. This raises questions of whether a children's programme should be part of the event – we heard that this had been tried in the past without noticeable success.

We heard questions about the appropriate agenda for AM. In particular, we frequently heard that reports are better circulated in writing than given at the meeting, and that only issues arising for decision should be covered. Another theme was that there are too many jobs, given the different pressures that individuals are under, and the requirements of local meetings.

Communications within AM were mentioned – email lists, *Sesame*, the importance of chat over tea. While emails work well on the whole for those who use the technology, there is a significant issue for those who do not: they may feel – or actually *be* – out of the loop.

We heard of ways in which the community of Quakers in South East Scotland is nurtured without specifically involving AM, such as the Wiston Lodge weekend each September, which started off as a community-building occasion for South Edinburgh LM, but in recent years has also had regular commitment from members of Polmont, Portobello & Musselburgh and Central Edinburgh. It has been particularly valuable in bringing

families with children together, and in helping children and older friends get to know one another.

One person said that AM 'is the crucial unit with Quakers', and that everything it does should come under one or other of three activities, which are central to our Quaker life: *nurturing our spiritual roots; encouraging witness; and promoting Quaker values*. (This mirrors the recent statement from the BYM long-term framework process *Our faith in the future*.)

There was a sense that Area Meeting is the first ripple in an outward-flowing circle from the local meeting to a wider world, of Quakers and beyond, but we found a varying level of commitment to that, and indeed to the need for it. Some feel that the local meeting is all they need, and that it is hard to identify with AM, particularly for younger or more recent Quakers. On the other hand, there is a recognition that membership and oversight is an important function, and at one meeting, the book of members and attenders was specifically mentioned as giving a sense of contact between Quakers.

Next steps: The STIR group would welcome guidance from Area Meeting on where our focus should be. Our thoughts, framed as questions, are:

- *What contribution can AM as event make to building AM as community – and what is the extent to which it should try to do that?*
- *How can we build and sustain our Quaker community with a minimum of jobs, duties and meetings for necessary business?*
- *What are the best and most inclusive forms of communication within the AM area?*
- *How can we foster an inclusive, all-age set of practices?*
- *What role does money play in allowing us to be the community we would seek to be?*
- *What changes are needed to put these aspirations into place?*

We are very open to ideas on these topics, and to being guided to consider other aspects within the remit.

Anyone who wishes to offer views to the STIR group is invited to contact its convener, Alastair Cameron, at mandolin.alastair@gmail.com.

Voltaire on Penn: from Letters concerning the English Nation, IV

Our last issue included an extract from the third of Voltaire's philosophical letters, with his account of the origins of Quakers. The fourth letter is devoted almost entirely to the career of William Penn, but ends by forecasting the future of Friends on this side of the Atlantic. Spelling and punctuation are unaltered; note that 'Americans' means native Americans.

William Pen inherited very large possessions, part of which consisted in crown-debts due to [his father] the vice-admiral for sums he had advanc'd for the sea-service. [. . .] *Pen* was oblig'd to go more than once, and *Thee* and *Thou* king *Charles* and his ministers, in order to recover the debt; and at last, instead of specie, the government invested him with the right and sovereignty of a province of *America*, to the south of *Maryland*. Thus was a Quaker rais'd to sovereign power. *Pen* set sail for his new dominions with two ships freighted with Quakers, who follow'd his fortune. The country was then call'd *Pensilvania* from *William Pen*, who there founded *Philadelphia*, now the most flourishing city in that country. The first step he took was to enter into an alliance with his *American* neighbours; and this is the only treaty between those people and the Christians that was not ratified by an oath, and was never infring'd.

[. . .] The natives of the country instead of flying into the woods, cultivated by insensible degrees a friendship with the peaceable Quakers. [. . .] In a little time, a great number of these savages (falsely so call'd) charm'd with the mild and gentle disposition of their neighbours, came in crowds to *William Pen*, and besought him to admit them to the number of his vassals. 'Twas very rare and uncommon for a sovereign to be *Thee'd* and *Thou'd* by the meanest of his subjects, who never took their hats off when they came into his presence; and as singular for a government to be without one priest in it, and for a people to be without arms, either offensive or defensive; and for a body of citizens to be absolutely undistinguish'd but by the publick employments, and for neighbours not to entertain the least jealousy one against the other.

William Pen might glory in having brought down upon earth the so much boasted golden age, which in all probability never existed but in *Pensilvania*. He return'd to *England*, to settle some affairs relating to his new dominions. After the death of king *Charles* the second, king *James*, who had lov'd the father, indulg'd the same affection to the son, and no longer consider'd him as an obscure Sectary, but as a very great man.[. . .] [*James*] was desir-

ous of pleasing the Quakers by annulling the laws made against Nonconformists, in order to have an opportunity, by this universal toleration, of establishing the *Romish* religion. All the sectarists in *England* saw the snare that was laid for them, but did not give into it; they never failing to unite when the *Romish* religion, their common enemy, is to be oppos'd. But *Pen* did not think himself bound in any manner to renounce his principles, merely to favour Protestants to whom he was odious, in opposition to a king who lov'd him. He had establish'd an universal tolerance with regard to conscience in *America*, and wou'd not have it thought that he intended to destroy it in *Europe*, for which reason he adhered so inviolably to king *James*, that a report prevail'd universally of his being a Jesuit. This calumny affected him very strongly, and he was oblig'd to justify himself in print. However, the unfortunate king *James* the second, in whom, as in most princes of the Stuart family, grandeur and weakness were equally blended [. . .] lost his kingdom in a manner that is hardly to be accounted for.

All the *English* sectarists accepted from *William* the third and his parliament, the toleration and indulgence which they had refus'd when offer'd by king *James*. 'Twas then the Quakers began to enjoy, by virtue of the laws, the several privileges they possess at this time. *Pen* having at last seen Quakerism firmly establish'd in his native country, went back to *Pensilvania*. [. . .] All the laws had been religiously observ'd in his absence, a circumstance in which no legislator had ever been happy but himself. [. . .] [After] some years in *Pensilvania*, he left it [. . .] in order to return to *England*, there to solicit some matters in favour of the commerce of *Pensilvania*. But he never saw it again, he dying in *Ruscomb* in *Berkshire*, anno 1718.

I am not able to guess what fate Quakerism may have in *America*, but I perceive it dwindles away daily in *England*. In all countries where liberty of conscience is allow'd, the establish'd religion will at last swallow up all the rest. Quakers are disqualified from being members of parliament; nor can they enjoy any post or preferment, because an oath must always be taken on these occasions, and they never swear. They are therefore reduc'd to the necessity of subsisting upon traffick. The children, whom the industry of their parents has enrich'd, are desirous of enjoying honours, of wearing buttons and ruffles; and quite asham'd of being call'd Quakers, they become converts to the Church of *England*, merely to be in the fashion.

Conferences in 2016

We are asked to appoint representatives to attend the following two conferences. Representatives are offered full conference and travel costs by Area Meeting. Please let me know if you would like to represent us. I hope we shall be able to appoint at our 28 November meeting.

Both members and attenders may represent us.

Phil Lucas, AM clerk

QPSW Annual Spring Conference 2016

1–3 April 2016, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

How does Quaker Peace & Social Witness work with Friends to make change happen – in our own lives and in the world? The Conference is for fairly new Friends and seasoned Friends who want to reconnect or learn more. QPSW Spring Conference is a spiritually based event. You will learn how the work we do springs from Quaker concerns and is discerned and overseen by Friends from all over Britain.

Gathering on the Sustainability Commitment: Being a transformational community

18–20 March 2016, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

A weekend gathering organised by the BYM Sustainability Group. The gathering will have three threads: practical change, including campaigning; engaging with the spiritual dimensions of climate change; and strengthening our communities. There will be short talks, worship, workshops, fun and relaxation.

Each area meeting is asked to send at least one Friend to the gathering; individuals are also welcome subject to space.

The Trip

A few weeks ago I learned of the conditions at Berkasovo, a tiny village (pop. 1,228 in the 2002 census) on the border of Serbia and Croatia, where thousands of refugees, mostly families and children, many of whom are disabled, are arriving without appropriate clothing. The weather is worsening, and, due to long delays and the chaos ensuing, people are standing for hours, sometimes for days, in driving rain and mud – often without shoes – at borders and train stations, waiting to travel north. As a Ph.D. student, I have no money to give, but I can drive, and so the next best thing seemed to get stuff there myself.

A team of us are now working with the *Humanitas* Charity, an aid agency on the ground which works specifically to support families and children, providing medical supplies and blankets. I am in contact with its director, Dr Ramiz Momeni, who has asked me to bring specific supplies, including medication, vitamins, emergency blankets and winter clothing.

We have been overwhelmed by people's donations, good wishes and support in spreading the word. We now have two van-loads of supplies ready to go, and have closed down the donations side of things. But we are still very much dependent on people's generosity with money: to hire vans, get insurance, and buy as many supplies as possible – we will be doing food runs once at the border, to maximise our usefulness. We are leaving on the 26 November and returning on the 2 December.

It would be untrue to say that we are not daunted by what we are taking on. The situation is volatile, and things are changing quickly. But we all firmly believe that if there are problems with the supply chain in getting essential items to people in desperate need, and we can fill that gap, then we must do so.

If you feel able to help, we would be extremely grateful.

Miranda Barty-Taylor

Cheques, payable to Miranda Barty-Taylor, can be sent to her c/o Lynne Barty, 10, Jordan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4 RB.

For more information and to donate online go to

<https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/berkasovotrip>.

The page is open to accept donations until 21 November.

Northern Friends Peace Board

The Subud Centre, home to Perth Local Meeting, was the venue for the Board's September meeting. As ever, after worship and introductions, we had some routine items of business: reports from the Trustees, a statement from the Treasurer, and nominations – Douglas Shaw, of Lanark LM, was appointed to serve on the Executive, 2016-18. In the Members' Forum we heard about actions and events across 'the North', (and, indeed, beyond – Tim Wallis of QPSW had news of central work on peace issues). Common themes were the militarisation of society, and of schools in particular (the subject of the John Hamilton Memorial Lecture in Liverpool and a campaign in Craven); Hiroshima commemorations (in Inverness and Leeds), also linked to opposing Trident (in Barrow, Manchester and of course at Faslane); support for refugees (in Glasgow, Huddersfield, Kendal and Perth); and remembering the witness of C.O.s (in Chesterfield, Edinburgh, and Glasgow again – where a monument to conscientious objectors on Glasgow Green has beaten what had been thought to be Scotland's first, still to find a site in Edinburgh).

Discussion on three main topics dominated the day. "Building Peace in Diverse Britain" has been a project which has run over the past five years, and included youth work and conferences – a summary report of the activities it generated was being presented on the same day to a session at the QCCIR conference [*as reported by Lynne Barty, pp. 5-9*]. Although it has now been laid down as formal concern, it was hoped that work begun can be taken forward.

Secondly, we revisited a project undertaken in 1999-2001 which, in a series of publications called The Peace Papers, had given individuals the opportunity to describe then-current concerns and the action that resulted. Funding has been found, we heard, to put some of these online, with additional material reflecting developments in the intervening fourteen years – we discussed in groups what the most important of these might be, concentrating on what had inspired us: answers included the Referendum campaign, the work of EAPPI, and examples of steadfast individual witness.

Finally, we discussed the short version of the Ammerdown Invitation reprinted in *Sesame 198*; "Sustainable Security" is a current Board project (the topic for a conference early next year) and questions on the respective roles in promoting it of governments and citizens were considered. 'Shared Security', a document produced by FCNL/AFSC was commended to us.

Alan Frith

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 24 October 2015 at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House

2015/10/01 Worship

During opening worship *Quaker Faith & Practice* 2.90 has been read to us. In it, we are reminded that our Meetings for Church Affairs are about discerning the will of God and not the majority view. A discipline of deep and unhurried discernment is required of us.

2015/10/02 Introductions

We have ensured those present know each other's names and meetings. The attendance will be recorded in the concluding minute.

2015/10/03 The minutes of our last meeting, held on 29 August 2015 in Dunbar, have been signed and entered in the minute book.

2015/10/04 Membership matters

a) Barbara Naumann

Michele Gunn and Jim Pym have met with Barbara in her home in Kinghorn. Barbara has been part of a Quaker meeting for many years and has felt so much part of it that applying for membership had actually not occurred to her. When it did, she applied. Barbara's spiritual journey and current relationship with Friends were explored; it seemed to Jim and Michele that her application for membership was right in every way.

We accept Barbara into membership and ask John Eccles to welcome her on our behalf.

b) [An application has been received, and visitors appointed.]

2015/10/05 Matters arising

- a) **Militarisation in society** (Minutes 2014/10/06, 2014/11/04a, 2015/01/4a, 2015/02/06, 2015/04/04, 2015/05/04a and 2015/08/04a refer)
A weekend course on *Militarisation in our Society* takes place at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre from 12 to 14 February 2016, to which we would like to send two representatives. We have provisionally booked two places but only one name has been forthcoming to date.

We have queried how such concerns are owned in our Local Meetings when it is difficult to find Friends to become more fully engaged. We hope a session on concerns and corporate discernment at our February 2016 meeting may help us to address this issue. We ask our clerk, in the meantime, to re-advertise the course to Area Meeting Friends and to make clear that the full expenses of appointed representatives are offered by the AM. We will also seek to co-ordinate our representation with that from other Scottish area meetings.

We have also recently been told about a 'Taxes for Peace Bill', which is being presented to the House of Commons on the centenary of the first Military Service Act which came into effect on 2 March 1916. That Act established the right of conscientious objection to bodily conscription, and the proposed bill would introduce a right of conscientious objection to financial conscription through the use of our taxes to pay for weapons and war. The 'Taxes for Peace Bill' has the support of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Forces Watch and the Green Party and we have been asked to give it our support.

These issues fit well with the work the General Meeting Parliamentary Liaison Function Group is doing both on militarism and, in the future, on tax, with further tax powers being delegated to the Scottish Parliament. We ask our clerks to explore the best ways of making the Conscience campaign better known in Scotland, both among Quakers and more widely.

We forward this minute to General Meeting for Scotland.

b) Representatives to National Outreach Conference in February

(Minute 2015/08/13c5 refers)

Max Marnau (Kelso) and **Katrina McCrea** (Portobello & Musselburgh) have offered to represent us. Both are members of the group who offered in May (Minute 2015/05/05) to organize an outreach event for General Meeting. We appoint them accordingly.

c) Terms of reference for our Social Responsibility Working Group

(Minute 2015/08/11 refers)

A revised remit for the group has been drawn up by Elizabeth Allen, in consultation with the Group. We thank them for this and ask the Group to work to this new remit, to which we have made one small amendment.

2015/10/06 Review of the Area Meeting

Alastair Cameron, Rachel Fitzgerald and Don Stubbings have reported on the work to date of the 'STIR group', which we established in October 2014 to review the work of our area meeting and to develop a vision of how it can work with local meetings to fulfill its purposes more effectively. The group is attempting to meet with every local meeting and worship group and with all eight area meeting committees and is making good progress with this programme. It has recognized the dual nature of AM: as a community and as an event.

In conversations with local meetings, a clear difference has been encountered between the value people find in local meetings and in area meeting in session, with many recognizing the necessity of AM in session but not wishing to attend for a variety of reasons which indicate that it is often not seen as an enjoyable or worthwhile experience. The question of who is able to participate is a recurrent theme. It is suggested there may be better ways of nurturing community and there is a widely shared feeling that change is needed. Conversation with AM committees have had a different flavour. They seem to be working reasonably well, with members mostly happy in their roles.

The STIR group is seeking guidance from Area Meeting on how it should focus the remainder of its work. Emerging themes are:

- *What contribution can AM as event make to building AM as community – and what is the extent to which it should try to do that?*
- *How can we build and sustain our Quaker community with a minimum of jobs, duties and meetings for necessary business?*
- *What are the best and most inclusive forms of communication within the AM area?*
- *How can we foster an inclusive, all-age set of practices?*
- *What role does money play in allowing us to be the community we would seek to be?*
- *What changes are needed to put these aspirations into place?*

The group is very open to ideas on these topics, and to being guided to consider other aspects within the remit. Its interim report will appear in *Sesame* and the group has taken notes of responses to it received at this meeting.

We thank the group members warmly for their work on our behalf and encourage them as they move towards their final report in the spring.

2015/10/07 Appointments and release from service

1. Our Nominations Committee brings the following **nominations** for our consideration:

To serve from October 2015 to end of September 2018:

- a) World Day of Prayer – **Katrina McCrea** (Portobello & Musselburgh)
- b) Overseer – **Mairi McCormack** (South Edinburgh)

To serve from October 2015 to end of June 2016:

- c) Co-editors of *Sesame* – **Alan Frith** (Central Edinburgh) and **Kim Smith** (Portobello & Musselburgh)

To serve from October 2015 to end of September 2016:

- d) Treasurer, Festival Committee – **Alan Sayle** (Central Edinburgh) -
reappointment

These names being acceptable, we appoint them accordingly.

2. Conference representatives

We appoint the following:

- a) To represent us at the Woodbrooke Course, *What is Quaker Ministry?* 27-29 November 2015: **Cath Dyer** and **Jessica Paterson** (*attender*) (both Polmont)
- b) To represent us at Woodbrooke Course, *Militarisation in our society*, 12-14 February 2016: **Jane Pearn** (Kelso).

We authorise our treasurer to meet their expenses.

3. Release from service

Margaret Mortimer (Central Edinburgh) has asked to be released as an overseer. We do so and thank her for her service.

4. Completion of period of service

We note that **Marilyn Higgins** (Central Edinburgh, elder), **Andrew Farrar** (Central Edinburgh, Programme & Website Editor for Festival Committee) have completed their terms of service for which we record our thanks.

We ask our Nominations Committee to bring forward the names of Friends to fill these vacancies.

2015/10/08 Our Quaker concern for housing

Alastair Cameron has reported on a recent Woodbrooke conference prompted by the 2015 Yearly Meeting Minute 25, *Responding to social inequality and injustice: housing as a tested concern*, and supported by Qua-

ker Housing Trust. This was an invited gathering of 17 participants, who were deeply involved in housing, and who had widely different experiences in this field. It was a working weekend with the purpose of turning the intentions of the Yearly Meeting minute into action.

The huge inequalities in our society are reflected in the gulf between those who own homes and the one third of the population who do not. The current Westminster Government attack on the provision of social housing is intense and the private rented sector is also a great cause for concern. But practical solutions are available and the conference came up with a number of recommendations, particularly in relation to how Quakers might live out their personal housing arrangements in line with our witness. Notably, there were two key ideas:

- Positive investment in sustainable and affordable housing.
- Applying ethics to the world of housing in both landlordship and tenants' rights

In taking this work forward, Quakers recognise that there is a systemic fault in British society, in which we are all complicit. It affects both financial and economic mechanisms, which re-enforce the injustice.

Guidance from the Quaker Housing Trust helped shape the weekend: "Though the materials we work with are bricks and mortar and money, our concern is for people. And though people have pressing material needs in the world, our concern is with the spirit."

We thank Alastair for his report, a written version of which is expected to appear in *The Friend*.

2015/10/09 Recommendation from our Festival Committee

John Fitzgerald, convener of the Festival Committee, has reported on the financial outcome of this year's Venue 40 operation.

Following receipt of draft accounts, the committee noted that a reduced programme and opening at noon had reduced income in 2015. While the use of Paradise Green saved a considerable amount on theatre equipment, City of Edinburgh Council are now applying charges where previously they did not, with no allowances for smaller venues.

The committee have recommended that they transfer £7,500 to Area Meeting and ask us to agree to send £1,000 to Mines Advisory Group, £1,000 to the Nepal Earthquake Appeal and £1,000 to Quaker Central Work, leaving £4,500 for the Area Meeting to cover Meeting House ex-

penses for August. This would leave them a useful balance to carry forward of £1,783.

We agree with the committee's recommendations and ask our Treasurer to make the three donations accordingly. We thank the Festival Committee and all others involved for all the work that has been done this year on our behalf.

2015/10/10 Report from our Social Responsibility Working Group

The group, which currently has just three members, organized an event as part of the Edinburgh World Justice Festival on Monday 5 October 2015 at 5.30 pm, at Edinburgh Meeting House. It was a further conversation, following on from the November 2014 event on 'Imagining Scotland in 2015'. This event was aimed at a wider audience, with which it provided an opportunity to share Quaker values. Verbal feedback has been very positive and a summary report will be shared with Area Meeting. We thank the group and also Cath Dyer (Polmont Meeting) and Laura Dunkel (Central Fife Meeting), who helped with the event.

We encourage the group to share its work more widely with others, including the Scottish Government, who are seeking to build a fairer Scotland and we ask our nominations committee to bring further names to restore the group to its intended membership of six.

2015/10/11 Dates and venues for Area Meeting in 2016

The following list of proposed dates and venues for our meetings in 2016 has been circulated for consideration. We will confirm these at our next meeting.

Already agreed:

Sunday 10 January	2 pm	South Edinburgh
Saturday 27 February	11 am	Central Edinburgh

Proposed:

Saturday 16 April	2 pm	Central Edinburgh
Saturday 4 June	11 am	Kelso
Saturday 16 July	2 pm	Tweeddale
Sunday 18 September	2 pm	South Edinburgh
Saturday 26 November	11 am	Central Edinburgh

2015/10/12 Correspondence

We have received:

- Details of Prisoner Week, 15-22 November 2015 (a churches initiative)
- Copies of the Quaker Social Action annual report

2015/10/13 Closing minute

22 members and two attenders representing eight Local Meetings have attended all or part of this Area Meeting, as indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 11 + 2 As	Central Fife 2	East Lothian 3	Kelso 1	Penicuik 1
Polmont 1	Portobello & Musselburgh 1	South Edinburgh 2	Tweeddale -	

We next meet at **Portobello Old Parish Church, Bellfield Street, EH15 2BP** [N.B. This is a correction from the written Minutes] on Saturday 28 November 2015, at 2 pm.

(Signed)
Phil Lucas, Clerk

The text of the Taxes for Peace draft Bill (see p. 22) may be read online: go to <http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk/new-taxes-for-peace-draft-bill/>

More information on EAPPI [the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel] (see Lynn Barty's report, p. 8) is on the website, <https://www.eappi.org/> or, for a revealingly hostile Israeli view of it, go to the Jerusalem-based 'NGO Monitor': <http://www.ngo-monitor.org>.

The quotation from Penn on p. 4 is from No Cross, No Crown, chapter V, § XII [1682: 1849 edn. p. 56]; also (slightly differently) in Q.F.&P. 23.02.

Unexplained initials (p.20): FCNL = Friends Committee on [US] National Legislation; AFSC = American Friends Service Committee (counterpart to QPSW).

Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland**Every Sunday**

Central Edinburgh: 7 Victoria Terrace	9.30 am & 11.00 am
South Edinburgh: Open Door, 420 Morningside Road	10.30 am
Polmont: Greenpark Community Centre	10.45 am
Kelso: Quaker Meeting House, Kelso	10.30 am

Every Wednesday

Mid-Week Meeting: 7 Victoria Terrace	12.30 – 1 pm
--------------------------------------	--------------

First Sunday in the Month

Penicuik: Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik <i>Children welcome, bring and share lunch</i>	11.00 am
Portobello & Musselburgh: Old Parish Church, Bellfield St. EH15	7.30 pm

First and Third Tuesdays in the Month

Edinburgh University Common Room, Muslim Prayer Rooms (opposite Weir Buildings) at Kings Buildings: contact Sarah Martin 07818050853 or sarah.martin@ed.ac.uk for details	1 – 1.30 pm
--	-------------

Second Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00 am
--	----------

Second and Fourth Sundays in the Month

Portobello & Musselburgh: Old Parish Church, Bellfield St. Portobello	11.00 am
Tweeddale: Nomad Beat, 10-11 Cavalry Park, Peebles <i>All welcome, but please phone to confirm 01721 721 050 or 01896 850 389</i>	10.30 am
Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am

Fourth Sunday in the Month

N. Edinburgh Meeting: Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh	7.00 pm
---	---------

Fifth Sunday in the Month

Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am
--	----------

Last Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00 am
--	----------

Distribution of *Sesame* and *Scottish Friends Newsletter*

The current practice (*now under review*) is to distribute one copy of *Sesame* and the *Scottish Friends Newsletter* to every Member and Attender household. Contributions to the costs of *Sesame* are always warmly welcomed by the Area Meeting Treasurer, Mark Hutcheson. An email version of *Sesame* is more ecological and is free! A large print version is available on request. Published by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, South East Scotland Area Meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL. Scottish Charity No. SC019165