

SESAME

Number 217: June 2018

Area Meeting on 23 June / Equipping for Ministry, Year 2/ NFPB in Lancaster / Statement on the Glasgow Arms Fair/ QPSW Spring Conference / Yearly Meeting Reflections/ Peter the Great and Quakers / Fringe Events 2018 / AM May Minutes



A French engraving of a "Quakeress" preaching at a Meeting in London, c. 1725
(Three modern women Friends share their impressions of YM 2018 inside; see page 13.)

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Area Meeting will take place on Saturday 23 June 2018 at Greenbank Church Halls, Edinburgh EH10 6ES, from 11 am to 4.45 pm (tea/coffee provided from 10.30 am)

Following the success of our work to modify military influence in our schools, how can Quakers contribute to creating a Scotland committed to peace and ending arms manufacture on our soil?

There will be a programme of outdoor activities for younger Quakers in the Hermitage of Braid, a business session in the morning, a picnic lunch for everyone (inside or in the park nearby) and, from 2 pm, a participative session led by Kirsten Bayes from Campaign Against Arms Trade.

Please come and enjoy the day and bring with you your favourite cake to share.

Greenbank Church Halls are in Braidburn Terrace, on the left just off the A702 (Greenbank Terrace; before it changes to Comiston Road) as you head south from the Open Door in Morningside.

Buses from the city centre: 11 and 15, get out at Braid Burn; 5 and 16, get out at Greenbank Terrace, all a very short walk from the Church Halls.

DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE MORNING SESSION

1. Bursaries for young Quakers
2. Appointments
3. Membership matters
4. Data protection (very brief update)
5. Making change happen - Mary Woodward
6. Diversity in our Area Meeting
7. Prison ministry

Clerking team: **Kate Arnot, Alastair Cameron, Phil Lucas**

A Letter of George Fox

Friends,

Meet together, waiting upon the Lord, that nothing but the Life may among you reign; and that in life, love and wisdom ye may grow up. And in the measure of the grace of God all wait, to guide your minds up to God. And Friends, I do lay it upon you for to see that in order all your Meetings be kept. So the Lord God Almighty keep you all to his glory, in his wisdom to himself. Amen.

To be read among all Friends at their Meetings.

G. F. 1655

Equipping for Ministry: Year 2

[Mary Woodward's report of the first year of the Equipping for Ministry (EfM) course was in two parts, in *Sesame* 202 and 203 (April and June 2016) available online at www.quakerscotland.org. FiR (v.i.) means "to be a 'Friend in Residence' [usu., though not necessarily, at Woodbrooke]". Ed.]

Extracts from Christmas letter 2017: Well, Friends, it's been a mixed twelve months... This time last year I head-butted a phone box, resulting in a lump on my head and Two Lovely Black Eyes. This was followed by a cold that gave me a perforated eardrum and then hung around for months, reappearing each time I thought it had gone: just as I was finally recovering, I slipped on wet mud, put a hand out to save myself, and broke my left wrist! Fortunately, the plaster didn't impede my making jumpers and blankets for refugee babies and playing the piano – all good physiotherapy, which helped me bear the frustrations of tiredness and general one-handedness... The wrist healed well but a busy summer and autumn prevented me from getting back to the gym until early November, so Ms Blobby feels she has some way to go before recovering the reasonable state of fitness she was in this time last year. One lovely thing was the warmth of the welcome I got from staff and gym users alike when finally I walked through the door again!

The first eight months of 2017 were thus filled with Not Being Well, the EfM Year 2 residential week, and recovering in time for my usual August of reviewing the Fringe, International, and Book Festivals. I was then away from home doing EfM short courses (one of my 2016 courses had been cancelled, so I needed to do four in 2017). The four that called me all took place between mid-September and mid-October, while around and between them were sandwiched spells of FiRing and visits with fellow-students. A number of my year also came together at Woodbrooke for a self-directed weekend in November: this was my last period there until January 2018, when I came for a course, stayed on to FiR, and then took part in our year's Completion Weekend.

Being ill and/or incapacitated taught me both to accept how things are, including being unable to do things, to take better care of myself and, more importantly, to ASK FOR HELP, and to be specific about the help I need. This applied not only to practical matters like getting a laundry basket downstairs and hanging out its contents, but also reinforced for me the necessity of asking to be upheld when I have to write and present things for Quakers. I found being asked to do two reports for AM this year very challenging, but with the support of my EfM friends I had a clear feeling of being held, of being given words both in the writing and the presenting, and of being faithful in their delivery.

The residential week in April, with a newly-broken left wrist, brought important new challenges and reminders of things known but not taken to heart. November 2016's EfM get-together challenge was to OPEN UP AND SAY "YES"; 2017's residential was even more clearly STOP DOING AND SIMPLY

BE. This latter took the whole week to get through to me – all week this Isaac Penington quote, which I have known and loved all my Quaker life, kept appearing every day:

... Give over thine own willing, give over thy own running, give over thine own desiring to know or be anything and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee and be in thee and breathe in thee and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of Life, which is its portion.

Isaac Penington, 1661 [QF&P 26.70]

– but it took till the Thursday for me to realise that it was telling me to stop struggling to do everything, and simply BE.

My time since has been spent pondering what exactly ‘Just BEing’ looks like, given that food doesn’t find its own way to my plate, and my clothes don’t wash themselves... It’s becoming increasingly clear that it’s a matter of replacing EITHER/OR with BOTH/AND – what I’ve been calling “the shot silk life”, where there aren’t separate compartments in life for ‘god’, ‘Mary’, ‘friends’, ‘chores’, ‘garden’, ‘fun’, etc, etc, but that Here-and-Now and Other exist in the same time and space, like shot silk which is woven from two contrasting coloured threads, and changes colour as the light falls on the fabric. Thomas Kelly writes of this life in ‘On Holy Obedience’ – *a deeper, an internal simplification of the whole of one’s personality, stilled, tranquil, in childlike trust listening ever to Eternity’s whisper, walking with a smile into the dark.*

My four courses in the autumn of 2017 were *Handmaidens of the Lord*, about early Quaker women; *Welcoming the Soul*, which was about deep listening, and included taking part in a Meeting for Clearness; *Everyday Prophets*, which built on the 2015 course which resulted in my applying to do EfM; and *A Gathering of Fools* – an introduction to clowning which I knew would take me well out of my comfort zone: it did, and I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. The interconnectedness of many of the threads which emerged in these courses is becoming clearer, but I need to spend more time considering the tapestry they are enabling me to weave... I’m pretty sure that most of the threads are things I already know, but have yet to embed in my being and integrate into my life: this is my post-EfM task, I feel, and it will continue equipping me for whatever ministry I am called to undertake. [*There will be more about these courses in the next Sesame. Ed.*]

The four courses were all in their own way intense, and held a lot of meaning for me: the time in between them was mainly spent recovering and getting ready for the next one, so reflection time was something that didn’t get much of a look-in... There was also a lot else going on: going to see Andy Murray’s charity match in Glasgow; presenting a piece at AM which my LM hosted; getting myself back to the gym; spending time with friends; and discovering that ScotsGay had launched a new arts website, for which I’m one of the two reviewers – with the attendant joys of ticket-

requesting, show-seeing, and review-writing... This last led me to notice, yet again, that I always seem to be able to make time for the things I really WANT to do and the ones I really MUST do – though the latter are accompanied by a phenomenal amount of procrastination...! The sudden upsurge in arts reviewing has also reminded me that it's one major source of JOY in my life – and that it's okay to enjoy myself in this way! At Pendle Hill one of my favourite quotes was from Howard Thurman: *Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.*

The November EfM year 2 get-together offered those present much loving support. I made a conscious effort to spend nearly all my time with the others, instead of eating alone to give myself a break. I did become a little weary, and would have liked some free time on Saturday afternoon - but I felt that the joint labyrinth walk was essential. The labyrinth message to me was clear: *there is nothing new; you have all the pieces; get on with sorting them out!* The group agreed to be mindful of/pray for each other at 6pm on Sundays (some do this every day): we also want to continue meeting up after EfM, but it was felt that we needed formally to end the course before considering ways and means or making arrangements.

Once back home I finally started assembling my project book. This is not the project itself, but a reflection of what has been happening during the two years of Project Mary. I finished photographing and printing my journal entries, and took a photo of the stack of 2016-2018 journals which, along with all the others on my shelves, will be a constant source of reference, advice, counsel, and encouragement. My tutor couldn't be present at our Completion weekend, so we had our final tutorial in early January. It was good to reflect on the last two years, consider what might be in store 'post-EfM', and give thanks for what we have discovered together.

The learning continued right up to the completion weekend! I had been led to sign up for Marcelle Martin's course based on her latest book, *Our Life is Love*, about the early Quaker experience and how people still have these experiences today. Marcelle was one of my teachers at Pendle Hill, and I was delighted to see her again – though, alas, only 'virtually', as she joined us electronically from Pennsylvania. The greatest gift from the weekend was to discover the sentence immediately before the Isaac Pennington quotation above:

“BE NO MORE THAN GOD HATH MADE THEE”

A couple of days later in Meeting I was given an additional phrase:

“AND BE NO LESS”

The completion weekend felt a fitting conclusion to two very intense years, for which I am so grateful. It is now time to move into 'post-EfM', and discover what that means for me. These two years of EfM have seen me grow into accepting and caring for myself just as I am, discover and exercise new

gifts, and realise that my life is not a balancing act of 'either/or' but an integration – 'both/ and': my ministry is simply to BE MARY – and I will spend the rest of my life discovering what that means, supported and encouraged by Friends both near and far.

Mary Woodward

NFPB gathering in Lancaster, 12 May 2018

27 members attended, but I was the only representative from Scotland.

As an introductory exercise, we were asked to name a question related to peace that most urgently occupying each of us now. Answers were extremely varied, ranging over international, social, educational, and moral issues such as threats to peace in the Middle East.

We then heard a stirring talk under the heading, 'Challenging Militarism', given by Dave Webb, Chair of CND, Professor of Peace Studies at Leeds, and one of several Vice-Presidents of the International Peace Bureau. He spoke mostly about the history and work of IPB: founded in 1892, it is the oldest peace network, with organizations in 30 countries. (The Bureau won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910, and its president, Henri La Fontaine, was awarded it personally in 1913; eleven other laureates have been associated with the IPB including the British Friend Philip Noel-Baker.) Dave concluded by stressing the urgency of pressing for support for and ratification of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

After lunch, Philip Austin gave us a review of activities of NFPB in 2017/18, talking in particular about the workshops (a new initiative in 2017) given at different Quaker Meetings and other groups during the year.

Finally we shared information on local activities. The wide variety of contributions showed again that the pursuit of 'peace' has diverse modes and meanings at every level from the individual to the global. Two or three members spoke of plans for counter-demonstrations on National Armed Forces day, which provided a useful context for talking about the vigil on Conscientious Objectors Day in Edinburgh, and unveiling of the design by Kate Ive for a sculpture in Princes St Gardens.

The next Board meeting is at Glasgow Meeting House on 23 June 2018, timed so that participants staying over in Glasgow can also attend the meeting for worship at Faslane the following day (but clashing with our Area Meeting, unfortunately).

Karina McIntosh

NFPB Statement on the Glasgow Arms Fair

From 26-28 June 2018 Glasgow is hosting the Undersea Defence Technology Conference (UDT) at the Scottish Events Campus (SEC) in Finnieston.

Glasgow City Council has actively bid to bring this arms fair to Scotland, promising the attending multinational corporations and their executives a wide range of free services paid for with public funds.

Participants include the Israeli company DSIT Solutions – whose technology enforces the blockade of Gaza and whose board is staffed by members of the Israeli military – and corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Leonardo, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman.

The arms fair is led by BAE and Babcock, chief architects of the next generation of Trident nuclear-armed submarines. It includes talks and a discussion that include Trident and Dreadnought. The UDT Committee includes a Commodore from the UK Submarine Delivery Agency.

*A coalition of Scottish organisations are leading the opposition to the UDT under the banner **Sink The Glasgow Arms Fair: Campaign Against Arms Trade**, Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Trident Ploughshares, Food Not Bombs, SNP Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Scottish Peace Network, Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, Dovetails Scotland, Scotland Against Militarism, Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Scottish Socialist Party, and Catholic Workers.*

The following is a draft statement from NFPB, that might also be a template for a letter to politicians/news outlets in Scotland, and in Glasgow in particular.

DRAFT STATEMENT

As a body representing peace concerns of Quakers from across Scotland, as well as the North of England and North Wales, we unite with those who have already voiced opposition to the holding of the Underwater Defence Technology (UDT) event in Glasgow from 26th June. We understand that the programme has involvement of companies linked to Trident and its successor feature as areas of discussion during the conference. Given the Scottish Government's opposition to nuclear weapons, we are surprised and disappointed that this event is taking place in Scotland.

We oppose Nuclear Weapons on moral grounds. We also oppose them because of their cost and their contribution to global insecurity. We call for a redirection of the skills of those employed in the arms industry in Scotland, so that these skills can be used for societal and global benefit rather than for the production of costly and destructive weaponry. We hope that Scotland can lead the way in building positive and genuine security through its efforts towards a fair and just society, global justice, and a healthy planet.

STOP PRESS – 20/6/2018: *Although practical support for the UDT remains in place, the City Council's Glasgow Life logo has been removed from its publicity.*

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Spring Conference The Hayes, Derbyshire, 23-25 March 2018

I have been attending Quaker Meetings at Dunbar for about three years, getting to know the Quaker way of silent worship, witness, Friendship, discussion groups, social events and more. So most of my Quaker experience has been local; heartwarming and life-enhancing. However I have always known that there is a long history of Quaker radical thinking and action, challenging injustice and campaigning for peace all over the world. It is one of the things that drew me towards Quakers in the first place, and I wanted to know more of what, where, and how this work is done. So when I was offered a place at the QPSW Spring Conference I was delighted: there was much for me to learn and it was a wonderful experience.

Quaker testimonies to peace, integrity, equality and simplicity provide signposts to what we are led to do. Our actions can make the world a better place. This is from a QPSW leaflet and it describes what I wanted to find out about.

The keynote speech on Saturday morning was riveting !

Elsie Whittington spoke on awkward conversations, drawing from her personal experience of speaking out on matters that many of us find awkward, challenging and uncomfortable: sex, sexual relations and LGBT issues, and, in particular, the silence surrounding these issues. The personal becomes political and *vice versa*, and although her focus was mainly gender identity this is so in many areas of our lives, especially those areas that are difficult to talk about plainly. Elsie describes herself as a Feminist Quaker Activist, though a “quiet activist, practising activism by stealth”... I was not altogether convinced by the quiet stealth; she came across to me as a feisty woman! But an important message she wanted to get across is that she, as much as anyone, finds it challenging to speak out against injustice and prejudice. Nonetheless she delved courageously into things most of us don't want to talk about, analysing the reasons for our reluctance and why we do not have the conversations that need to be had. A valid one is that in doing so we make ourselves vulnerable, exposed, and it takes courage to speak out against repressive behaviour and injustice. It is not easy to speak but it is not fair to remain silent. Many people in LGBT minorities have the burden of personal struggle with their gender identity before being confident to identify with what the majority are concerning themselves with ...

A contribution by a gay Friend at the discussion afterwards: “ My experience of speaking out against homophobic attitudes is that if I do challenge I may be beaten up or killed. I should not have to do this, but we (gays) have to speak out because no one else does. Just living is risky.”

Elsie suggested that speaking out about these issues is akin to breaking the silence in Meeting for Worship. There are things that must be said that are not spoken about. In many situations exposing wrongdoing poses other questions and challenges; we could be opening a can of worms, and we

need to be prepared to walk with that person we have called out.

Clare Woods is part of the coordinating team for QPSW projects and she introduced the Conference programme at the plenary session. The work is “against unjust systems, allowing for the movement of the spirit leading from Britain Yearly Meeting and building our own experience towards making an impact”.

QPSW have several projects running at any one time; not necessarily Quaker-led, but partnered with NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and charities already operating in the fields of concern. Friends taking part are often on a one-year placement. Those introducing the individual projects were young or young-ish people (but being a senior citizen they all look young to me!) The enthusiasm, dedication, maturity, openness and wisdom of these people was impressive. There is hope!

The projects presented were:

Peace and Disarmament: campaigning against militarism, supporting Quaker peace actions.

Peace Education: towards understanding conflict, and injustice. Building peace with young people.

International Mediation and Conciliation: including support for non-violent social change in Kenya, and work with the Forum for Naga Reconciliation in Nagaland, Northeast India.

Ecumenical Accompaniment in Palestine and Israel: witness and accompaniment of vulnerable communities and individuals.

Sustainability and Economics: towards building a better, fairer economic system.

Sanctuary Everywhere: inviting Meetings to be part of a protective community for immigrants.

Peace Workers, Crime, Community and Justice: advocating restorative justice as more effective than the prison culture.

I attended two project workshops; “Meet the Peaceworkers” and “Making Change Happen in Occupied Palestine”

Meet The Peaceworkers

I am intrigued by the concept of peace in our world which is so riven with anger and violence. I know it is possible, though very difficult; I may be a grandmother but I am also a novice!

In this workshop I learned how nurturing inner peace in children and young people (and grandmothers!) supports the development of attitudes, values and skills to respond to conflict creatively, encouraging interpersonal peace at personal, institutional and international levels. Well, I know that, but how to find and learn the skills to practise it!

The two presenters were very different in their origins and their approach to the work. Abigail Darton has been a Quaker all her life. She has spent a

year on placement with LEAP, an organisation that sets about confronting conflict in prisons and developing/creating a model: Peaceful Prisons Project. This work is about treating conflict as opportunity for transformation by developing community circles amongst prisoners to help them manage conflict and develop positive relationships between prison staff and inmates as well as amongst prisoners themselves.

She is also working on a project with young people about identity, belonging and extreme thinking. Insecurity, fear and alienation can push youngsters into crises of identity, and this often creates a need to belong – to a gang, a brotherhood, to be part of something bigger that makes them feel significant – and being part of it can lead to intense loyalty at any cost: they can become immersed in a mindset that justifies violence and revenge.

Instead of demonising such young people, here they are given a safe place in which to express themselves and say things that would get them into trouble anywhere else. They have the opportunity to work through their difficulties, anger and isolation in a supported situation. Once again there is this expression; to treat conflict as transformation. I think this will be a mantra to take away with me; to try to understand and absorb.

Wayne Sharrocks comes from a very different background; two generations of soldiers. He wanted to be one from childhood and it was expected of him. As soon as he could, at the age of 16, he joined the army.

His open sharing of his own experiences of life during and after his army career was inspirational. He told us of techniques used to make teenagers “battle ready” including training them to shoot to kill.

After some years and two tours of duty in Afghanistan, he decided to leave the army, having had enough of active service. He was interested in filmmaking and went to university to study it, but found it hard to keep going. His experiences isolated him and there was no post-service support from the army. Depression brought on by post-traumatic stress got the better of him and he suffered a mental and emotional crisis. Too ashamed to face his family he hid in his flat behind closed curtains for several months until eventually they found him the help and support he so badly needed.

His rehabilitation has helped make him a talented photographer as well as being known for his pithy short films. One is about his own and other veterans’ experiences and suffering of PTSD. He speaks eloquently on militarism in schools and universities, and the recruitment of child soldiers: he insists 16 is far too young and damaging to the psyche – he would know!

On a lighter note, he makes promotional shorts for community groups and individual projects, some quite whacky; see “No Handed Climbing”

Making Change Happen in Occupied Palestine

Like so many people I am appalled by the blatant injustice and cruelties committed by the Israeli Government towards the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. A few years ago I joined Zaytoun “Harvest Tour” for a

week's visit to the West Bank. Zaytoun is a trading company dealing solely in Palestinian farmers' produce: a difficult business, fraught with the military and bureaucratic complications and obstacles of Israeli control.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel (EAPPI) sends volunteers to live in vulnerable communities for three months at a time to keep an eye on what goes on at hot spots such as the Israeli checkpoints that farmers and workers must pass through to get to their fields and work. The EAPPI witness will just be there, observing but not intervening. They report weekly on events and behaviour. Israeli soldiers know they are being watched and monitored and reported on, and this presence discourages undue aggression and obstruction. It makes things a little easier for the Palestinians.

The project that the two speakers were observing as EAs was a school, doubling as a community space, part-funded by the UK government, and being built by Palestinians on their own land. As with most such land, Israeli settlers have their eye on it for building new and ever-expanding settlements, so this is a hot spot for trouble. The West Bank is a little over a third the size of Wales. 700,000 settlers have already moved in illegally and a military base is established there.

The school building was up and ready for fitting out when, at 5 a.m. one morning, Israelis moved in and demolished it, illegally. Their excuse was that it had been built without the proper permits, which was not so; it is Palestinian land. Since then the school has been rebuilt and demolished five times. It is a "conversation" which continues. The illegal demolitions of Palestinian homes and businesses that happen daily all over the West Bank, the illegal forced transfer of Bedouin from their traditional tribal areas, the illegal settlements spreading across Palestinian land; we do know about them. And there are many Israelis who campaign against these injustices such as Combatants for Peace, a combined group of Israeli ex-soldiers and Palestinians, working together to unravel this Gordian knot of conflict in the Holy Land.

EAPPI work does make the world a better place. It is remarkable that many Palestinians still have hope that they will recover their land and their human rights. But continuing unequivocal exposure of the Israeli tyranny is essential. We can all take part in transformation in that beleaguered land by keeping up to date with what is happening, speaking of the situation and donating to www.quaker.org.uk/eappi.

There were many other supporting activities, meetings/Meetings and good food. I found it altogether inspirational: it's good to know so much excellent work is being done by Quakers everywhere. I may not be able to do EAPPI witness work (too old), but there is much I have been enlightened about that I *can* do!

Susan Nuttgens

A Call to Arms

*A Man that Looks on Glass: Standing up for God
in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) – Derek Guiton*

FeedARead Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78610-232-4

Derek Guiton himself, and David and Rachel Britton, who are both thanked warmly in the Acknowledgements, and Alastair Heron, the first name cited in the introduction, were all active members of Sheffield Central Meeting in the 1980s and '90s, so I come to this book feeling I know what I am going to hear – or rather read, of course, since it is not a discussion group but printed pages. A “lively, nettle-grasping work” according to Alec Davison on the back cover, it is far more combative than I remember its author ever being in person; although he finds quotations from those against whom he would have us stand up that are indeed provocative. Don Cupitt, having called the valuing of silence a “death wish”, for example, then asserts that “The most frivolous gossip is holier, wiser and deeper than silence” (p. 142) – so much for the “silent assemblies of God’s people” that so impressed Robert Barclay. However Derek’s main targets are the Non-theist Friends Network (NFN) and, in particular, David Boulton, who, willing to call theism “a lie”, is rebutted in similar terms.

I am inclined to agree with Derek. At Woodbrooke in 1986, I remember Roland Ellis praising the integrity of Michael Goulder, one of the contributors to *The Myth of God Incarnate*, who, while his colleagues explained that *myth* had a technical, theological sense, and did not mean simply ‘a story that isn’t true’, realised that that was what he *did* mean and resigned his orders as a priest. The contrast with other clerics, who could lead a congregation in proclaiming “I believe in the resurrection of the body ...” while deriding what the then Bishop of Durham, called “a conjuring trick with bones” seems stark. Friends have no credal statements, but our testimony to “the promptings of love and truth”, Nayler’s “spirit that delights to do no evil”, and our seeking to answer “that of God in everyone” are meaningless if God’s existence is merely metaphorical. Furthermore, we have a status for those who wish to join us without committing to our shared beliefs: that of Attender. (Oliver Postgate, creator of *Noggin the Nog* and *Bagpuss*, called himself a “birthright attender”.)

Nevertheless, the book is not an agreeable read: I wince at phrases such as “sheer nonsense” even when I concur, and I rather doubt whether many would be won over who started with the opposite view. Any call to arms is likely to be heard with foreboding, whichever side one expects to take. But when, as noted in the last *Sesame*, Quakers are hailed (albeit mistakenly) for their willingness to ditch God, might the call be needed?

Alan Frith

Reflections on Yearly Meeting 2018

There is some overlap in these accounts of what went on at Yearly Meeting last month, but rather than edit them into a single narrative we preferred to let the different versions stand as they were so that readers can hear Friends' own voices.

Editor

Yearly Meeting in London was held at the beginning of May this year; a lovely warm sunny weekend, with flowers in full bloom. There were 44 Friends from Scotland – a record!

Friday evening was the necessary and important time for appointing people to keep Britain Yearly Meeting running smoothly and 'in right ordering'. We are grateful to all these Friends who work so hard and so well for us and the Society.

At YM 2014 in Bath we were not in unity as to whether our own red book, our *Quaker Faith & Practice*, should be revised. We had adopted it and received it with joy in 1994, and we love it. However we have had to revise the Church Government chapters four times, to take account of new challenges, new laws, and alterations in our practice. In 2014 the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (RPG) was appointed. The group encouraged us to read the Book systematically: we found our favourite bits and discovered more that is lovely, but also noticed omissions, and realised that some situations and conditions are not well covered.

On Saturday morning we were ably led in thinking about what was under consideration and why by two RPG members, Lesley Richards (the clerk) and Adwoa Bittle. Lesley compared revision to road-mending: in patching and re-patching it eventually becomes easier and less expensive to start again from the beginning. Adwoa Bittle told us how difficult she had found it even to *think* of revision: having known the red book since her time as a Young Friend she had joined RPG "with a spanner" – to poke into the works of any change. However she too saw the gaps needing filling, and that once again we need to rethink things in a new Book of Discipline.

We had sessions on the how and why and what of putting together a new book. It has been suggested we go back to having *two* books; or to restructure Church Government into 'core' material, of why we do things the way we do, and 'supplementary' procedural information that could be in handbooks or online so as to allow updating when necessary without the whole of Church Government having to be reprinted.

A new Book, or Books, will need to include people and situations which are not currently mentioned. It is to be hoped too that Young Friends will be involved, as this will be their Book.

One of the delights of Yearly Meeting is the Friends in the Under-18 Programme. They too were discussing how we see the Society; each group

presented a minute of how they had spent their time and their conclusions – one of my favourite bits! 34 dedicated adults had supported them.

The many visiting Friends from around the world added diversity to our Meeting. A Friend from Philadelphia YM led the session on Sunday morning, assisted by the 3-5 year-old children. She told a story about listening.

The Swarthmore Lecture was by a Young Friend, Chris Alton, an artist and activist who talked about effecting change in the world; he was humorous, eye-opening and serious. He encouraged us to think about how we could make a difference (“may we go forth and reshape the world”) through being creative and positive.

During the worship at the beginning of sessions, our Clerk, Deborah Rowlands, read from the Books of Discipline of other Yearly Meetings, and we also heard extracts from ‘Epistles and Testimonies’ including part of the Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend Helen Steven.

Friends House staff worked hard to make our life easy and straightforward; we met and greeted old Friends, and sat and talked with others not met before; and we worshipped together.

I came home exhausted but pleased that I had been there – again.

Alison Burnley

As usual I appreciated very good clerking and enjoyed seeing the faces of friends I have made at Woodbrooke and in five Area Meetings. The particular message of this YM is that “the Quaker community needs to engage in open dialogue on a continual basis. It is important to share experience and beliefs and when this is done well we can be enriched by our diversity.” (The quotation is from *God, words and us* edited by Helen Rowlands.) The calm atmosphere throughout the weekend seemed evidence of careful preparation by Agenda Committee and the Revision Preparation Group. I brought back *Toolkit for action – Owning power and privilege*, a guide “to help Friends who are committed to producing truly inclusive spaces” which could be a useful aid to helpful dialogue.

Rachel Frith

On the Saturday of YM, I attended the ‘Religious Differences’ workshop run by Alex Wildwood and Rachel Muers.

In the plenary session, some of the discussion had been dominated by those who wanted to be heard and not listen. Two things emerged from this. Firstly, we were all agreed that Quakers experience “that of God”, whether the word *God* is used or avoided completely. Secondly, while we were agreed that what is important is how we act in the world, we were divided as to whether we needed a theological perspective to complement our action. And it was left at that.

I was reminded of Advices & Queries 22:

Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

However it occurred to me during the course of the workshop that the Rule of the Iona Community might also be helpful here. This reads:

As Members of the Iona Community we commit ourselves to:

- *Daily prayer, worship with others and regular engagement with the Bible and other material which nourishes us*
- *Working for justice and peace, wholeness and reconciliation in our localities, society and the whole creation*
- *Supporting one another in prayer and by meeting, communicating, and accounting with one another for the use of our gifts, money and time, our use of the earth's resources and our keeping of all aspects of the Rule.*
- *Sharing in the corporate life and organisation of the Community*

It is assumed that Community members are Christian, but this is fraying around the edges. We are a diverse Community with a wide variety of traditions, beliefs, and types of worship which might be seen as incompatible. However, unlike Quakers at the moment, we don't spend a great deal of time discussing these. We simply accept the differences. It is the Rule that binds us together. What is important is how we act in the world.

One might "translate" the Rule as:

Quakers are committed to:

- *Worship with others and regular engagement in *Quaker Faith & Practice* and other material which nourishes us*
- *Working for justice and peace, wholeness and reconciliation in our localities, society and the whole creation*
- *Supporting one another by meeting and communicating with one another for the use of our gifts, money and time, our use of the earth's resources*
- *Sharing in the corporate life and organisation of Quakers*

The rule is a guide ~ relational rather than institutional. It helps us to deepen our relationships with God, with each other and with the Community and its concerns.

One of the books I value greatly is *Awareness* by Anthony de Mello, from which this extract comes:

"The highest form of talking about the Trinity is to know that one does not know. Now, this is not an Oriental Zen master speaking. This is a canonized saint of the Roman Catholic Church, the prince of theologians for centuries.

To know God as unknown. In another place St. Thomas even says: as unknowable. Reality, God, divinity, truth, love are unknowable; that means they cannot be comprehended by the thinking mind. That would set at rest so many questions people have because we're always living under the illusion that we know. We don't. We cannot know.

What is scripture, then? It's a hint, a clue, not a description. The fanaticism of one sincere believer who thinks he knows causes more evil than the united efforts of two hundred rogues. It's terrifying to see what sincere believers will do because they think they know. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a world where everybody said, "We don't know"? One big barrier dropped. Wouldn't that be marvellous?"

Don Stubbings

Oh gosh, why do I ever talk myself out of going down to Yearly Meeting when it's in London? It was not only a very exciting one – taking part was a huge privilege – but also a wonderful friend-filled weekend. I'd decided very late to try to come down, due entirely to the urging of Adwoa Bittle, our GM Clerk, who told me I simply *had* to be present and, most fortunately, my sister-in-law in Brixton was not only at home on the Friday but able to offer me a bed for the weekend. All I had to do was get a train ticket: not cheap, but not as hideously expensive as it might have been!

The main business of the weekend was to consider whether the time is right to revise *Quaker Faith & Practice* (Q.F. & P.), the Book of Discipline. In 2014 Meeting for Sufferings had recommended that the time *was* right, but Yearly Meeting was unable to reach unity. A Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group (RPG) was set up, and at the end of 2017 Sufferings received their final report and agreed to bring the matter to Yearly Meeting again. My journal entry for Saturday morning included:

I'd been reading some of the heavier chapters of QF&P, on YM, Sufferings, etc: they don't exactly make bedtime reading, and I feel make more sense once someone has told you what they say in user-friendlier words... but at least I have tried to read some of the church governance bits: don't know if I've derived much benefit from them, but maybe am a little clearer about things at the top?? Still un-certain exactly who decides what goes on – and what exactly Trustees do – so much organisation at the top, and so disconnected from the ordinary person at the bottom: words saying so much about discernment and being led, but how much Spirit is there going on at the top, and how little there (sometimes) seems to be at ground level...

Am I being too judgmental here?? Listening to the Fs House staff at QLRC [Quaker Life Rep. Council] they sound alive in the Spirit, ditto W[ood-broo]ke tutors - which is how you'd hope they'd be: but how does that filter down to the ordinary person who never sets foot outside their Meeting?

Lesley Richards, Clerk to RPG, began Saturday's business with an illustrated history of the Book of Discipline over last hundred years or so.

Photos of her own family showed how the family changed over the generations, each photo showing some people from the past alongside new family members: each new Book contains things from the past as well as new entries. The 1921 Book (in three separate volumes) was the first to include extracts from Friends' writings; the 1959 edition was in two parts – the blue *Christian Faith & Practice*, and black (later maroon) *Church Government* while in 1994 ten years' work resulted in the current 'big red book', which put everything into one volume, thus making it harder for people to ignore the Church Government section!

What amazed me was that the 1994 Church Government sections, although re-ordered, and slightly rewritten, were basically unchanged from the 1967 revision and thus written when the Society mainly consisted of Friends who had grown up in the Society, and didn't need to have 'why we do things this way' explained to them. So – not only have we changed a lot of the things we do as a result of legislation, etc, but the language is over fifty years old and pretty obscure: no wonder I found reading these sections less than dazzlingly illuminating!

Going back to Lesley's photos – the last one was of a recent family wedding, with a vast increase in new members who were most definitely not all white, middle class, and affluent: does our current *Q.F.& P.* reflect the huge changes in society and speak to the new people who've joined, or might join us? The current Big Red Book has already gone into a fifth edition, and even that is out of date – the website has the only up-to-date version, also subject to constant revision. The RPG concluded that not only was a complete revision of the Book urgently needed, but that a new format would be desirable – a core volume, setting out what we do and why we do it, (changes to which would have to be approved by Yearly Meeting in session) together with supplementary material dealing with the finer detail which could be more easily updated, and approved by some other committee.

You can read Lesley's introduction and see her slides, on the Yearly Meeting 2018 website, in Documents and minutes. You can read the RPG's recommendations in Appendix D at the end of the Agenda and Notes (Documents in Advance) – M.W.

We then heard a fabulous account from our GM Clerk Adwoa Bittle about her personal transformation while part of the RPG. In her own inimitable style she confessed her resistance to any idea of changing the Book she'd grown up with and her initial conviction that the whole thing was a done deal and a stitch up by the staff at Friends House, and how being part of the group's hard work, deep prayer and deep listening transformed her into a passionate supporter of the need for revision. (*again, you can read it in her own words in YM2018 Documents & minutes*).

After that it felt as though everyone was ready to say “yes, that’s fine, we need to revise, let’s just get on with it”... but we had to go through a process of looking at the decision and its implications, finding out how Friends feel, and making sure that the decision was in right ordering...’ and so we did. The morning session ended with ministry around ‘yes it’s time, get on with it’ and also ‘beware, it’s going to be painful for some people and it’s not going to be easy!’

Each break between the main sessions offered many opportunities to find out about a wide variety of Quaker groups, but I needed all my energies for the business sessions. I ate my sandwiches out in the hot and sunny garden before going inside to escape the heat, constantly bumping into yet another familiar face and loving smile – so different from my first time at YM when I was so grateful to see the faces of a few familiar Scots clustered around the desk in the entrance, waiting to welcome such as me.

After lunch was a ‘small’ (but crowded) session on diversity, hearing from people feeling left out of the current book; I was prepared to say SINGLETONS, but someone else spoke of them much more eloquently than I...

Friends were then given the opportunity in worship to express their feelings about three questions:

- *What have religious differences shown you in your Quaker community?*
- *How has your faith and practice been enriched by these differences?*
- *How can we find a way to get beyond potentially divisive words?*

To my surprise I was at one stage on my feet, heart pounding fit to bust, ready to minister about Pendle Hill and the enrichment/ challenges/ difference and diversity I found there – but someone who’d been at the Young Friends Gathering in 1985 spoke much more clearly and eloquently about the process of creating their epistle which is one of my favourite bits of *Q.F.& P.* [29.17], and which rendered my ministry redundant...

That was enough for me for the day: I had a lovely curry and delightful conversation with Alison Burnley after which she went back to listen to the Swarthmore Lecture and I headed for Brixton... I gather the lecture was brilliant – *it will be available from the Woodbrooke website “very soon”*, but I was both exhausted and elated from short but intense encounters with so many people I know – Scottish Friends, EfM friends, Woodbrooke people, FiRs, and other people encountered in my UK-wide Quaker ramblings...

On Sunday we continued considering the revision. Finally, in the final session of Sunday’s business, the decision was taken that the time is right to begin the revision process and the crafting of Minute 31 which summed up our two days’ work began – another superb illustration of Friends’ method of conducting business. I had to dash for my train, sorry that I could neither stay for the rest of YM nor say goodbye to all my Friends: NEXT YEAR I WILL KNOW BETTER, AND ARRANGE TO STAY FOR THE WHOLE THING!

Mary Woodward

A Visitor at Meeting

The following improbable-sounding story is taken from Annals of the Early Friends, by Frances Anne Budge (2nd Edition, 1886): a collection which reprinted her articles from the Friends Quarterly Examiner, this one being a life of Thomas Story, a lawyer before he came into contact with Friends, who did legal work for the Society in London and was later a law officer in Pennsylvania.

Editor

In 1697 we find Thomas Story and Gilbert Mollison calling at the residence of Peter the Great, who was in London *incognito*, where they wished to leave the Latin edition of "Barclay's Apology," hoping that it might fall under the notice of the Czar. They had an opportunity of conversing with him on some of the views held by Friends. The following Sunday morning, as Thomas Story was sitting in Gracechurch Street Meeting he saw two gentlemen enter; they were dressed in the usual costume of Englishmen of that period, but this did not prevent him from recognising the Emperor and his interpreter. A minister named Robert Haydock was preaching about the cure of Naaman, and – entirely unaware of the high rank of one of his hearers – he said, "Now if thou wert the greatest king, emperor, or potentate upon earth, thou art not too great to make use of the means offered by the Almighty for thy healing and restoration, if ever thou expect to enter His Kingdom, into which no unclean thing can come."

Fifteen years later, when Peter the Great's troops had taken possession of the Friends' Meeting-house at Frederickstadt, he not only ordered them out of it, but gave notice that he would attend a meeting in it, if the few Friends residing there were inclined to hold one. As his Generals did not understand German, the Emperor, with much seriousness, acted as interpreter in this meeting, remarking that whoever would live in accordance with such doctrines would be happy.

Whatever his fluency in German, Peter the Great did not read Latin, so would not have benefited from the Friends' gift. His attendance at meeting for worship at Gracechurch Street was on 30 January 1698 (= 1697 according to the old calendar, by which the year turned on Lady Day, 25 March); on 3 April 1698, perhaps hoping to hear more agreeable ministry, he went to Deptford Meeting. The plaque at 144 Deptford High Street marking the site of the Meeting House (demolished in 1907) refers to his worshipping there in "1697-8" which might imply he attended more than once, or that the single occasion actually fell in the ambiguous period between 1 January and 25 March.

Friedrichstadt, in Schleswig-Holstein, had been founded in 1621 as a refuge for Dutch Mennonites and Remonstrants, and had drawn other faith communities to it, including Unitarians, Quakers, Catholics and Jews. In the Great Northern War of 1700-21, between the Swedish Empire and an alliance of its enemies, Russian forces under Menshikov were the largest contingent in the army besieging the nearby fortress of Tönning in 1713-14, when the episode may have occurred.

Friends at the Fringe 2018

August draws on apace, and already people are flocking to the Fringe box office to get their tickets ... Shows at Venue 40 begin on 5 August, and run Monday to Saturday. Some are on all three weeks, others only for one week: make sure to check either in the Fringe programme or the wee easy-to-handle orange, green and white brochure which just covers “our” events.

Venue 40’s 2018 programme has a fascinating mix of shows with something for all tastes. I simply HAVE to see *Accident Avoidance Training for Cutlery Users – Level 2* which is on all three weeks of the Fringe. My other must-see show is *Conchies!* (featured in *The Friend* a week or so ago) about a group of pacifists who set up a farming community in a Lincolnshire village in the second World War. I also fancy Theatre On The Edge’s *You are cordially invited* - to the wedding reception of Robert and Issy.

Groups making a welcome return to Venue 40 include the Sorries; Syracuse University, with an adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *A Scarlet Letter*; and Newbury Youth Theatre, whose *Of Rags and Bones* is inspired by the short stories of Anaïs Nin. The Tibetan monks from Tashi Lhunpo monastery return with a programme of sacred dance, and invite you to join workshops in which you can watch them create a peace mandala and have a go at prayer-flag printing, butter sculpture, and learning Tibetan. Lucy Aphramor’s new show, *Enough*, is “Mad, queer and age-positive”: if you aren’t up for that, try her other show, *Raise the Roof*. Majk Stokes invites you to quench your thirst with *One more cup of coffee, and then we’ll save the world*, but if coffee’s not your tippie, try *Make tea, not war*.

Newcomers this year include Nelson Youth Theatre from New Zealand with *Holy Moses!*, a re-telling of the prophet’s teenage years; the Theatre Arts Academy, who raise *3 Cheers for Maisey!* and the Tobermory Players, whose *A World Beyond Man* tells the story of a Russian polar expedition’s desperate attempt to reach land after being ice-bound for two years.

Luath Press offers a series of fascinating talks – *Catalonia and Caledonia: parallels and possibilities*; *Whisky in song and verse*; *St. Kilda: the silent islands speak*; *Verse and song in tribute to the women of Scotland* and another fifteen which I don’t have room to mention.

If all this is making your head reel, try Collateral Damage’s *White Poppy Project*, an evolving exhibition curated by the Quaker Arts Group, and then recruit your strength at *Eating House @ The Meeting House* where chefs Ben Reade and Ian Wilson will tempt you with a mouth-watering selection of vegetarian dishes (and cake!).

Happy Fringe 2018!

Mary Woodward

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Monday 14 May 2018 at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House

2018/05/01 Worship and Introductions

We began our business meeting with a period of worship during which *Quaker Faith & Practice* 2.88 was read to us. Coming from London Yearly Meeting in 1986, this reminds us that the sacred and the secular are woven together in unity in our meetings for worship for business, leading us to seek for a spirit of unity in all our decision making.

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

2018/05/02 The minutes of our last meeting, held on 17 March, 2018 at The Bleachingfield Centre, Dunbar, have been signed and entered in the minute book.

2018/05/03 Matters arising

a) General Meeting for Scotland (Minute 2018/03/08 refers)

(i) Proposed dates for General Meeting in 2019/20

We agree the dates proposed at our last meeting for the holding of General Meeting in 2019/20 and will inform General Meeting accordingly.

These are: 9 March 2019 (<i>agreed</i>)	West Scotland AM
8 June 2019	South East Scotland AM
14 September 2019	North Scotland AM
16 November 2019	East Scotland AM
7 March 2020	South East Scotland AM

(ii) General Meeting, 16 June, Inverness

We appoint Jacqueline Noltingk and Kate Arnot to represent us at General Meeting in Inverness and together to write a report of that meeting for the *Scottish Friend* and *The Friend*.

b) The plight of our homeless neighbours and how we might help

Further to the consideration of this matter at our last meeting we have been told by David Sterratt of an open meeting on 25 March 2018 at 7 Victoria Terrace. This was a difficult meeting. The Management Committee of 7 Victoria Terrace have further discussed this. There are many activities addressing homelessness in Edinburgh in which Friends may be involved. The managers have contacted other Meeting House managers to find out what is happening elsewhere, usually in partnership with other organisations.

If Friends are moved to action or a concern, then further discernment is needed. If Friends wish to take this forward, David Sterratt is willing to be an initial contact. A critical matter to be discerned to how to support staff and the Management Committee should any action be agreed.

2018/05/04 Report on a conference of the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

A brief account has been read to us of a QCCIR conference attended by Mary Woodward and held at Woodbrooke in March 2018. The subject was how Quakers should respond to the changing face of faith in Britain.

QCCIR is exploring where Quakers fit into the changing British religious landscape and the implications of that for all of us. Grace Davie, who spoke to the conference, challenged Quakers to consider what we can do to make people want to be with us.

Friends are encouraged to read Mary's fuller report which is published in *Sesame*.

2018/05/05 Nominations/Appointments

Our nominations committee has brought us the following names for appointment:

1. To serve on the Meeting House Management Committee from April 2018 to the end of March 2021:
 - a) **Tony Gross** (Central Edinburgh)
 - b) **Peter Dean** (Central Edinburgh)
2. To serve from July 2018 to end of June 2021:
 - a) as Assistant Editor of *Sesame* – **Joanna Swanson** (South Edinburgh)
 - b) in Pastoral Care & Oversight – **Pat Lucas** (East Lothian)

We appoint these Friends accordingly.

Jackie Slater (East Lothian) has asked to be released from service in the Pastoral Care and Oversight team and we release her as requested.

2018/05/06 Report on the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Spring Conference

Su Nuttgens, our appointed representative at the QPSW Spring Conference, held at Swanwick in March, has reported to us on that conference.

Su had been drawn to this event because of her awareness of Quakers' radical positions on social and peace issues.

In plenary, Elsie Whittington had spoken from a feminist perspective of the need to 'break the silence', particularly in relation to issues of gender identity. Quakers have a particular role in this.

In workshops on peace and on the EAPPI programme, Su had learnt what skills are needed to respond to conflict in constructive ways. Treating conflict as an opportunity for transformation has become something of a mantra for Su.

We thank Su for attending this event, and for her report, and ask her to prepare a written report for *Sesame*. [See page 8.]

2018/05/07 Membership Matters

a) Application of Joanna Swanson (Minute 2018/03/06b refers)

We have received from Kerstin Phillips and Susie Reade an account of their meeting with Joanna Swanson to explore Joanna's membership

application.

Joanna is a civil servant whose work involves creating policies to encourage person-centred work within the NHS, which she feels fits well with living her Quaker faith. She has been influenced by Quakers throughout her life, her maternal grandfather and her mother both having been Quakers; she was a participant in Quaker activities as a teenager and young adult, including clerking Junior Yearly Meeting when she was seventeen. She is still enthusiastic about the Quaker business method.

Joanna is now very happily settled with her husband and two children and feels ready to commit to and be involved in the life of the Religious Society of Friends. She has already agreed to be Assistant Editor of *Sesame*.

We are glad to accept Joanna into membership and appoint Susie Reade to welcome her and arrange the gift of a book to mark her admission.

b) Transfer of membership of Rici Marshall Cross

A certificate of transfer for Rici Marshall Cross has been received from Leeds Area Quaker Meeting. Rici is worshipping with South Edinburgh Local Meeting, and we welcome her to our Area Meeting.

2018/05/08 Memorial Minute regarding Marjorie Farquharson

We have received Minute 2018/05/07 of Central Edinburgh Local Meeting, a memorial minute regarding Marjorie Farquharson, who died in May 2016. [See page 26.] We attach this to these minutes and ask the four Friends who wrote the memorial minute to do such further work as is required to develop this into a testimony to the grace of God as shown in Marjorie's life and to bring that back to us as soon as they are ready.

2018/05/09 Meeting for Sufferings report

Henry Thompson has reported on the Meeting for Sufferings held on 7 April 2018. His report including relevant links is published in the current issue of *Sesame*.

Henry highlighted a report on the work of the Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group. Meeting for Sufferings accepted some recommendations of the review, and felt that work on sustainability needs to be better integrated with the Yearly Meeting's programme of work. Therefore MfS did not accept a recommendation to lay the group down. This expressed a sense that the overall workplan can fail to reflect views and decisions of Yearly Meeting in session.

We were reminded that though the Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group has been problematic, work on sustainability has continued at national, area and local levels.

Henry also raised minute 2017/11/10 of our Area Meeting, on diversity. We note that we have not taken action to consider the issues identified, and ask the Clerks to address this.

Friends are encouraged to read the full report in *Sesame*, and to speak to Henry about any issues in which they are particularly interested.

2018/05/10 Young Adult Friends Group

Rici Marshall Cross has informed us of the intention of young adult Friends to form an informal group attached to this Area Meeting. We welcome this news and offer the group our full support.

2018/05/11 Data Protection

Area Meeting Trustees are taking steps to ensure that our Area Meeting practices with regard to the storage and transmission of personal information conforms with the new legislation which comes into force this year. Further advice to local meeting and committee clerks will be issued in the course of the year.

2018/05/12 Short Annual Report

A short annual report on the activities of the Area Meeting and its constituent Local Meetings in 2017 is being prepared by David Somervell at the request of Area Meeting Trustees and will be published shortly.

2018/05/13 Falkirk Peace Pole

We have received a request from Polmont Local Meeting that the Area Meeting should underwrite the hospitality costs involved in an event planned to mark the erection of a peace pole near the Kelpies in Falkirk, an amount not expected to exceed £300. Trustees have considered this and we agree to support Polmont LM in this way.

2018/05/14 Two legacies**a) Legacy of Marjorie Farquharson**

We have received a request that we donate £10,000 of this legacy to Campaign Against Arms Trade to help fund the two year appointment of a Scottish coordinator to work with the Edinburgh CAAT group in promoting its work. CAAT was founded largely by Quakers and local Quakers have played a major part in the work of the Edinburgh group throughout its life. AM Trustees have investigated the charity law implications of such a donation and are supportive of this donation, which we now agree.

b) Legacy of Catriona Collins

In March this year, our Area Meeting received an unrestricted bequest from Catriona Collins, an attender at Central Edinburgh LM, totalling £538,330.83. This has been paid into our current account and Trustees are taking steps to ensure that it is distributed and held in several separate accounts to ensure its safety.

We acknowledge the need to discern very carefully the right use of both Catriona's and the remainder of Marjorie's legacy money and will need to return to this matter, under the guidance of our Trustees, at future meetings.

2018/05/15 Support for the Wiston Lodge residential weekend

We agree to support the Wiston Lodge residential weekend this year by underwriting the costs up to the sum of £500 to ensure that those who wish

to attend are able to do so. It has also been suggested that younger people wishing to attend could be supported by the Wigton & Ayton Trust.

2018/05/16 Correspondence and notices

We have been informed of events being held on Tuesday 15 May 2018 to mark Conscientious Objectors Day and the design of the Opposing War memorial to be placed in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh; and, the following week, a Legacies of Resistance to War event taking place in the Scottish Parliament.

We have received

- The QUNO Geneva Reporter
- An appeal from Water Aid
- An appeal from the Mines Advisory Group
- A newsletter of the Refugee Survival Trust

2018/05/17 Closing minute

27 members and one attender, representing five Local Meetings, have attended all or part of this Area Meeting, as indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 16 members	Central Fife -	East Lothian 4 members 1 attender	Kelso -	Penicuik -
Polmont 1 member	Portobello & Musselburgh 1 member	South Edinburgh 5 members	Tweeddale -	

We next meet at Greenbank Church, South Edinburgh, on Saturday 23 June 2018, from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm.

(Signed)
Kate Arnot
Phil Lucas
Alastair Cameron
Clerks

At Area Meeting in May, Alison Burnley commended *Kingdom of Olives and Ash: Writers Confront the Occupation*, a collection of essays and stories by various writers, edited by Michael Chabon and Aylet Waldman, and drawing on the experiences of members of Breaking the Silence – former Israeli soldiers who have seen the reality of life in the occupied territories and wish to challenge their country’s official version. Some online sellers announced prematurely that a “mass-market” edition was to be published on 31 May 2018; it is 2019 however. In the meantime, the “trade” edition (also a paperback) costs £12.99, three pounds more. ISBN 978-00-6243178-3.

Marjorie Farquharson – Memorial Minute
[of Central Edinburgh Local Meeting, 6.5.2018: 2018/05/07]

Further to Minute 2018/03/06, Rosemary Harthill, Alan Sayle, Tony Gross and Fiona Paterson have written a memorial minute for Marjorie Farquharson.

Marjorie Milne Farquharson. Political scientist, 11.8.1953 – 13.5.2016

Marjorie Farquharson was an amazing, courageous woman, whose life was inspired by, and a testimony to, the key Quaker values of peace-building, equality, simplicity and truth. She died aged 62 of pneumonia after a cancer operation.

When in 1991 she set up an Amnesty International office in Moscow, she was the first westerner working on human rights with a permanent base there. It was particularly important because for years Amnesty in the USSR had been considered an 'anti-soviet organisation', and a 'nest of spies'. Mikhail Gorbachev's dual programme of *perestroika* ('restructuring') and *glasnost* ('openness') had introduced profound changes in economic practice, internal affairs and international relations, which inadvertently set the stage for the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union into 15 individual republics. In this highly unstable political and economic climate, Marjorie was the lynchpin of Amnesty's research for Soviet-era human rights activists, campaigning not only for those well known in the west such as Andrei Sakharov, but also helping to expose the hidden crime of the political abuse of psychiatry.

Her quiet passion and work for open democracy and human rights continued in various ways for the next 25 years.

She was born in Glasgow, but when she was three, her father, Alexander Farquharson, a chartered accountant, changed jobs, and he and his wife, Nellie, and family moved to Lancaster. Marjorie was the youngest child of three, and 'unplanned'.

In 1975, now a student back in Scotland, Marjorie won a British Council scholarship to Russia, and the following year left St Andrews University with prizes and First Class honours in Soviet Political Sciences. After a year in the Quaker UN Office in New York, in 1978 she started working for Amnesty, initially in London. This was a time when travel to the Soviet Union was very difficult. Russian intellectuals were smuggling material out to be published by Amnesty.

In 1991, most foreigners in Moscow were still living in foreign enclave ghettos, with access to foreign currency shops and good quality food. Marjorie chose instead to live as ordinary Muscovites, in one-room with small kitchen. In 1992, the inflation rate in Russia soared to over 2,300%.

By late 1992, Marjorie was working for the UN, based in Geneva but monitoring human rights violations in Bosnia Herzegovina, during both the Bosnian-Croat and the Bosnian-Bosnian civil wars.

In 1994, she was back in Moscow directing the TACIS NGO Support Unit, supporting open democracy by helping the new Third Sector in Russia get on its feet. Then in 1996, it was on to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg for five years advising the Russian Federation and Ukraine on human rights, influencing legislation, establishing a regional ombudsman, helping emerging NGOs to get consultative status to enable them to lobby at Council meetings.

She travelled extensively alone to remote places with very poor living conditions and at considerable personal risk. It seems her gentle, unassuming and modest demeanour coupled with her wide knowledge enabled people to trust her. She was a very good listener, spoke Russian naturally and well, and never looked like a posh foreign consultant there to teach those Russians democracy.

In 2001, her father's ill-health brought Marjorie and Irina back to Scotland. In Edinburgh, she set up as an independent human rights consultant. Work included reports on statelessness in Central Asia, sexual minorities in Uzbekistan, the death penalty in four ex-Soviet states, child soldiers, and corruption in the defence procurement industries.

She also evaluated projects funded by the European Union and wrote many expert opinions on asylum seekers' applications to live in the UK.

Her hobbies included Tai Chi, music and photography, even a recent bee-keeping course. Marjorie also translated some Gogol, Bulgakov and Mandelstam and wrote short stories. One of them, 'The Weather Station', won the 2000 BBC World Service Best Short Story Prize, and was broadcast.

For 20 years, unknown to most people, Marjorie lived with multiple sclerosis. Initially, it did not affect her too badly. But about 2010/11, balance problems developed. Undeterred, in 2014 she was nominated by her local SNP branch to stand (unsuccessfully) as a potential SNP Candidate for the Euro Elections.

As a member of the Religious Society of Friends, Marjorie was Area Meeting Clerk for South-East Scotland, 2009-13. Before becoming the Registrar for Marriages for the area, she oversaw the first religious same sex marriage in Scotland. She was quietly supportive of new people to the meeting, and those with particular responsibilities.

Marjorie died as she lived, very quietly and privately. In her last days, she and her Russian partner, Irina, read extracts from Lao Tsu's *Tao Te Ching* and listened to Allegri's *Miserere*, both of which were heard at her Edinburgh Quaker funeral.

We send this minute to Area Meeting and we ask that Area Meeting consider using it as a basis for a Testimony to the Grace of God in Marjorie's life.

We are unable to include a review of Marjorie's Moscow Diary in this issue, but hope to have it next time --- Ed.

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
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First Sunday in the Month

Penicuik: Valleyfield House, 17 High St., Penicuik <i>Children welcome, bring and share lunch</i>	11.00 am
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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
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Second Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00 am
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Second and Fourth Sundays in the Month

Portobello & Musselburgh: Fisherrow Community Centre, South St, Musselburgh EH21 6AT. <i>Children welcome.</i>	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
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Fourth Sunday in the Month

North Edinburgh Meeting: Broughton St Mary's Church, Edinburgh	7.00 pm
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Fifth Sunday in the Month

Central Fife: Hunter Halls, Kirkcaldy (Kirk Wynd, opposite Old Kirk)	10.30 am
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Last Sunday in the Month

East Lothian: St Andrew's Centre, Dunbar	11.00 am
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Distribution of *Sesame* and *Scottish Friends Newsletter*

The current practice 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; if you would prefer to receive it this way, or to change the address to which a paper copy is sent, or if you would like to get one by post and currently do not, please contact **Joanna Swanson** at jmswanson69@gmail.com. A large print version is also 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. Printed by Footprint UK, Riverside Works, Edinburgh Road, Jedburgh TD8 6EE.