

# SESAME

Number 233: January 2020

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AM on 18 January/South Edinburgh at 50/Nuclear Weapons Ban/From Our Motoring Correspondent/World Day of Prayer/John Woolman/YM 2021 – *by Zoom*/Science and Mysticism/To Africa by rocking chair – *online intervisitation*/At Holyrood/Meeting for Sufferings/Trustees' Report/AM November Minutes/ Revising Q.F. & P. – *notes from groups*/LDW ad./ &c.

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*Janet Fenton, holding the medal of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to ICAN in 2017, and Philip Austin, Co-ordinator of the Northern Friends Peace Board. See page 8.*

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Published by South East Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Material for the next issue should be sent to Alan Frith (email: [ar.frith@btinternet.com](mailto:ar.frith@btinternet.com)) or by post to 10, East Parkside, Edinburgh EH16 5XJ, to be received at the latest by **Tuesday 9 March**. The Editor reserves 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

The next Area Meeting will be on Monday 18 January 2021 at 7.00 pm at Edinburgh Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace EH1 2JL.

## DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of Saturday 28 November 2020
3. Matters arising from the minutes
  1. *Contribution to BYM* (2020/11/04.1 refers)
  2. *Young Quakers Day* (2020/11/08.1 refers)
  3. *Enquirers' event* (2020/11/09 refers)
4. North Scotland AM's proposal on a single Quaker entity for Scotland
5. News from local meetings
6. Membership matters
7. Wedding: appointment of date
8. Appointments
9. Political engagement in a year of challenges and opportunities  
*Andrew Tomlinson, our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, and Grace Da Costa, Public Affairs & Advocacy Manager for Quakers in Britain, will speak [see page 21]*
10. Reports
11. Closing minute

**Alastair Cameron**  
AM Clerk



South Edinburgh Meeting Friends, 2015 – see opposite

## South Edinburgh celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday

*Rufus Reade talks to Sylvia Massey, Jenny Robertson, David & Ida Turner, Sandra Riddell, Alastair Cameron, Alison Burnley, David Somervell and Susie Reade, as well as drawing on Ron Halliday's account of the first fourteen years.*

**I** WONDER IF THERE IS A PATTERN in the way that new meetings are formed? With such a question going round my head, it's a good time to mark a Meeting that opened 50 years ago.

Let us head back to when Edinburgh had just one meeting, in Stafford Street. Meeting for Worship was held upstairs in an L-shaped room. Judiciously choosing your seat might mean you could see everyone, but many places had a restricted view, and you couldn't see who was ministering.

Coupled with this awkward layout and poor access was the fact that by 1970, Meeting had become very overcrowded. The birth of a new meeting seemed inevitable, even if at its launch it was homeless. Ron Halliday, in his account of the first fourteen years [*reprinted in Sesame 232*] describes the first meeting for worship of South Edinburgh Quakers being on 27 September 1970, in a church on Fountainhall Road. He goes on to list brief sojourns at the Scottish Congregational College on Hope Terrace 1971-75, and Grange Home School 1975-76, before a longer stay at the Rudolf Steiner School, 1975-82.

Successive Preparative Meeting minutes during the 1970s record new landlords until in 1979 the Quakers heard of an ecumenical centre planned for Morningside. The clerk approached the coordinator Peggy Hunter, and as a result Friends were invited to appoint a trustee: Margaret Gibbins' name was put forward, thus beginning her long and fruitful association with the Open Door. Friends visited for the first time on 8 October 1980, and the very first Meeting for Worship took place on 7 February 1982.

Even when they found sanctuary at the Open Door no one expected it to be a long stay. Picture the space in Morningside almost opposite the clock, next to the little-used railway line: at pavement level the Open Door appears to be a café, and that is how it still welcomes visitors, Monday to Saturday. In the beginning Meetings for Worship on a Sunday morning were in the café, when the lower ground floor was unusable. There was nowhere for children to meet, and the hope that the new meeting would attract younger Friends seemed a forlorn hope. During the early years of the 1980s, work on the lower ground floor made it a useable space, and in September 1984, Friends met for the first time downstairs. Today, 36 years on, this is where you'll find a small meeting room, an office, a kitchen, toilets and a generous size room where Meeting now sits, called the Hunter Room after Peggy Hunter, (who was not a Quaker). She envisaged an ecumenical centre where folk could gather in a non-judgemental atmosphere to exchange ideas over a cuppa: as Peggy said: *"I have a dream ... to turn loneli-*

*ness into fellowship, isolation into recognition ... and bridge the gap between church and community".*

In 1985, Dorothy Buglass was warned when she started attending South Edinburgh, "This is an elderly Meeting, don't expect it to last long!" Despite the prognosis, families began to join.

By the mid 1980s South Edinburgh could welcome children. There were never huge numbers, but out of Children's Meeting there was born the 'weekend away'. In the early '90s, led by Ida and David Turner, a group of parents, children and helpers took over Kirk Yetholm Youth Hostel for a self-catering weekend of simple activities (including shared cooking) which laid the foundation for what became a weekend away, once a year, at Wiston Lodge outside Biggar, where they were welcomed by the warden Meg Beresford, herself a Quaker. Everyone at Meeting was invited to come. From simple walks, sitting and chatting on the grass, the weekends evolved to become programmed and ambitious in their content. By 2015 it seemed that the Wiston weekend was offering more than South Edinburgh's membership could use and so very happily the invitation went out to other Meetings to join the weekend. The weekends were multi-generational but there was always the added energy of the children which made them such happy excursions!

David Somervell recalls a scene at his home. A sofa overloaded with Quaker young who all flourished in each other's company: an extraordinary friendship group emerged which was to lead into the annual journey to the young people's Summer Gathering, later known as Shindig.

Over the years, South Edinburgh has seen many folk come and go, and in a review of this nature a list of names might be tedious! But please excuse me if I mention one or two people. Let me begin with a prime minister and a philosopher. In the 1990s, Tony Blair mentioned the influence on him of the Edinburgh University philosopher John Macmurray. What Blair may not have known was that John Macmurray used to attend South Edinburgh Meetings: Catherine Somerville and Jenny Robertson, two of his former Edinburgh University students, were also part of Meeting.

Sometime later, after John Macmurray had died, the Longmans hosted a Meeting for Learning looking at his philosophy. Discussing Macmurray could lead to arguments! By way of contrast, Julia and Alan also organised Apple Dookin' for Hallowe'en which proved a great deal of fun, as Alison Burnley recalls.

Sitting in Meeting, we have frequently heard a freight train trundling past on the line just outside the fire escape door: I often wondered if it was carrying nuclear fuel.

South Edinburgh has been very involved with supporting the ongoing protest against Trident with a few members very faithfully bearing witness to their opposition to nuclear weapons by going to the naval base at Fas-

lane six times a year for a Meeting for Worship outside the submarine base. Thinking of nuclear weapons brings me to Christine and Brennan Soane who were long-term members of the Meeting: Christine has been dead many years but early on in this author's time as clerk of Preparative Meeting, she told me the following story: she and others had conceived the notion of taking the issue of the illegality of nuclear weapons to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. South Edinburgh Preparative Meeting initially refused to put early discussion of this important subject on the agenda and her message to this new clerk was to remember to listen to all agenda items as proposed and not to be too hasty in turning them down! As history fortunately records, Christine's huge persistence paid off: the World Court Project, became a world-wide campaign that resulted in an historic opinion from the International Court of Justice in July 1996, which ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally illegal, and that states have an obligation to conclude negotiations on their elimination.

Other campaigns include David Turner urging Meeting to support his concern that the British Army should not engage in underage recruitment amongst school children, though looking back he is less certain the campaign was successful. But Margaret Anderson recalls a venture also led by David Turner, who established a group (including Tony Davies and Alison Chalmers), to regularly visit Saughton Prison where they could share time and conversations with prisoners. At one discussion group, Margaret Anderson spotted someone she recognised. During the tea break the young man approached Margaret to ask her if she had been his school doctor: she had.

David Turner had a long interest in and compassion for prisoners which may have something to do with his own experience as a conscientious objector and fugitive during WWII. David campaigned against the use of torture and rendition by British Government agencies – which was a move led by Meetings for Sufferings. And for 19 years he corresponded with Michael Riley, a prisoner on death row in the USA, who was sadly eventually executed. Michael sent Meeting a clock he had made and a cloth he'd embroidered which celebrated his relationship with South Edinburgh and the support David had given him.

The initial work on the lower ground floor was completed in the mid-1980s but the Hunter Room had skylights and no windows in any of its walls: it felt very subterranean. And that is how for many years it remained. In the 21st century the Open Door raised funds to upgrade the lower ground floor but there was no money for a window in the Hunter Room: I think the credit for radically changing that room with the installation of a long window looking onto the adjacent gardens must go to David Somervell. Suddenly meeting was no longer underground!

The Hunter Room was often the venue for the annual Christmas party whose high drama was the arrival of a red-cloaked, white bearded Santa.

Spoiler alert: the men in Meeting took turns each year to don the robes and facial hair, faithfully stored over the decades by Sylvia Massey.

Sometimes Meeting went picnicking – once, on a glorious day, at Crichton Castle. One of the small boys was seen walking along the ruined ramparts, too high up to be safe, and too far out of reach to be retrieved. Mary-Jane Elton pointed this out to his father, who turned round to see that intervention was useless, and so he returned to his sandwich, his back to the scene!

In early 2009, it was beginning to be obvious that a significant number of those in the South Edinburgh Meeting came from Portobello and Musselburgh, and the birth of a new meeting seemed on the cards. In due course the Musselburgh/Portobello Meeting was born. These migrations inevitably leave a parent meeting bereft for a time, In the case of South Edinburgh/Portobello & Musselburgh, each meeting in turn then began to adjust to the new arrangements, and to flourish.

Since South Edinburgh was always a small Meeting there was a strong chance that newcomers, and visiting Quakers would be welcomed and their presence acknowledged: Alastair Cameron recalls the welcome he received from Pippa Ludlam, which was in direct contrast to another meeting he'd recently attended, and this made a deep impression. Pippa always wore her waist length hair until the end of her life, in a plait, usually coiled round her head. Pippa had been Margaret Anderson's boss. Margaret tells the (possibly apocryphal) story of the newcomer sitting in unaccustomed silence turning to a neighbour and whispering "When does the service start?" to which came the answer "Service begins when the Meeting is over!" Her point being that the Meeting seemed to her to accept all and care for all (though there are times when some of us must have failed), as exemplified by the *service* of tea and biscuits during the chat after the end of Meeting for Worship.

Meetings are mainly attended by human beings! But Lucy Zawadska and her family once brought in lambs, and there have been dogs who have peacefully sat through the hour: recently Susan Robertson has been accompanied by her hound, and over many years Jeffrey Dunningham came with his black Labrador, Bess.

Reading through the old minutes of PM, various names still resonate: one such family name is Robertson. When Dorothy Buglass first joined South Edinburgh in 1985 Giles Robertson was clerk. And in speaking to Jenny Robertson (no relation) she told me she had recently been reading Candia McWilliam's autobiographical reflection on blindness, *What to Look for in Winter*, where she came across Giles and Eleanor Robertson's names, since they were with Candia, when she was six, the day her mother killed herself. Candia McWilliam remembers Giles and Eleanor still using 'thees and thous' in every day speech (this perhaps in the early 1960s). Giles had been at Bletchley Park during the war and latterly was professor of Fine Art at Edinburgh University. If you've ever found yourself sitting comfortably in

the Meeting at Victoria Terrace, you can thank Eleanor for her sponsorship of decent stacking chairs!

Some weighty friends, like Eleanor, could be a little intimidating to those of us who were less certain of their faith, One such weighty Friend was Alison Douglas who sometimes had a severe manner (she never said hello or goodbye on the phone) but it concealed a warm soul who spoke her mind, and loved cats! She once turned to me in a Meeting for Learning and asked me what was the most daring thing I'd ever done: "Asking Susie for our first date!" I replied.

Weighty Friends often provide a Meeting with some sort of leadership: David Somervell recalls Julie and Alan Longman as the mother and father of the Meeting, when he first began attending.

Sandra Riddell recalls a Meeting for Learning run by Jenny Nielsen on the Synoptic Gospels – a category she was unfamiliar with at the time. Jenny was a keen and gifted photographer who made a point of visiting Friends in their homes to take photographs. Some years after Jenny died, Sandra (as Correspondent for the Meeting) received a phone call from the photography shop in Morningside to ask after Jenny since the owner had not heard from her for some time. Sandra had to tell him that Jenny had died a couple of years earlier.

2020 was a complicated year for everyone: Meeting continued, but entirely on Zoom. An innovation of many years standing, the regular consultation with the area's Member of Parliament and our Member of the Scottish Parliament was suspended at their request due to a COVID-19 postbag overload. Hopefully to be resumed, on Zoom! Few Meetings can ever have had such a long term relationship with their parliamentary representatives! A Zoom group initiated by Area Meeting has also been looking at Black Lives Matter to Quakers with an extraordinary wide-ranging discussions about books read and short video interviews shared. The new clerk for 2021, Rici Marshall-Cross has had a baby – Esther, her first born. South Edinburgh in its first half century has spawned friendships, campaigns and a new Meeting; now in 2021, South Edinburgh heads into its next half century.

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***R**ELIGION ... is reason in human nature creating the community of persons – recognizing and achieving the unity of all personal life. It is the force which creates friendship, society, community, co-operation in living. That is why I am wont to say that friendship is the fundamental religious fact in human life. That capacity for communion, that capacity for entering free and equal personal relations, is the thing that makes us human; it is the rock on which personality is built. If it were not for this we would not be human beings. It is evidenced at the lower level by the capacity to speak; to use language for the sharing of our experience; and at the highest level in the recognition by the intuition of reason that God is Love.*

**John Macmurray** (1891-1976), from *Reason and Emotion* (1935)



# THE NUCLEAR BAN TREATY ENTERS INTO FORCE

## 22 JANUARY 2021

*Janet Fenton, now of Lanark Meeting, has been working at the UN and here in Scotland since ICAN's inception in 2007. She currently serves on ICAN's International Steering Group with the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, and as liaison for Scottish ICAN partners at UN House Scotland. She writes:*

**T**HIS 22 JANUARY IS THE SPECIAL DAY on which the **BOMB IS BANNED**, thanks to the United Nations and so much courage from so many activists and diplomats. Here is a start to the story; find out more on <https://www.nuclearban.scot/> and <https://www.icanw.org/>. Enable Quakers in Scotland to accelerate the treaty's progress by sharing knowledge about it among Friends and through social media.

From *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 24.40, written in 1920:

“ ‘Armaments are the weapons of organised violence and outrage ... they are not ... sources of security.’ ... The only true safety is the safety of all.”

Quakers see nuclear weapons as a violent and irresponsible means of social control, and even those who support the use of force set limits on the level. Dumdum bullets (which expand on impact to maximize injuries) were defined by an International Peace Conference as so barbaric that they were banned in 1899. In 1945, the first UN resolution was to end nuclear weapons use; but until the 2017 adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), they were the only weapon of mass destruction *not* subject to a prohibition treaty.

The TPNW that enters into force on 22 January is unambiguous, legally binding the states that have ratified it and impacting on the global security regime. The Treaty has comprehensive prohibitions – no storing, using, threatening, transporting or stockpiling; nor assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in any of these activities. It commits states to positive obligations including a commitment to urging other governments to join. States must all make reparation for nuclear damage, and are obliged to recognise the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and indigenous communities.

When the nuclear-armed states failed to disarm through the earlier Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) acted to avert a catastrophic humanitarian and environmental tragedy.

Three main elements contributed to successful negotiations. First, the focus on the humanitarian impacts, including evidence from nuclear weapons and test survivors; second, the active involvement of global civil society, academic, medical and ethical witnesses; and third the unfettered involvement of the governments that do not subscribe to nuclear weapons policies in their security doctrines, despite their vulnerability to nuclear mishap.



The failure of the NPT Review Conferences 2010-15 coincided with warnings by the International Red Cross that it could provide no meaningful disaster response to a nuclear weapons exchange. All of the nuclear-armed states have unsuccessfully resisted and opposed the TPNW, and aim to reduce its impact by not joining it. However, at each stage in its progress, the TPNW has diminished the effectiveness of their resistance. A letter to NATO members from the US Government ironically outlined how effective the TPNW will be in diminishing their nuclear strategies. Canada initially said it would not sign or even discuss the Treaty, and now declares that the TPNW has value in progressing nuclear disarmament discussions. Major financial institutions are divesting as the difficulties become apparent. Of course we must work to get the UK on board, but it is important that we do not fail to recognise how fast global opinion is reconsidering what security actually means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Note that, after entry into force,

- applying pressure to TPNW member states will not be legitimate diplomatic conduct;
- risk-averse financial institutions will abandon nuclear investments;
- transportation of fissile materials globally becomes problematic;
- evidence of the links between nuclear weapons and the climate emergency will emerge;
- rising awareness of nuclear costs and dangers will lead to reputational damage; and
- the truth about their nuclear weapons policies will impact the credibility of states.

Even accords which are not ratified by all UN states have a big effect. Here are some which the US Government did not sign, but had to accept:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Cluster Bombs Prohibition Treaty
- Landmines Prohibition Treaty

Scotland has a unique position: there is no alternative base outside Scotland for the UK's nuclear weapons, and their deployment is opposed by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and the majority of Scots MPs. This puts the UK in a difficult position in claiming a mandate for its policy. Whether or not you believe that Scotland should seek self determination in order to contribute to international peace and justice, it is undeniable that a Scotland that could accede to the TPNW would be supported by the 130 out of 193 member states who voted on 7 December 2020 to support the TPNW at the UN General Assembly.

*All round the world, people will be celebrating the Treaty's coming into effect. Suggestions on what Friends can do locally are overleaf.*

## Ten Actions for Scottish Friends to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

1. Form a group (on Zoom) to learn about the Treaty. Read it online, or get a hard copy. Do the Scottish CND TPNW Quiz together with F/ friends. *The international resources are at [https://www.icanw.org/the\\_treaty](https://www.icanw.org/the_treaty). For Friends in Scotland, see the [nuclearban.scot](https://www.nuclearban.scot) website, especially <https://www.nuclearban.scot/bone-up-on-the-ban/where-it-fits-in-scotland/>. It is also good to set up a Google Alert for 'Nuclear Ban Treaty' or 'TPNW' to bring you up-to-date news and views (both good and misleading!) Questions or notes of planned events can be sent to [hello@nuclearban.scot](mailto:hello@nuclearban.scot)*
2. Arrange a celebration for 22 January, to highlight that the Treaty comes into force that day. Find out what other peace groups are doing and join in. *Events planned for Scotland will appear on [nuclearban.scot](https://www.nuclearban.scot), and Facebook and Twitter.*
3. Put a poster, flag or banner in your window to show your support and remind you and your neighbours: **NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE BANNED**. *The Quaker banner and a window flag can be seen at/obtained from [nuclearban.scot](https://www.nuclearban.scot).*
4. Use social media to learn what is happening and share developments. 'Follow' or 'like' **Scottish CND** and **ICAN in the UK**, **NuclearBanS** and **Janet Fenton**. Use the hashtags #nuclearban #TPNW and #BairnsnotBombs.
5. Do your own Quaker press work! As well as letters to editors, pictures and press releases can be sent to local as well as national papers. Radio phone-in shows offer a chance to speak truth to power on the treaty. *For your local paper see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_newspapers\\_in\\_Scotland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_Scotland)*
6. Work with elected representatives. Get them on board with the international Parliamentarians pledge to support the Treaty, or ask your local authority to join the Cities appeal which declares that your community wants all governments to sign the Treaty. *Check whether your parliamentarians are on the ICAN list at <https://pledge.icanw.org/>, or the local authority listed on the Cities Appeal at [https://cities.icanw.org/list\\_of\\_cities](https://cities.icanw.org/list_of_cities)*
7. Read up/ share some of the research on the risks to people's health and impact on the climate that are part of what led countries to join the TPNW. *See <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/humanitarian-impacts-and-risks-use-nuclear-weapons>; [https://www.icanw.org/history\\_of\\_the\\_tpnw](https://www.icanw.org/history_of_the_tpnw) and <https://www.ippnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HealthEnvironmentalCase2016.pdf>. More can be found using 'nuclear weapons' or 'TPNW' on Chatham House and Reaching Critical Will websites.*
8. Check your investments and pension funds; divest from any that are involved with nuclear weapons, fossil fuels or arms manufacturing. Discuss with your meeting treasurer making divestment a corporate testimony. *Don't Bank on the Bomb Scotland has a comprehensive account of financial institutions investing in the production of nuclear weapons. See <https://nukedivestmentscotland.org/>*
9. Form a hustings group to make sure that Quaker values, peace and nuclear disarmament are at the top of the agenda for May's Scottish elections.

Contact our Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer at [AndrewT@quaker.org.uk](mailto:AndrewT@quaker.org.uk) and [janet@wordsandactions.scot](mailto:janet@wordsandactions.scot) for support with this.

**10.** Work with children in your meeting and at their schools so that they understand how the UN works and what the Treaty means for the world.

See <https://www.peaceeducationscotland.org/> & <https://www.unhscotland.org.uk/model-united-nations> for resources; or email [hello@nuclearban.scot](mailto:hello@nuclearban.scot)

**Janet Fenton**



*Artwork by Stewart Bremner*

## Going electric

### *The experience of living with Zoe*

Two years after we moved to Edinburgh to manage the Meeting House, and when we were sure our future lay in Scotland, Pat and I sold our house in the West Midlands and looked for a garden (with somewhere to eat and sleep attached) within reach of work. We were led to buy in a small village five miles from Dunbar. Rural living has huge advantages but one major drawback: Stenton is served by two buses a day and none after 1 pm, so we were making ourselves car dependent. And because we were both living busy lives, sometimes separately, we soon became *two*-car dependent.

Nearly four years ago, one of the cars (both diesels) needed to be replaced. After much thought and research, we decided to go electric. Most of our journeys were local and short, often into Edinburgh; the longest we regularly undertook was to worship at Kelso Meeting, a round trip of some 80 miles. We bought a Renault Zoe, which was well written-about and less

expensive than a Nissan Leaf (which had been the front-runner in the small electric car market). The deal included the fitting of a 7kwh charging point at home, though we had to pay a little for ours as our carport is 35m from the house near the bottom of the garden, so a cable had to be run through the house and down the garden wall. We kept one diesel car, mainly for longer trips – camping in France, our annual fix, for example.

We found in practice that the Zoe's range was about 140 miles; rather less in cold weather as lithium batteries are less efficient in the cold, but this was more than adequate for our use. When the car told us there were only about 50 miles left in store, we just plugged it in at home; it took five or six hours to fully recharge. The guys who installed our charging point told us we needed to join the Polar network (now owned and run by BP) but they were based in Newcastle and were not aware that Scotland had got its act together: Chargeplace Scotland were busy developing a network here. We were the first electric car owners in our village – there is now one other – and about a year after we bought the Zoe, two charge points were fitted in the village car park (which we used for a year, when the electricity was free). There are further charge points we have used very occasionally in Dunbar, East Linton, Haddington and Kelso.

The Zoe is simplicity itself to drive. Pat loved it (and so do I). No gearbox or clutch, a choice of forward, reverse or neutral, and off, almost silently, you go. Then, in June last year, Pat died and I certainly only needed one car. The Renault garage had already contacted us to say that a new model Zoe, markedly improved, with a range of about 200 miles and a quick-charge facility, was coming on the market and we had already decided to upgrade, so the decision was easy. Zoe Mark 2 was delivered in July, a month after Pat died, and I sold the diesel Seat in September.

I decided, despite official advice, to spend Christmas with my younger son and his wife at their home on the edge of the Pennines near Manchester, 240 miles away. They had formed a 'bubble' with me during the first lockdown, helping to nurse Pat during the last month of her life, so reforming that bubble meant I did not have to spend my first Christmas without Pat alone. Travelling by train would have been difficult and did not appeal, so Zoe needed to take me there: my first journey beyond the range of the car. I had done some research and found that Ecotricity run a lot of the motorway service station recharging 'pumps' and offer half price electricity to those who have a domestic electricity account with them. So I switched from Good Energy to Ecotricity. I also opened an account with Polar (now BP Pulse) in case I found myself at a distance from an Ecotricity 'pump'.

I can report that all went well. The journeys to and from Delph took an extra hour and a half because of the need to stop twice for a 45 minute charge. The Ecotricity 'pumps' limit you to 45 minutes of 50kwh charge, which adds about 80 miles to the range. Electricity for the journeys cost about £11 each way. Mine was the only electric car I saw on both journeys,

apart from one Tesla (who have their own charging network) so at present availability is not an issue. In any case, the Ecotricity app and a more general one called Zap tell you which 'pumps' are available. I am planning, COVID permitting, to travel with Zoe this Spring or Summer, to renew my acquaintance with North Devon, where I spent most of my childhood.

Phil Lucas

## World Day of Prayer: 5 March 2021

### BUILD ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

Women of the Republic of Vanuatu (located in the South Pacific Ocean) have prepared this year's service. The black and white sandy beaches, coral reefs with coloured fishes, lovely birds, fruits and nuts in the forest, all make the islands a pristine environment but they are vulnerable to frequent tropical storms, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis and active volcanoes. Women, men and children of all ages are called to 'Build on a strong foundation' and live in unity, love and peace in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity like Vanuatu and so many other places around the world.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world; their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally at a church near you on Friday 5 March 2021 people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Vanuatu.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 170 countries. It begins in Samoa, and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world – through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 39 hours later.

For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area see: <http://www.wdpScotland.org.uk/>.

## A Visitor at Yearly Meeting, 1772

*John Woolman (1720-72), the prominent anti-slavery campaigner from Mount Holly, New Jersey, was received warily when he attended London Yearly Meeting, although his own Journal does not mention it; this account is from The Story of Quakerism by Elizabeth Braithwaite Emmott (1908; revised 1929). She explains that Woolman "wore undyed garments, because he believed that dyes were invented partly to please the eye and partly to hide dirt, and that the practice of dyeing was contrary to true*

*cleanliness; and he endured the miseries of a steerage passage to England in those days of slow sailing, because the saloon cabin was ornamented and furnished in a way which he thought needlessly luxurious, and he 'felt a scruple with regard to paying money to be applied to such a purpose'"*

**O**N LANDING IN LONDON, John Woolman went straight to the Yearly Meeting, which was already sitting. Coming in late and unannounced in his peculiar dress, and after a hasty toilet in the crowded steerage, his appearance made Friends hesitate to receive him, and, although he produced his certificate from Friends in America, one Friend seems to have voiced the feeling of the Meeting by remarking "that perhaps the stranger Friend might feel that his dedication to the service was accepted, and that he might now feel free to return home." John Woolman sat silent, seeking for heavenly wisdom. At last he rose and said that he could not feel free from his prospect of service in England, but neither could he travel without the unity of English Friends. He was acquainted with a trade, and hoped Friends would be kindly willing to employ him, that he might not be chargeable to any, until the difficulty was removed.

Friends were touched by the wise simplicity of the stranger's words and manner, and when, after a silence, John Woolman felt words given him to speak as a minister of Christ, the spirit of his Master confirmed them in the hearts of his hearers. All doubt was removed, and he passed on to his work with the full sympathy of Friends.

*Elizabeth Braithwaite Emmott commends Woolman's Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich, written in England. She goes on: "After four months of travel in England he caught the smallpox and died at York in 1772, far from his dearly-loved wife and children, but in perfect peace, for he could say, 'I believe my being here is in the wisdom of Christ.'"*

## *A Reminder*

Members of the AM Nominations Committee are still looking for Friends to serve as

Assistant AM Clerk

and

Assitant Editor, Sesame

Details of the responsibilities of both posts are in the last issue (*Sesame* **232**, p. 25); please get in touch with **Fiona Paterson** [*contact details in the Book of Members*] if you would like more information, or might be willing for your name to be considered.

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*For an opportunity to work for Friends across Scotland, see page 39.*

## Yearly Meeting 2021 – a change of plan

*Book the dates now: Yearly Meeting in Session 2021 will be held, largely, between 31 July and 8 August. This will be an online event for hundreds of Quakers to gather in stillness to listen to stories of experience and to the promptings of love and truth.*

Public health advice over COVID-19 means that there is still too much uncertainty about booking a face-to-face event, which would be a substantial financial risk.

The decision follows the success of Yearly Meeting (YM) in November 2020 when 1,000 Quakers met online. Sessions were scaled down to deal with necessary business.

The dates for YM 2021 were confirmed by an online Meeting for Sufferings, Quakers' representative body. They had heard from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee about the eagerness for Quakers to come together as a worshipping community. They said, *"We mourn the loss of a chance to have a physical gathering, even as we are excited by the possibilities of a digital gathering."*

Reflecting on Yearly Meeting held online in November they wrote: *"Although we had not planned much in the way of community building activities, we were pleased with the sense of gatheredness which was possible at YM 2020. It was clearly important for participants to be able to see each other ... We have expressed our surprise at what a wonderful experience YM online was. Holding Yearly Meeting in this way allowed for a lower carbon footprint, the ability for international visitors, and Friends who would not be able to attend a yearly meeting in person, to join us with ease."*

YM 2021 will be much larger, more adventurous and will seek to be all-age, diverse and inclusive of those who could not attend a face-to-face event.

Plans are at an early stage and include:

- Business sessions to be focused primarily on the two weekends
- Time for children and families, Junior Yearly Meeting and Young People's Programme, (provisionally set for 2-6 August)
- A number of lectures normally associated with Yearly Meeting
- A wide range of fringe events providing time and space to highlight Quakers' work and witness in the world.

Being wary of screen fatigue, some events will be held in the weeks leading up to YM 2021. These might include a series of webinars, to help listening and learning around themes (yet to be settled).

The Yearly Meeting Gathering planned for August 2020 was cancelled because of COVID-19. Those who paid deposits will be contacted shortly to arrange for refunds or conversion to a donation.

**Anne van Staveren** [Quakers in Britain]



## Science and Mysticism

*Arthur Stanley Eddington* (1882-1944), a birthright Friend, was an astronomer, and director of the observatory at Cambridge from 1914 until his death. His observations during the total solar eclipse of 29 May 1919 confirmed Einstein's theory of general relativity by demonstrating that light rays from stars were "bent" by the sun's gravitational field; he also, in about 1920, correctly speculated that the energy of stars derives from the fusion of hydrogen into helium. Extracts from his 1929 Swarthmore Lecture, 'Science and the unseen world' are included in *Quaker Faith & Practice* (26.16 and 27.24); the following is from *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928), based on his Gifford Lectures of 1927.

A DEFENCE OF THE MYSTIC MIGHT RUN SOMETHING LIKE THIS. We have acknowledged that the entities of physics can from their very nature form only a partial aspect of the reality. How are we to deal with the other part? It cannot be said that other part concerns us less than the physical entities. Feelings, purpose, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense-impressions. We follow up the sense-impressions and find that they lead into an external world discussed by science; we follow up the other elements of our being and find that they lead – not into a world of space and time, but surely somewhere. If you take the view that the whole of consciousness is reflected in the dance of electrons in the brain, then all features of consciousness alike lead into the external world of physics. But I assume you have followed me in rejecting this view, and that you agree that consciousness as a whole is greater than those quasi-metrical aspects of it which are abstracted to compose the physical brain. We have then to deal with those parts of our being unamenable to metrical specification, that do not make contact – jut out, as it were – into time and space. By dealing with them I do not mean make scientific inquiry into them. The first step is to give acknowledged status to the crude conceptions in which the mind invests them, similar to the status of those crude conceptions which constitute the familiar material world.

[...] [I]t seems to me that the first steps in a broader revelation to man must be the awakening of image-building in connection with the higher faculties of his nature, so that these are no longer blind alleys but open out into a spiritual world – a world partly of illusion no doubt, but in which he lives no less than in the world, also of illusion, revealed by the senses.

The mystic, if haled before a tribunal of scientists, might perhaps end his defence on this note. He would say: 'The familiar material world of everyday conception, though lacking somewhat in scientific truth, is good enough to live in; in fact the scientific world of pointer readings would be an impossible sort of place to inhabit. It is a symbolic world and the only thing that could live comfortably in it would be a *symbol*. But I am not a symbol; I am compounded of that mental activity which is from your point of view a nest of illusion, so that to accord with my own nature I have to transform even the world explored by my senses. But I am not merely made up of senses; the rest of my nature has to live and grow. I

have to render account of that environment into which it has its outlet. My conception of my spiritual environment is not to be compared with your scientific world of pointer readings; it is an everyday world to be compared with the material world of familiar experience. I claim it as no more real and no less real than that. Primarily it is not a world to be analysed, but a world to be lived in.'

Granted that this take us outside the sphere of exact knowledge, and that it is difficult to imagine that anything corresponding to exact science will ever be applicable to this part of our environment, the mystic is unrepentant. Because we are unable to render exact account of our environment it does not follow that it would be better to pretend that we live in a vacuum. If the defence may be considered to have held good against the first onslaught, perhaps the next stage of the attack will be an easy tolerance. 'Very well. Have it your own way. It is a harmless sort of belief – not like a more dogmatic theology. You want a sort of spiritual playground for those queer tendencies in man's nature, which sometimes take possession of him. Run away and play then; but do not bother the serious people who are making the world go round.' The challenge now comes not from the scientific materialism which professes to seek a natural explanation of spiritual power, but from the deadlier moral materialism which despises it. Few deliberately hold the philosophy that the forces of progress are related only to the material side of our environment, but few can claim that they are not more or less under its sway. We must not interrupt the 'practical men', these busy moulders of history carrying us at ever-increasing pace towards our destiny as an ant-heap of humanity infesting the earth. But is it true in history that material forces have been the most potent factors? Call it of God, of the Devil, fanaticism, unreason; but do not underestimate the power of the mystic. Mysticism may be fought as error or believed as inspired, but it is no matter for easy tolerance:

We are the music-makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,  
And sitting by desolate streams; —  
World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams:  
Yet we are the movers and shakers  
Of the world for ever, it seems.

**B**UT A DEFENCE BEFORE THE SCIENTISTS may not be a defence to our own self-questionings. We are haunted by the word *reality*. I have already tried to deal with the questions which arise as to the meaning of reality; but it presses on us so persistently that, at the risk of repetition, I must consider it once more from the standpoint of religion. A compromise of illusion and reality may be all very well in our attitude towards physical surroundings; but to admit such a compromise into religion would seem to be trifling with sacred things. Reality seems to concern religious beliefs

much more than any others. No one bothers as to whether there is a reality behind humour. The artist who tries to bring out the soul in his pictures does not really care whether and in what sense the soul can be said to exist. Even the physicist is unconcerned as to whether atoms or electrons really exist; he usually asserts that they do, but, as we have seen, existence is there used in a domestic sense and no inquiry is made as to whether it is more than a conventional term. In most subjects (perhaps not excluding philosophy) it seems sufficient to agree on the things that we shall call real, and afterward try to discover what we mean by the word. And so it comes about that religion seems to be the one field of inquiry in which the question of reality and existence is treated as of serious and vital importance.

But it is difficult to see how such an inquiry can be profitable. When Dr Johnson felt himself getting tied up in argument over 'Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that everything in the universe is merely ideal', he answered, 'striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone till he rebounded from it – "I refute it thus"'. Just what that action assured him of is not very obvious; but apparently he found it comforting. And today the matter-of-fact scientist feels the same impulse to recoil from these flights of thought back to something kickable, although he ought to be aware by this time that what Rutherford has left us of the large stone is scarcely worth kicking.

There is still the tendency to use 'reality' as a word of magic comfort like the blessed word 'Mesopotamia'. If I were to assert the reality of soul or of God, I should certainly not intend a comparison with Johnson's large stone – a patent illusion – or even with the  $p$ 's and  $q$ 's of the quantum theory – an abstract symbolism. Therefore I have no right to use the word in religion for the purpose of borrowing on its behalf that comfortable feeling which (probably wrongly) has become associated with stones and quantum coordinates.

Scientific instincts warn me that any attempt to answer the question 'what is real?' in a broader sense than that adopted for domestic purposes in science, is likely to lead to a floundering among vain words and high-sounding epithets. We all know that there are regions of the human spirit untrammelled by the world of physics. In the mystic sense of the creation around us, in the expression of art, in a yearning towards God, the soul grows upwards and finds the fulfilment of something implanted in its nature. The sanction for this development is within us, a striving born with our consciousness or an Inner Light proceeding from a greater power than ours. Science can scarcely question this sanction, for the pursuit of science springs from a striving which the mind is impelled to follow, a questioning that will not be suppressed. Whether in the intellectual pursuits of science or in the mystical pursuits of the spirit, the light beckons ahead and the purpose surging in our nature responds. Can we not leave it at that? Is it really necessary to drag in the comfortable word 'reality' to be

administered like a pat on the back?

The problem of the scientific world is part of a broader problem – the problem of all experience. Experience may be regarded as a combination of self and environment, it being part of the problem to disentangle these two interacting components. Life, religion, knowledge, truth are all involved in this problem, some relating to the finding of ourselves, some to the finding of our environment from the experience confronting us. All of us in our lives have to make something of this problem; and it is an important condition that we who have to solve the problem are ourselves part of the problem. We are meant to fulfil something by our lives. There are faculties with which we are endowed, or which we ought to attain, which must find a status and an outlet in the solution. It may seem arrogant that we should in this way insist on moulding truth to our own nature; but it is rather that the problem of truth can only spring from a desire for truth which is in our nature.

A rainbow described in the symbolism of physics is a band of ætherial vibrations arranged in systematic order of wavelength from about  $\cdot 000040$  cm to  $\cdot 000072$  cm. From one point of view we are paltering with the truth whenever we admire the gorgeous bow of colour, and should strive to reduce our minds to such a state that we receive the same impression from the rainbow as from a table of wavelengths. But although that is how the rainbow impresses itself on an impersonal spectroscope, we are not giving the whole truth and significance of experience – the starting-point of the problem – if we suppress the factors wherein we ourselves differ from a spectroscope. We cannot say that the rainbow, as part of the world, was meant to convey the vivid effects of colour; but we can perhaps say that the human mind as part of the world was meant to perceive it that way.

*Quotations in this passage are from Ode by Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-81), set to music by Edward Elgar as 'The Music Makers'; and from Boswell's Life of Johnson: an episode of 6 August 1763. "The blessed word 'Mesopotamia'" refers to an anecdote in E. Cobham Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable concerning "an old woman who told her pastor that 'she found great support in that comfortable word Mesopotamia'": whence it means something "high sounding and pleasing, but wholly past comprehension". "Rutherford" is Ernest Rutherford (1871-1937), the physicist whose work on the structure of atoms revealed that apparently solid matter (such as Johnson's large stone) is mostly empty space. — Ed.*

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## *Visiting Africa*

### *from the comfort of my rocking chair*

Is there no end to the wonders of Zoom? Early on in lockdown I was able to attend a baby shower for a friend in Chicago, joining with others around the world in celebrating the imminent arrival of Solace (who arrived safely and is thriving). I took part in cookery classes organised by my daughter: the teacher was in Switzerland, while members of my family joined in from Finland, Switzerland, Canada, England and Scotland. Like many of

us, I've also been able to keep in contact with far-flung friends it was impossible to visit, and am very grateful that I can see as well as hear them.

Quakers, of course, took to Zoom like ducks to water, and I've been able to join Friends in worship, take part in AM and GM, continue with the work of revising *Quaker Faith & Practice* and 'virtually' visit Friends who want to learn about the revision process, engaging them in a number of different ways. On 6 December I joined Finnish Friends in worship, and was warmly invited to join them a fortnight later – as the COVID situation worsened there, Friends were increasing the frequency of their electronic gatherings. It was a delight to see and hear friends made during my visits to their twice-yearly gatherings – and humbling to be the recipient of generous translations from Finnish for my benefit, as the one person not fluent in it (though I am delighted to say that my Duolingo lessons are paying off, as I was able to recognise a number of words scattered through people's ministry and conversation after Meeting!)

But what of Africa, I hear you say? Well, on 5 December I was able to join Friends in Africa and Britain in an 'online intervisitation', once again without leaving the comfort of my rocking chair. The Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) of Britain Yearly Meeting works to make links between British Friends and those in other parts of the world: in 2020 they had hoped to concentrate on building connections between Quakers in Britain and Africa. The pandemic rather got in the way, but in November British Friends received an invitation to gather with African Friends simply to talk – the one thing that's unfortunately often missing when Friends gather for worship by Zoom.

The 75-minute session began and ended with worship, introduced by Friends in Africa and the UK. We were then divided into small groups and given a question to guide our conversation. There were rather more British Friends than Africans, but wherever possible an African Friend was present in each breakout group. My first group of five included a Friend from South Africa and three British Friends I didn't know, all with strong connections to different parts of Africa. We were asked to begin by introducing ourselves, then talk about *What is important in your life right now?* In peripheral things our lives were quite different, but the common bond of the pandemic and our concern for others became very clear in the course of conversation and, though it lasted only twenty minutes, by the end we felt very connected in the things that are eternal.

After a comfort break, we were put into different groups to consider *How is your Quaker community surviving and thriving in these times?* This time there were four in my group; our African Friend had been a member of Westminster meeting in London before, to his surprise, moving to live in South Africa. The other three spoke of the situation in their home meeting – very different in each case – while I spoke about the global nature of my Quaker community which, with these African beginnings, now spans even

more of the world than before. It's thanks to the pan-demic that all these connections are developed and strengthened by the use of Skype and Zoom – an amazing silver lining to what has been a horribly dark and lowering cloud over us all for far longer than many had imagined possible. A closing worship-sharing session brought contributions from many people, all delighted to have taken part and fervently hoping that the next of these gatherings will take place soon.

The invitation to the session had said its aim *is to get to know each other and to learn more about what Quakers are doing in the world in an informal way. We hope it will foster a deeper understanding and a sense of a global community.* I found the session deeply moving, infinitely joyful, and of great help in expanding my experience and understanding of the truly world-wide family of Friends. Like many families, we don't agree about everything we do, but we also have much in common.

In a world that is becoming increasingly divided, anything that crosses borders and removes barriers is to be sought after and engaged in with joy and enthusiasm. Look out for the next session and take part if you possibly can!

**Mary Woodward**

[Go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/our-structures/quaker-world-relations-committee> for information about the work of QWRC. The event in which Mary participated was announced in Quake! the online newsletter from Friends House: see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/quake> – Ed.]

## ***Public engagement in a year of challenges and opportunities***

**Andrew Tomlinson** took over in October as the Society of Friends' Parliamentary Engagement Officer at Holyrood. Together with Grace Da Costa, Public Affairs and Advocacy Manager at Friends House, he will be speaking about his work at Area Meeting on 18 January; here he sets out some particular current concerns.

Following the unprecedented year that was 2020, we can all be forgiven for approaching 2021 with a degree of uncertainty. At this early stage there is much that is still unknown, and yet within Scotland's national and political life there are also some significant contours that have already begun to take shape. There will, we hope, in 2021 be the first steps towards a life beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of a just and green recovery. 2021 will also see the UK begin life outside of the European Union after a drawn out and contested departure. And the significant events of the parliamentary election in May and the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November have potentially long reaching implications. In the back-

ground there are numerous policy discussions underway, including the potential for a new human rights law for Scotland.

At an event in December to launch the UK's 6<sup>th</sup> Climate Budget, Chris Stark, chief executive of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), stressed that, if we are to meet our long-term targets, we have five years to get the necessary legislation in place. Already by the close of 2020 we had written to and met with the manifesto writers for each of the main parties ahead of next year's election, stressing this point. Work is also underway to finalise resources that will support Friends to engage with candidates in the run up to May's election and make sure that there is a particular focus on the climate and ecological emergency. On 16 December the Scottish Government published its Climate Change Plan update, which lays out Scotland's proposed pathway to Net Zero by 2032. [*It is accessible here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/>*] This month we will be working with colleagues in Stop Climate Chaos Scotland to respond, following on from work we did last year writing to each of the Cabinet Secretaries ahead of its publication.

By the end of this month, as part of a consultation by the Scottish National Human Rights Leadership Taskforce, we will have facilitated a conversation among Friends to explore what a new Human Rights Law for Scotland might look like, and how it might work. The current proposals put forward by the taskforce are focussed on cultural, economic, and social rights, such as the right to health, food, housing and a healthy environment. Finally there is COP26 in Glasgow In November, and in collaboration with colleagues in QPSW we are exploring ways to use this event as an opportunity to encourage the UK and Scottish governments to be as ambitious as possible in tackling the climate and ecological emergency.

So while much remains uncertain about 2021 and beyond, on this first glance there are many opportunities for Friends, and for civil society as a whole, to engage with and shape the decisions that will set the course for the UK and Scotland well into the next decade and beyond.

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## Witness at Faslane

For many years, Friends have gathered periodically to hold a meeting for worship at the North Gate of HMNB Clyde, as an act of witness and protest against the nuclear weapons based there: the UK's four Trident submarines. At present, it would be difficult to hold such a meeting; and – for Friends from South East Scotland – illegal to travel to attend it. Nevertheless, it is hoped that meetings *will* resume in 2021, and dates will be publicised when known. Meanwhile, **Alison Burnley** [*contact details in the Book of Members*] may have more information before *Sesame* next appears.



## Meeting for Sufferings, 5 December 2020

As South East Scotland Area Meeting's 'alternate' representative to Sufferings, I attend when Henry Thomson is prevented. This was my first meeting of the triennium. 5 December was also Young Friends' Participation Day, and we joined by around thirty Young Friends at the beginning and end of the day. For me, the meeting (by Zoom) was beset with technical problems, but I could both see and hear all of the morning's session and hear most of the afternoon's.

The agenda, papers, minutes and follow up letter are available at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Moving on from a fruitful and interesting "getting to know you" session and regular items (membership of Sufferings; prison/court register; and appointments), the first substantive agenda item was a report from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, with input from both the Clerk and Treasurer of Trustees. BYM is facing financial difficulties due to the closure of Friends House. A deficit of about £3 million is anticipated for 2020, and the future is uncertain. The Clerk of Trustees asked for consideration as to whether it would be useful for there to be a Memorandum of Understanding between BYM Trustees and AM Trustees arising, but not limited to, safeguarding to prevent individual and reputation damage. Since I had no idea what our AM Trustees might think of this, I said nothing but several Friends contributed. I was struck by one Friend's saying it was the process of working through a Memorandum that was valuable and it should not be written in legal language. It was agreed a Working Party would be set up to take this forward. To me, a more interesting element of the report was a continuing focus on racism – "Racism exists within the Religious Society of Friends and we must tackle it. This is a hard thing to admit, but recognising the problem is an important step in addressing it." There was limited input by Friends as contributions would be more fruitful after the afternoon presentation on diversity and equality.

We were told that Westmorland General Meeting (WGM) has been laid down, and the associated registered charity is to be closed. This is of interest to Friends as WGM was the owner of Glenthorne, just over the border in the Lake District, which many Friends will have visited or stayed at. I'm assuming that this change is to enable more simple structures and that Glenthorne will continue to be a valuable and welcoming Quaker resource. This was followed by continuing concerns from two Area Meetings around governance and discernment. I had the feeling from reading previous papers and minutes that there is some disquiet. Devon AM had also forwarded a concern on fossil fuels. They want their pension providers to disinvest from companies engaged in the production and distribution of fossil fuels. They urge other AMs to take similar action.

The morning session concluded with business remitted from Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) which held only one afternoon session by Zoom in 2020. As well as nominations and appointments, this included receiving and accepting reports from Central Nominations, Quaker Housing Trust and Quaker Stewardship Committee.

The afternoon session began with the Clerk to BYM, and was perhaps of most interest to many, for we were informed that BYM in 2021 will be held online. [See page 15.] Planning for it needs to be done over the next three months and involves substantial financial commitment and risk; we do not know what restrictions may exist in August 2021. **BYM will be held from 31 July to 8 August, over two weekends and during the week.** There is awareness that meeting virtually both includes and excludes. However, there now is much experience of Zoom Meetings and it is hoped that Friends will dip in and out as their circumstances allow. Junior Yearly Meeting will make its own decisions. There will be an extended preparation period of some three weeks before BYM begins.

The Clerk to Friends World Relations Committee spoke briefly, telling us that British Friends had had a Zoom meeting with African Friends. [See page 19.] This was very positive and it is hoped to repeat this; it has helped to integrate British Friends into the world family of Friends.

This was followed by a most powerful presentation by Edwina Peart (inclusion and diversity co-ordinator for BYM, who Friends may remember spoke to GM in June 2019, about building on our Quaker testimonies to equality and truth). There was much information about Friends' historic involvement in slavery, almost all of which was new to me. We do talk of how much we contributed to the ending of slavery but we need much more acknowledgement of our complicity in, and financial gain from, active participation in slavery, bound up with our colonial past. Other churches have apologised for their role in slavery but we haven't. There was some discussion around this, *e.g.* can there be an apology for something we ourselves haven't done. Edwina asked us to consider two questions:

1. Can we make an active commitment to dismantling institutional racism within Quakers and Society?
2. Based on our testimonies, what is our vision for this work?

The minute reads in part:

*We are called to commit to becoming an actively anti-racist church. Individually we are all on different stages of this journey, which is based on learning, moves through acknowledgment and on to commitment to action based on discernment. ... The time to act is now, personally and in our area meetings.*

The afternoon closed with Worship, in which we were joined again by Young Friends.

**Kate Arnot**

## *Report of Area Meeting Trustees and Treasurers*

*[This report was presented to Area Meeting on 28 November 2020 but was not available for inclusion in the last Sesame.]*

### ***7 Victoria Terrace***

We were unable to open the Meeting House on 14 September as hoped and are still unable to open. We therefore continue to have no lettings income and have very few enquiries about future bookings.

Work continues on video conferencing. Trustees agreed to underwrite, up to £20,000, the cost of new equipment, *i.e.* cabling for the entire meeting house and equipment for the Meeting Room. Central Edinburgh Local Meeting has agreed to contribute towards this £10,000 out of the Sylvia Marshall Bequest. In addition, the grant of £1,400 that Area Meeting has received from the Francis Camfield Trust for 2020 is earmarked for this purpose. The maximum amount that will fall on AM is therefore £8,600 but we hope the final cost will be lower. Mark Kisby from AVD visited the Meeting House last week and will be updating their proposal shortly.

### ***Staff***

Friends will be aware that the furlough scheme was due to finish on 31 October. The UK Government proposed that it be replaced by a Job Retention scheme based on employees working a minimum of one-third of their normal hours, then revised the minimum down to one-fifth of normal hours, before setting it to one side at least temporarily and, with the return of lock-down in England, announcing a continuation of the furlough scheme.

We therefore revised our own plans. Our staff are now all on furlough: full furlough for the five members of staff on casual contracts who are receiving 80% of their past earnings based on HMRC's criteria, and flexible furlough for the four members on permanent contracts who are receiving their full salaries. Our two managers specifically suggested to us that, given that their workload was reducing, they should be flexibly furloughed and that led to their inclusion. That means that they, and the other management staff, work some hours each month when there is work for them to do. We review the situation on a monthly basis.

### ***Buildings***

Several months ago our Trustees authorised some major work to be carried out at Kelso Meeting House and on the Upper Bow frontage in Edinburgh. It is disappointing that progress has been slow in respect of both projects, and we are still waiting for the City of Edinburgh to give permission for scaffolding. We will keep Friends updated.

### ***Area Meeting financial position***

Looking at finance, we anticipate a deficit in 2020, and it is hard to make predictions at a time when we cannot guess the future extent of the pandemic or of government support for business activity. We know that we shall be drawing down funds from our savings account but hope not to

have to draw on our longterm investments. We shall try to provide a brief overview in January, when we shall be sending out the letters for the 2021 appeal.

Each year Britain Yearly Meeting asks Members to make contributions in support of its central work, and we distribute to Friends and attenders the annual appeal together with our own. Trustees are recommending that AM should make a contribution to BYM of £30,000 for 2020, a sum that is additional to the amounts earmarked for BYM by Friends in their 2020 donations to AM and amounts sent directly by Friends in the area. The sum agreed by Area Meeting will be sent, but it has raised the question of how far Friends feel engaged in the work of BYM and whether they feel that we are managing the subject of BYM funding as well as we might. Friends may also wish to make extra personal contributions to BYM.

### ***North Scotland Area Meeting***

Friends in North Scotland have been experiencing difficulties over some years in finding Friends who are willing to serve the Meeting in a number of roles. This is partly a result of the distances involved in this Area Meeting, but we all have such problems to some extent. They have recently asked Friends in Scotland to consider whether it might be helpful to combine the four Area Meetings with General Meeting for Scotland to form a single charity. Trustees gave some preliminary thought to this radical suggestion.

There is little doubt that collaboration on administrative matters (the development of child protection policies, health and safety, insurance, data protection and so on) is useful and time saving, and could probably be extended. But could we collaborate further, for example in looking after employment and staffing, or treasurership? Trustees would have to be sought to oversee the work of the new charity, and we could also see that it might be necessary to employ paid staff, similar to the employment of staff by Britain Yearly Meeting at Friends House. All this raises large questions: these will require careful analysis and then discernment over a period of time.

## **SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING**

### **Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 28 November 2020 by remote videoconferencing**

#### **2020/11/01 Worship and introductions**

During worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 24.40. In a week in which defence spending has been boosted, and international aid cut, this reminds us that harmony is not fostered through the apparatus of discord, and that true safety comes from building safety for all.

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

**2020/11/02 Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday 2 September 2020**

The minutes for our meeting held by remote videoconferencing on 2 September 2020 have been signed and entered in the minute book. Minutes for our meetings in January, April, May and June have now been signed by the clerks and added to the minute book.

*[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]*

[*Redacted*]

### 2020/11/12 Closing minute

48 Friends (44 members and four attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting. Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

Central Edinburgh 19	Central Fife 2	East Lothian 5	Kelso 3	Penicuik 1
Polmont 4	Portobello & Musselburgh 5	South Edinburgh 6	Tweeddale 2	Visitor [Nether Edge LM] 1

We next meet on Monday 18 January 2021, by Zoom unless otherwise notified, at 7.00 pm.

(Signed)  
Alastair Cameron  
Clerk  
Cath Dyer  
Assistant Clerk

*Notes from a meeting of South East Scotland Area Meeting held on Saturday  
28 November 2020 by Zoom to consider the Book of Discipline Review*

#### Group 1

We were a group of just four, two experienced Friends, one who has been in membership for a couple of years and one attender.

##### 1. *What does Q.F.&P. mean to me?*

We all four find it invaluable as a source book for our own spiritual lives and as a guide to our corporate discipline.

The two experienced Friends referred to needing it constantly by their sides when they were engaged in Quaker committee and meeting clerking. The newish Friend explained how the use of it led him towards applying for membership. The attender spoke about taking part in a Becoming Friends course and how that helped her to get to know and use Q.F.&P.



## **2. *What we need to keep.***

Clearly the guidance on our organisation and practice is essential. It's very important that the content reflects both our history and where we are now.

The balance between being rooted in Christianity and open to new light needs to be clearly reflected.

## **3. *What new content is needed?***

There is inadequate guidance on Quaker funerals and material to use at such occasions.

More material to help those new to Quakerism to find their way in.

There has been much rich theological writing in recent years and doors need to be opened to this.

A clear distillation of what it means to be Quaker.

More material designed for children and young people and the book needs to be made more attractive for such.

## **Group 2**

### **1. *What does Q.F.&P. mean to me?***

- A kind of 'Torah for Quakerdom', working testimony
- Unlike other churches it's contemporary but spiritual
- Gives a core to Quakerism
- Early encounter with it – read with excitement
- The worship sections show that there is no 'one right answer'
- I reach for it in an instructive way, particularly through the index of well-loved phrases
- Most useful parts: the worship sections. Feeling of Friends, their faith, range of faith
- But it doesn't reflect the diversity of faith today, how do I know what anyone else's concept of God is?
- Its existence is the most meaningful thing about it to me – that Quakers have a core text which is collective experience. This is unique. It's not an authoritative text but a collective text.
- I use it very occasionally for guidance on procedure, much more for Advices & Queries (A&Q) and inspiration from others' words.
- Could we split the experiential and the procedural parts? (several people agreed)
- I use it more when on a course or in worship, than in my daily life – and the digital version more than the hard copy.

### **2. *What must stay***

- A&Q – most of us agreed. This frames the meeting especially smaller and deeply spiritual meetings
- Need time to reflect on what's in the book
- But if we are mentioning single paragraphs (as we started to do), 'Live adventurously' [A&Q 27] must stay in! (general agreement).

### **3. *What to add***

- Rationale – why we do what we do

- Hearing more about / from other Quakers
- Issues that have come to concern us more since the Red Book was published: climate change, racial justice.

### Group 3

We were given three questions to address. However, there were some general points that came up rather randomly:

- Will the Church Government sections be separated from the rest of the volume? (They do require regular updating, whatever one thinks of embedding them within the rest of the text.)
- Will there be a physical book? If so, what sort of length? Will it link to a larger online archive?
- Can a published book be kept accessible by maintaining it as a relatively low-price paperback?
- Does it work as an introduction to Quakerism for Enquirers? Or is *Q.F.&P.* merely for “internal consumption”?

#### 1. *What does Q.F.&P. mean to me?*

- It provides a historical context (especially for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps less so for the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>).
- Inspiration – expansion of, and reflection on, the well-known Quaker testimonies.
- Every piece is short; each can be read and then used for reflection.
- Church government sections are very readable, easy to understand and clear to follow. They help us to know what to do and when.

#### 2. *What should not be lost?*

- Pieces on the testimonies and other Quaker concerns, what they have meant in the past and their enduring value.
- *Advices & Queries* (still to be available as a separate booklet, of course).

#### 3. *What needs to be added?*

- Pieces contributed by Young Friends and children.
- Short pieces of Poetry – written from the Spirit, it does not need to be too polished.
- The book can never be comprehensive and nor does it need to be. But it would be good to include more records of Quaker witness and achievements on the world stage over recent years.

### Group 4

#### 1. *What does Q.F.&P. mean to me?*

- It is nearly always relevant (*e.g.* this morning's reading [24.40]).
- I seem to forget passages so I re-read when I hear others quote from it.
- It is also the point of reference for a lot of group work and is an aid when trying to understand other people's point of view.
- It helps me as an elder as a reference point.
- There is the administrative part at the beginning that used to be published separately from the more philosophical references. It is part of my background.
- Prisoners really appreciate the extracts from it.

- It is understandable and helpful.

## 2. *What must stay?*

- The passages from early Quakers are really helpful though sometimes difficult to understand.
- Young people really appreciate the long-standing wisdom of our Quaker forebears.
- A&Q's wording has changed, but it is rooted in everyday life with a very personal impact and it can have a big impact on our lives.

## 3. *What would you like to see in the new version of Q.F.&P.?*

- Wider inclusion from other cultures *e.g.* the Thanksgiving Address from First Nations Americans.
- Poems and extracts from other traditions.
- We talked about other publications where we had found inspiring writing.

## Group 5

### 1. *What does Q.F.&P. mean to me?*

- Food for thought, steering, supportive, a reference point with a great index. Great introduction to early Quakers. Easy to find topic.
- 'Everything spoke to me'
- 'The more I read, the more I find'
- A reading from QFP can anchor a Meeting, give some focus. Helps elderly Friends.

### 2. *What must stay?*

- The historical record, a place to identify or find quotes. Must keep the 17<sup>th</sup> century material,
- Good to have breadth through time, helpful though from different ages. Possibly could lose some of the 20<sup>th</sup> cent. material, seems time limited.
- 'Keep the timeless material and discard the time limited'
- It is both inspirational and procedural. Should the information on procedures be available in a different format, *e.g.* online?

### 3. *What needs to be added?*

- Must be accessible, in a sophisticated digital format
- Personal experience
- The **collective stories** of Meetings
- Stories of all age worship, to reflect changing attitude to **children in Meeting**
- What we've learned from meeting online
- Keep testimonies of lives as examples of collective action
- Quaker impact on wider society, our collective achievements
- The Quaker role in initiating campaigns
- **Our living testimony**

## Group 6

### 1. *What Q.F.&P. means to us*

- I need it... for comfort... I have it handy all the time ...
  - *For discomfort*

- *For guidance and support*
- It is a resource and a reference to my life
  - *It is particularly a resource at times of change. Such as life stage changes when roles change, such as when getting married*
  - *It is also a resource for getting one's hearts and minds prepared. (plural deliberate)*
- It is a mystery sometimes
  - *There are 10 or 20 passages for each of us which are particularly important and seem to contain particular mysteries that attract our interest again and again*
- It is practical
  - *Such as helping guide the process for visits,*
  - *Or guiding the performing of different Quaker roles*
  - *It helps us know HOW things happen, and are supposed to be done*
- It supports our journey through issues of importance
  - *Often this in the old pieces that describe how early Friends did stuff*
  - *It helps connect up the Spirit from the heart while journeying through major issues*
  - *This is because it has things like the feelings involved and is therefore less academic*

## **2. What should stay**

- Life event guidance – the whole body of work that is about how to handle relationship issues. Our connections as a community
- Church Membership Guidance – the way we work and we discussed that we thought that shouldn't be in a separate book/ appendix/ place
- Phases that touch the spirit.. we all have 10-20 phrases... such as the baby walking across a meeting room [10.09]
- Definitely want it to be a body around our FAITH, our spiritual leadings, as the key place to find out easily what that is. This includes the current Chapter 2, Approaches to God, as that helps broaden our individual experiences.

## **3. What we want added**

- More on inclusivity
- Working as a Quaker – to cover directly the areas of paid work, career and being a witness in all that 'work' means as a way of living faithfully today.
- Why we do what we do – particularly as we have more people who join with Quakers later on in their lives than we did in Quakerism before.
  - *So more about climate change and new ways of being that integrate with the planet*
  - *Another example was about how we deal with conflict, both in relationships and conflict in communities we are part of.*
- The index needs to be better organised.

**Group 7*****Added Question: What do we use it for?***

- Guidance when having personal problems.
- Words of comfort for the bereaved.
  - *But the right words are not always there*
  - *Suggest of “Words of comfort for the bereaved” (Ian Beamish will have the full details)*
- Ben Pink Dandelion’s Swarthmore lecture
  - *It’s all there in the red book*
  - *We’re “fissionable material flying all over the place” - the book holds us together*
- Universality and flexibility are valuable – has to allow for the multiplicity of personal experience.
- Procedures
  - *But some bits need to be pruned, e.g. bits on overseers.*
- Stories, personal experience
- In Meeting for Worship, look in index for X or Y – but X or Y not there, so look for something related, which often is helpful
- Read on phone – is easier than heavy book.
- A reference book and a guide

***Question 1: “What does Quaker Faith & Practice mean to me?”***

- Multiplicity of experience that goes into the Quaker compost
- Reassurance
- Anthology material, where we see in individuals, the grace of God being lived out
- Guidance – a window on the enduring spirit

***Question 2: “What must stay?”***

- Testimony concerning Mary Hughes (1860-1941) “She identified herself completely with those around her, sharing their poverty, their privations and their lack of opportunities for cleanliness” [18.13]
- John Woolman arriving in London (One of us thought this exact story was there – but it isn’t!) [See <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/62/John-Woolman>; see also page 13]
- Quotation by Charles F. Carter on doubt [26.39]

***Question 3: “What must be added?”***

- Simplified versions of old passages, perhaps alongside the old passages
- New material – newer experiences of Friends
- Moving governance out – a living standard.

**Alastair Cameron**

Clerk, South East Scotland Area Meeting

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*If we are not free, generous, tolerant, if we are not up to or above the level of the age in good works, in culture and love of beauty, order and fitness, if we are not the ready recipients of science and philosophy, in a word, if we are not full-grown men [sic] and Christians, the fault is not in Quakerism but in ourselves.*

**John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92), 1870**

# Local Development Worker for Scotland

**Salary:** £23,630 per annum (£29,538 pro rata per annum)

**Contract:** Permanent, from April 2021

**Hours:** Part time: 28 hrs per wk including some weekends and evenings.  
Frequent travel (when restrictions are lifted).

**Location:** Based at home or in a suitable office in the region [*sic*].

We are seeking enthusiastic, pragmatic, optimistic people who are excited by what spirit-led growth might mean in a faith context. Our expanding local development team is a key part of our plans to reinvigorate Quakerism and to help Quaker communities thrive. (Local development workers are also sought for **East Anglia; Yorkshire; and Cumberland & North East England.**)

As a local development worker, you will support Quaker communities to be inclusive, welcoming and all-age. The support areas include worship, community, organisational management, social action, collaboration in the wider community, and outreach. You will provide accompaniment, facilitation, project support, and training. You will work alongside others in Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Learning to provide resources and opportunities that grow from the identified needs of local Quakers.

We invite applications from people who are:

- good listeners, with experience of working with groups to develop and deliver a shared vision
- familiar with Quaker worship, community, witness and organisation
- organised and resourceful; able to research information, analyse and sift it, and apply it appropriately to a range of situations and personalities
- creative and adaptable; able to encourage innovation and support experimentation
- digitally curious; willing to experiment in using digital platforms and programmes to develop community and to progress work.

Alongside the opportunity to transform the experience of Quakers across Britain, we offer a generous benefits package. To arrange an informal discussion of the role, please email Sophie Smith on [sophies@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sophies@quaker.org.uk).

**Closing date:** Monday 25 January 2021 (9.00 am)

**Interviews:** w/c 22 February 2021 – online

**For details of how to apply for this role, go to  
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/job-opportunities/jobs>**

*Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to equality in all its employment practices  
Britain Yearly Meeting is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk  
and expects all its staff and volunteers to share and uphold this commitment.*

*Quakers have a faith commitment to equality, and we encourage and welcome  
applications for posts from all sections of society. You do not have to be a Quaker  
to apply for this post, but we expect you to uphold the values of our organisation.*

## **Quaker Meetings for Worship in South East Scotland**

*Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members. QMH = Quaker Meeting House.*

### **MEETING IN PERSON**

**Central Edinburgh:** QMH, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

*Alternate Sundays at 11.00 am. The first meeting of the month is All Age worship.*

*Go to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/meeting-for-worship-tickets-123670916039> to request a place; for more information, email [centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk) or call 0131 225 8425.*

**Central Fife:** The Old Kirk, Old Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy K1 1EH

*On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays in the month at 10.30 am.*

**Kelso:** QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

*Sundays at 10.30 am; alternate Wednesdays at 7.00 pm. NB. Please contact **Marianne Butler** in advance if you wish to attend, as places are limited to NINE.*

**Portobello & Musselburgh:** Bellfield, 16B Bellfield St, Portobello EH15 2BP

*On the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in the month at 7.30 pm; on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 11.00 am.*

*For information on **Tweeddale Local Meeting**, contact **Anna Lawrence**.*

### **MEETING BY ZOOM**

**Central Edinburgh** – for login details contact [centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk)

*Sundays at 11.00 am – blended with meetings in person when they take place.*

*Alternate Thursdays - 'Epilogue' at 9.00 pm*

**Central Fife** – for login details contact **Laurie Naumann**

*On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with the meeting in person.*

**East Lothian** – for login details contact **Di Simcock**

*Wednesdays at 7.30 pm.*

**North Edinburgh worship group** – for login details contact **Tony Gross**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm.*

**Penicuik** – for login details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in the month at 11.00 am.*

**Polmont** – for login details contact **Mariot Dallas**

*Sundays at 10.45 am; preceded by Children's Meeting, 10.00-10.30 am.*

*Wednesdays at 8.00 pm.*

**Portobello & Musselburgh** – for login details contact **Mary Jane Elton**

*2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 11.00 am – NOT blended with the meeting in person.*

**South Edinburgh** – for login details contact **David Somervell**

*Sundays at 10.30 am.*