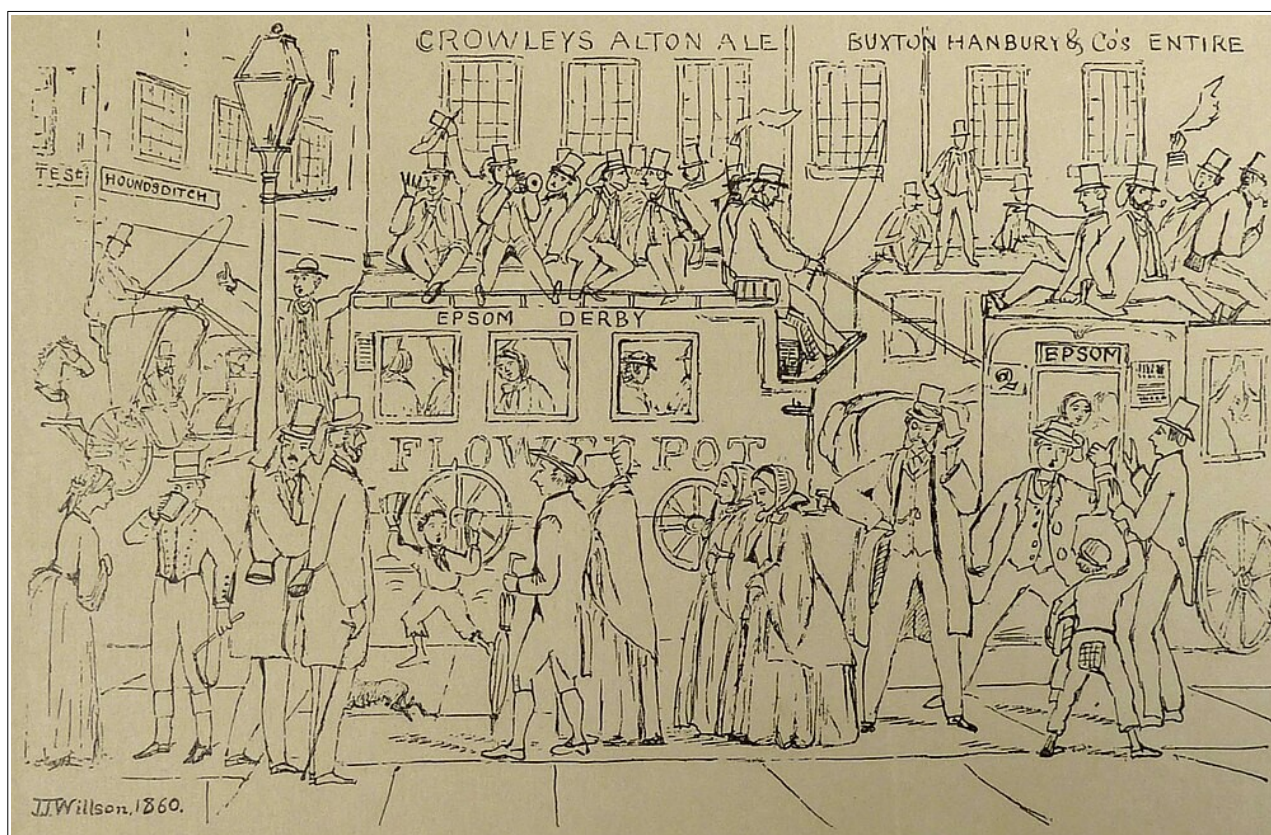


SESAME

Number 261: June 2025

Area M^{tg}, 21 June / YM (& JYM) *Epistles*; *Minute on Gaza* / EAPPI talk / Friends' Impressions of BYM / Following YM / Emily Provance: *workshop*; *other possible events* / Fox's Journal *extract* / GM / Fringe 2025 QMH arrangements, &c. / Woodbrooke courses & events / Christian Aid / Climate Justice news / Ecocide Bill update / Trans rights news / NFPB, Edinburgh, 28 June / Wiston weekend / Memorial Minute / Quaker Quicks / Financial commentary / AM May Minutes / ... &c.



"Friends on their way to yearly meeting; distractions of Derby Day", an 1860 drawing by J.J. Willson of Leeds. That year, the Epsom Derby was on Wednesday 24 May; this was the scene in Bishopsgate, near Devonshire House where Yearly Meeting took place. See page 3 for the Epistle from Yearly Meeting 2025; Friends' impressions begin on page 9.

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Saturday 21 June at the Community Hall, 75 High Street, East Linton EH40 3BQ, and online. It will be hosted by East Lothian Local Meeting. We will gather with refreshments at 10.30 am and start with all-age worship at 11.00.

The draft agenda is below; please let me know as soon as possible of any other items. In the afternoon, we will spend time together in a session led by members of East Lothian meeting on the theme *What gives me hope?*

All are welcome to the day or any part of it; we expect to finish by 3.30 pm. It is helpful to those planning the children's programme if you can tell us beforehand if you plan to bring children; email sesamclerk@gmail.com. You don't have to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends to join us.

Alastair Cameron
Clerk

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 6 May 2025
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Appointment of Elders for Meeting for Worship for Marriage* (2025/05/5.2
 2. *Funeral arrangements* (2025/05/06) refers)
4. Membership matters
 1. *Application for membership*
 2. *Transfer*
5. Matters from local meetings
 1. *Memorial minute: Andrew Farrar, Central Edinburgh*
 2. *Memorial minute: John Fox, Central Edinburgh*
 3. *Memorial minute: Margaret Paterson, Kelso* [see page 41]
 4. *Central Edinburgh: action on EACOP* [see Sesame 259, pages 26-29]
6. Community buildings
 1. *Warm space at Victoria Terrace*
7. Appointments: from Nominations Committee
8. Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 and Junior Yearly Meeting [see opposite & ff]
9. General Meeting matters
 1. *Report on the meeting in Aberdeen, 7 June* [see page 22]
 2. *Any other matters*
10. Reports and correspondence
 1. *Edinburgh 900 Faith & Belief Accords*
11. Closing minute

THE EPISTLE FROM BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING

*held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire,
and online, from 23 May to 26 May 2025*

Dear Friends everywhere, we send you our love and greetings.

Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a'n cyfarchion.

What is your message of peace for the world?

What brings you a sense of inner peace?

To explore these questions, around 1,000 Quakers met at Yearly Meeting this weekend as an all-age community. We are encouraged that for many this was their first time at Yearly Meeting. The contributions to our discernment from the thriving young people's programmes have lifted our hearts, as have the gurglings of the infant with us in our worship.

Recent Yearly Meetings have focused on Church Governance. We now see ways forward, as we develop structures that we trust will help our shared discernment. This year's agenda is firmly rooted in our historic peace testimony, and we have asked ourselves deep questions about what it means for us today. We have listened in hope, and have opened ourselves to new learning, trusting in the leadings of the Light.

We are reminded that the central message of the New Testament is one of love. We are called to challenge tyranny; and to love everyone, even those who do bad things.

This is an anxious time for the world, even more so now than when we met last year. We have been challenged to welcome, accept, and nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves and in others. We have also explored how we, as Quakers, address violence and conflict in our communities.

To help our discernment, we have seen a film about the different ways in which Friends are called to bear witness to our Peace Testimony. We have also heard prepared ministry from a number of Friends, including those who have seen violence and oppression at first hand while giving service in Palestine and Israel as human rights observers. Reflecting on what we hear and read about each day has inevitably stirred deep and painful emotions.

We have spent much time praying about the situation in Gaza. Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to power. We have done some heart-searching and some heart-breaking, and our discomfort contributed to deeply gathered worship. We have been moved by the Spirit to speak out. We urge Friends to read the full minute [*see page 5*], which has been written in love for all those affected.

This year's Swarthmore Lecture, *A Testimony of Community*, has nourished our discernment. We have spent time in worship considering how we live together in our various communities; there are many things we might do to build peace within them. The work begins by finding peace within ourselves.

The promptings of love and truth in our hearts are pushing us to step outside our privilege, comfort and security. Can we do this in a spirit of adventure and joy? How radical can we be while retaining tenderness and not doing harm?

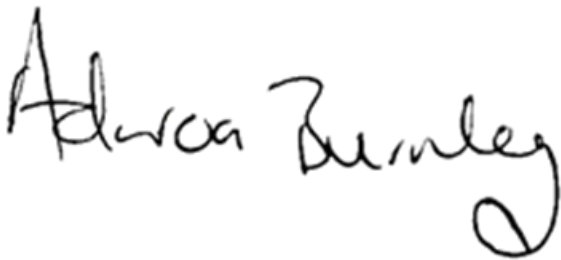
We each have a different appetite and capability for radical peace-making; we can all contribute.

We recognise that to secure lasting peace we must address the complex causes of conflict, including poverty and hunger, injustice and distrust, fear and dis-empowerment. To create a fairer world, we must get better at sharing. In doing this work we remember Jesus' advice to his disciples to be "as wise as serpents, as gentle as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

As a final shared activity, many of us who were in London have taken advantage of being together to stand in silent worship around Friends House. We held signs which had messages of hope for world peace on the outside and hopes for personal peace on the inside.

This Yearly Meeting has been one of great joy at meeting each other in the spirit, deep sorrow at conflict in the world, and determination to live out our Quaker witness.

Signed in, and on behalf of, Yearly Meeting



Adwoa Burnley, Clerk.

THE EPISTLE FROM JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

held at The Frontier Centre, Northamptonshire, 23-26 May 2025

To all Friends everywhere,

WE SEND LOVING GREETINGS from the Junior Yearly Meeting 2025, which was held at The Frontier Centre, Northamptonshire, from the 23rd to 26th of May. During our time together, we gathered as a community of 42 young Friends, six adult volunteers and four staff to discuss the theme of:

**"How do we as Quakers create the Peace that is needed
in ourselves and our communities?"**

The theme was at the heart of our Junior Yearly Meeting influencing our actions throughout. We found that peace begins with truly listening to one another. We created safe spaces where everyone felt valued, heard, and accepted.

We opened and closed each day in worship, grounding ourselves in silence and time to reflect. Our sense of community and acceptance allowed ministry to come from the heart and many young people felt comfortable to minister for the first time, and with a degree of openness that they had not felt before.

Our community was further enriched by sharing the site with the Young People @ Yearly Meeting (YP@YM), who joined us for several shared worship sessions that deepened our sense of connection across age groups.

We had plenty of opportunities to unwind and have fun throughout the weekend. Out-

ward bound activities at the Frontier Centre were a real highlight, including Raft Building, Kayaking, High Ropes, Bushcraft, and Abseiling. Our Saturday night disco will be fondly remembered as a joyful opportunity to let loose and celebrate together—complete with a menu of creatively named Quaker mocktails like “Peace on the Beach” and “A Margarita Fell”. Our community was greatly strengthened in free time, allowing people’s connection to form organically, through music, craft, conversation, and activities. In our joyous open-mic, Friends felt comfortable to share their eclectic talents, ranging from circus to barber shop — and everything in between.

Poignant and emotional moments were shared by our speaker, Mike Jackson who spoke on his experience in the LGSM (Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners) movement, challenging us to think about, protest and action. We were inspired by the influence of his work with peaceful protest. He showed us how simply standing in front of people and facilitating conversations has the power to break down prejudice and create space for peace and unison. His insights inspired us to see that protest can begin with something as simple as a conversation — and that it only takes two people talking to start making a difference.

Hannah Larn helped us to find our truths within ourselves and give us a deeper understanding of our own characteristics. Hannah made us think inwardly about our own strengths but also our own weaknesses. She discussed that in her experience, placing people with opposing views together, for a period of time, broke down barriers and made people see each other not as opponents, but one and the same— turning conflict into acceptance.

We were inspired by both speakers and overwhelmingly felt that despite being young “we still have skills and capacity to be the change we want to see.” Young Quakers are here and now, we are not just the future.

The bonds we have made with other young Friends are powerful. In a time of political conflict and lack of peace in wider communities, Junior Yearly Meeting is an event where there is a real sense of hope for the future. We invite all Quakers to carry this hope with them into their lives and their communities, knowing that this is a driving force for peace.

We want to end with a quote from our minute: “We will continue to strive to show love to everyone in our community that they may not see in other places, even those who we disagree with, and seek to find that of God in everyone.”

In friendship and peace,

Signed on behalf of Junior Yearly Meeting,
Hayden Kemp and Esme Roberts

Yearly Meeting Minute 30: Gaza

Our clerks have prepared the following statement on the current situation in Gaza drawing on our discernment earlier in our Yearly Meeting. We are deeply distressed by the conflict that we are praying over, and we have struggled with how to find unity. We are led to unite with this statement, as amended in our meeting.

“Fear is what happens in the absence of love.”

(Emily Provance, Swarthmore Lecture 2025)

“Radical peacemaking requires us to engage with and to acknowledge truth in all its discomfort, complexity and cruelty. Quakers historically have spoken truth to power. We need to heed the promptings of love and truth in our hearts and speak up now.

"Last year, Meeting for Sufferings minuted its alignment with the International Court of Justice rulings that the term apartheid was an accurate description of the situation in occupied Palestine and that there was a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza. Meeting for Sufferings felt compelled to speak out following decades of direct Quaker witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel.

"Since then, we have watched with horror as the Israeli government has deepened its collective punishment of Palestinians for the heinous, unjustified crimes of Hamas on 7 October 2023.

"Over the last three months, we have witnessed the deliberate mass starvation of a people and dismantling of almost all life-sustaining systems within Gaza. We have seen the forced movement of Palestinians and a stated intention to expel them from Gaza. We have heard Israeli government ministers incite hatred against and dehumanise Palestinians. We have heard language and witnessed actions that cannot be justified and strike at the core of our common humanity.

"In a world where we are seeing cases in many countries of outrageous inhumanity, dehumanisation and the cruel actions that follow from denying the worth and dignity of all, what is being done in Gaza is no less terrible for not being unique. Our long history of witness and peace work in Palestine and Israel gives us particular experience from which to speak on this issue. The fact that we are speaking about Gaza does not absolve us of our responsibility to learn about and respond to other atrocities around the world.

"We understand that genocide under international law must meet certain strict criteria. It means specific acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Genocide scholars are clear that genocide does not constitute one overwhelming, horrific act only, but is a process with many stages.

"With this in mind, and guided by the testimony and judgement of Palestinians, Israelis, and genocide and legal experts we look to and work with, we are therefore led to say that we believe that genocide and mass displacement are underway in the actions of the Israeli government and its military towards the population of Gaza, recognising that a legal judgement on this is a matter for the International Courts.

"We know that for many in the Jewish community, this word brings deep and real fear. Fear that the term 'genocide' fuels antisemitism, that it attacks their core Jewish identity and safety. That it reduces a complex, existential conflict to a simple story of 'good' and 'bad'. We acknowledge the historical weight of this term for Jewish people, set against centuries of anti-Jewish hatred and crimes, and the ultimate horror and genocide of the Holocaust. We acknowledge the history and present day reality of anti-Jewish hatred in the UK, a hatred that was exported world-wide by British and other European colonial powers. We acknowledge the historic and current role of the British state in creating the context of this conflict and the tragedy we see playing out now.

"Central to Quakerism is the experience that there is that of God in everyone. From this belief – that all people are unique, precious, children of God – all others follow. We therefore abhor racism, including antisemitism, in all its forms. We grieve the pain and fear that our friends in Jewish communities are experiencing at this time.

"We see and uphold those in Jewish communities and in Israel working for peace and justice for Palestinian people.

"And so, we cannot say clearly enough: it is this current Israeli government that we are led to say we believe is committing genocide. Jewish people are not committing genocide. The Israeli people are not committing genocide. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to exploit our words to incite, fuel, or commit anti-Jewish and antisemitic hatred or violence. We abhor, and will challenge, any attempt to use our words to question the existence of Israel or the Israeli people's right to live in peace and security.

"It is also a tenet of Quakerism that violence can never be the answer. That the means are just as important as the ends. This is our peace testimony that has led us for more than 350 years to eschew all war and all violence at all times. We cry out for the violence in Gaza to stop – for an end to the killing of Palestinians and for the Israeli hostages to be returned home. We cry out for Palestinians and Israelis to be safe and to live thriving, joyous lives in their homelands. Everyone deserves a place to live where they don't feel scared. Our long work for peace tells us that security for some bought with the insecurity of others tears at our collective humanity and is only ever temporary. Peace can never be brought about by the systematic oppression of others.

"We therefore use the word 'genocide' after deep discernment. We use this word with the aim of opening eyes, minds and hearts. We use this word in the deep hope that the actions it describes will stop."

We know that making a statement is not enough. We draw Friends' and meetings' attention to Meeting for Sufferings minutes S/11/04/4 from April 2011, which asks Friends throughout Britain Yearly Meeting to boycott settlement goods, until such time as the occupation is ended, and MfS/18/10/19 from October 2018, which asks BYM to avoid investing in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine.

We ask Friends and meetings to reach out in love to Jewish people and communities they have connections with, and to understand and learn about atrocities across the world.

We send this minute to Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and uphold them as they communicate this statement to partners working for peace in the region.

We send this minute to Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, and uphold them as they communicate this statement and seek to reassure our friends in the Jewish community and in other faiths of our continued support and love.

We hold in the light the people governing Israel and Palestine and pray that they are moved towards peace and compassion.

We uphold those in positions of power and pray for them as they "seek light on the road to peace."

On the same day as this minute was agreed, a letter, signed by 829 lawyers, legal academics and former judges, was sent to the Prime Minister, together with a memorandum on the UK's obligations under International Law. It calls for sanctions to be imposed on Israel and urges that consideration be given to suspending it from the UN, warning that failure to act would be incompatible with the UK's "fundamental international legal obligations". The text is at <https://lawyersletter.uk/>. (ED.)

Eyewitness stories from Israel and Palestine

Sunday 22 June 2025

Bellfield (small hall) – 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

Tea/coffee from 6.45pm for a 7pm start.

- *What is daily life under occupation really like?*
- *What can be done to promote a just peace in Israeli-occupied Palestine?*

Our speaker, Neil, recently returned from three months in Palestine and Israel as a human rights monitor with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

EAPPI was established following an appeal from church leaders in Jerusalem for an international presence, accompanying local people and communities, offering protective presence and witnessing their daily struggles and hopes. The programme is co-ordinated by Quaker Peace & Social Witness on behalf of 16 churches and NGOs in the UK and Ireland.

Neil was based in the Jordan Valley and witnessed many violations of human rights. His blogs,

www.eyewitnessblogs.com/i-am-frightened-and-have-to-treat-the-flags-like-i-treat-my-own-children

and www.eyewitnessblogs.com/education-under-attack

describe examples of harassment designed to intimidate and force innocent people to flee their homes.

He will join us to talk about daily life for Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank and tell the stories of some of the people he met. His presentation lasts about 30-35 minutes and he will answer questions afterwards. The presentation includes a short film about the history of Palestine/Israel and suggestions of positive actions that can be taken by people in the UK.

We warmly invite you to join us (and bring a friend)!

Anna Portaro, Cathy Holman, and Claire Chalmers

Portobello & Musselburgh Local Meeting

The Scottish Friend – May issue

All readers of *Sesame* should also receive *The Scottish Friend*, the General Meeting newsletter; if you do not, please contact the GM Administrator, Jane Booth, on 07747 396 456, or by email at scotfriends@gmail.com.

The latest issue includes updates on the work of the BDRC, articles on ecumenical activities by our Friends Mary Woodward and Kate Arnot, and a piece by Margaret Roy (West Scotland AM) provocatively entitled “The peace testimony is well out of date”, among much else of interest. – ED.

Britain Yearly Meeting 2025 – Impressions

Juliet Henderson, a Yearly Meeting regular, was present in person. She writes:

I CANNOT SAY ENOUGH how grateful I am to all Friends and staff who played a part in this year's BYM, that focused on our peace testimony, and to the wind of the Holy Spirit that guided me there once again. A spirit which '*flowed over and around us*' all weekend (Kate Arnot). Once again, attending BYM felt like spending time in the mothership for a deep recharging of my spiritual and activist Quaker batteries, or, as Mary Hughes puts it (Q.F. & P. 6.11), as important as '*going up to Jerusalem*'. It was a beautiful, astonishing, exhausting and sustaining experience during which about a thousand fellow Friends from Britain and around the world gathered in deep worship.

The first and second sessions began with words from BYM clerk, Adwoa Burnley, she wished were unnecessary: '*Be kind, not rude*'. Entitlement had seeped into one or two Friends' treatment of staff and it was time for plain speaking: a timely reminder that peace begins within us. Or, as our Friend from Kenya, Mercy Miroya, ministered: '*peace starts with me, I can then extend peace-making to my family, the nation and internationally – the three circles of concern*'. Extending this message to examine the darker forces that can propel our own behaviours, another Friend hoped we would all be uncomfortable and challenged thanks to BYM, alert to the cost of being a Quaker.

A video shown in the Saturday session gave rich examples of quiet, inward ways of building peace: activist engagement in peaceful protest, building communities to bridge divides, and the nitty-gritty work of those in central Quaker bodies standing next to those in power to encourage them to pause and consider alternatives. Yet the Truth is that peace is always '*the task that will never be done ... a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached*' (Sydney Bailey, Q.F.& P. 24.57). It has such gnarled, knotty roots in complex histories and arenas of power they cannot be disinterred, including today where the bottom line in world affairs is that '*everything is based on the possibility of slaughter*' (Richard Seebom, BYM 2025).

Pausing was among the themes present in Emily Provance's clear and powerful Swarthmore Lecture, 'Testimony of Community'; full of inspiring stories about the vocation of travelling in the ministry without home or possessions (other than a small rucksack of essentials). Living according to God this way has allowed her to appreciate the countless 'involuntary communities' we are all part of whether we acknowledge them or not, anywhere from on a bus ride to a brief encounter at a till. In all these 'communities' our work is simply to channel God's love for all people.

Living my everyday life through this prism of involuntary communities has already helped me to see past the personas we project onto others to mask our fears and insecurities. Such false selves isolate us in bubbles rather than connecting us as part of a mysterious, life-giving whole. I will long remember Emily's words: '*When there is tension in the room ... pause to remember the belovedness of all those there*'.

In line with the ethos and praxis of pausing at BYM, 'Pausing the Police' was the title of the Salter Lecture given by Quaker barrister, Abimbola Johnson. In this, she presented her closely-evidenced work to scrutinise and reform police racism. Quickness to action and response encourage an unstable culture, in which lying, violence and non-accountability go hand in hand; what is needed is *slowness* to action, space to let ethical leadership emerge, and a police force moving at the speed of trust. I chuckled when she named this approach as 'Quakerism in policing'.

Any account of BYM would be incomplete without a sense of the emotional and spiritual intensity of some sessions, particularly related to the minute on Gaza. A hallmark of BYM this intensity is amplified by (a) the number of Friends present upholding clerks, witnessing, and giving spoken ministry in response to draft minutes; (b) the humility, vulnerability, knowledge, acuity and powerful receiving and discerning muscles of the clerks; and (c) the amazing manner in which the clerks slowly braid together revisions of a draft minute as hours tick by until, finally, all present assent either with 'I hope so' or silence. Friends, it feels miraculous. A process that follows a discipline that realises such joyful, true outcomes – minutes that represent us individually and collectively and can hence bear witness to in our lives beyond BYM.

I would love to share so many more stories about BYM: the part of Young Friends and their vision of Quakerism that affords a doorway into fresher perspectives and practices as well as constructive critiques of older ways; the close encounters with old Friends and others whose take on BYM touch one and broaden the field; the stalls, talks and talk that are not part of the formal agenda; the embodied experience of again and again collectively gathering in stillness and silence waiting on God; the hat-honouring of one friend (not doffing their cap). ... Yet this must be enough.

Or rather, just one final example of the impressive ways in which Quakers honour their discernment and truths was in providing trans-inclusive toilets at Friends House. Advocacy, solidarity, and witness in action. [See page 37 for the varying reactions to this in *The Daily Telegraph and Pink News* – ED.]

Elizabeth Allen is another regular:

I DON'T LIKE the long train journey to London, but there is such a joy in being at Yearly Meeting, that I go anyway. It feels like coming home, the comfort of belonging, the opportunity to meet and greet old friends and make new ones. For me, Quaker community – the theme of the Swarthmore Lecture – is at the heart of who we are, enriching our worship and our sensitivity to the leadings of the spirit in our ministry and our witness. Almost two thousand of us were in Friends House and online; the epistles we received from Yearly Meetings across the world reminded us we are part of an even larger community, the world family of Friends.

When we gather, there is energy amongst us. It is there in the buzz of meaningful conversations over coffee, thoughts and ideas being shared and tested in small groups, and it is always present in our worship. From Friday to Monday afternoon, we have this precious time together: a safe space, worshipful

and expectant, where we are ready and willing to listen to the spirit. In our formal sessions, it is also a disciplined space: over the years we have learned the value of holding our meetings in right ordering, so that together we might discern what we are led to do.

Over the long weekend we have church affairs to attend to. The running of our Religious Society depends on the gift of service of many Friends, locally, at area meeting level, and nationally. At the start of Yearly Meeting, we appointed Friends for central service – not just a list of names, these are people willing to take on the work that enables our church to function. In our consumer society, which values things purchased, gifting so much of our time freely is counter-cultural, but Friends do it, and do it again. Working together worshipfully is part of our spiritual journey – and we are provided with valuable opportunities to do this.

We are a peace church, and learning to love justice and mercy is what peace demands. This year, Yearly Meeting was focused on peace: What it means to be radical peacemakers and how we nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves and others; Conflict in our communities; How our Quaker meetings build a culture of peace. Ministry reflected the two elements of Quaker peace building: we are prophets, and we are reconcilers, and we need both.

When I was growing up, we had an ancient Chinese proverb on the wall, copied out by my mother in her best calligraphy. It read:

“If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.”

The memory of this was jogged during Yearly Meeting by ministry on the importance of nurturing our inner peace, as peace starts with me, then spreads to those around me, family, community, nation.

From a practical perspective, we were reminded that we have the tools to help us be better peacemakers in our communities, in particular the Alternatives to Violence Project and Nonviolent Communication. We were told about the experimental Reconciliation Laboratory and how it deals with conflict by creating a safe space where folk can tell their stories and be heard by others – a way of holding differences in one space.

We heard ministry that expressed concern about increasing hostility and polarisation in our communities, anguish about current wars, and our distress that resolution of global conflicts is still based on acceptance of the possibility of slaughter. We shared our concern about the rise of the far right, here, in mainland Europe and in the USA, and heard suggestions that we need to join with others to respond to it.

Peace is not ours to command, we need to work at it, which involves going to the roots of conflict, understanding their complexity, and tackling them. This is hard at a personal level, so it is important to work with others. Peace-building involves being direct, telling the truth, naming the issue. We discerned that it was time to write a truthful statement about the current situation in Gaza. After several sessions of prayerful reflection and ministry from differ-

ent perspectives, and reminded by our clerk that we were seeking unity rather than uniformity, we agreed a detailed minute about the situation in Palestine, expressing our concern and belief that genocide and mass displacement are happening in Gaza, perpetrated by the Israeli government. We are the first church in Britain to state this, and it felt timely and right.

At midday on Monday, we held a silent vigil for peace, lining up on Euston Road outside Friends House with placards expressing our hope for peace. As a steward, my job was to hand out peace postcards to passers-by. It was encouraging that so many people accepted them willingly and that drivers of passing vehicles gave us an appreciative toot.

Returning home, I am mindful of Jesus' advice to his disciples, quoted in ministry and in the Epistle, "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves*" (Matthew 10:16).

This is my personal view of how the spirit moved amongst us at Yearly Meeting 2025. You can read the details of the business in the minutes, which are online [<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/yearly-meeting-2025-britain-yearly-meeting-minutes>] I close with this question, asked in one of the sessions – *In these times, when for many what we take for granted is at risk, are we too comfortable, do we need to share more, and be prepared to be uncomfortable?*

Martin Ward, is a former YM clerk, now serving on Agenda Committee:

The Spirit blows in the unplanned gaps; the unscripted voids in a Yearly Meeting schedule marked '*as led*'. It must be fifty years since my first Yearly Meeting, but the need for time and space to allow true discernment has been a constant, as has the work of clerks in managing the process while leaving outcomes open to divine guidance in the gathered meeting. When choosing topics for the agenda, Friends are always better at drawing connections than boundaries, making topics sometimes unmanageably vague. It is tempting to over-plan and for introductions to fill too much of the allotted time. I think this Yearly Meeting was a success partly because it avoided those pitfalls.

There was a clear focus on peace, short introductions to the main sessions, and efficient but unhurried handling of necessary business from Trustees and Meeting for Sufferings. That left enough space to come to conclusions on the situation in Gaza, an issue not explicitly on the agenda, but on which many Friends have strong and deeply personal feelings. The thoughtful statement which resulted was the product of careful drafting by a small group, but the meeting as a whole wrestled with it and improved the text sufficiently to be able to own it as part of a minute. It always takes time to hear from a range of voices, but that is essential if a meeting is to travel together and arrive somewhere different from where it started.

Other aspects of YM have changed dramatically. I remember Friends in the 1970s who refused to use the new-fangled microphones but could be heard clearly from the back of the gallery, at least by my young ears. YM is now much more inclusive, and complicated, and explanations take up much of the opening session. My most vivid impression when I first attended was the sudden silence descending on a thousand chattering Quakers as the clerks

processed up to the table. Friends then caught the habit of holding up their hands to request silence, and an unfortunate forest of outstretched arms was raised as the clerks mounted the steps to the platform at Exeter in 2001. The clerks no longer process. On the whole I prefer the recent informality, though an introduction about fire exits, toilets and mobile phones is less impressive. Yearly Meeting continues to evolve, with the significant change next year to a 'continuing Yearly Meeting', replacing Meeting for Sufferings and meeting four times a year. Perhaps we could call it Quarterly Meeting? An important consideration for any organisation is the balance of power between 'the centre' and 'the grassroots'. Meeting for Sufferings is a body of Area Meeting representatives, while YM is open to anyone. Representatives will be appointed still, but I am uneasy that their role is sometimes presented as promoting the central work to the grassroots. This feels to me the wrong way round.

When the question of future representation was raised I was moved to ask whether the list of representatives would still be published and whether representatives would be able to introduce themselves as such when giving their name and meeting before ministering. The response from the platform was that all Friends are equal in a meeting for worship for business. That is true, of course, but at the centre we appoint staff, clerks, elders and a pastoral care team (with different coloured sashes, which might have shocked YM 1976). In each case we hear their contributions in the light of the responsibilities with which they have been entrusted. I hope the same will apply to those Friends entrusted with representing their Area Meeting at a continuing YM. As George Fox said:

"At these meetings any of the members of the churches may come, if they please, and speak their minds freely, in the fear of God, to any matter; but the mind of each meeting therein represented is chiefly understood, as to particular cases, in the sense delivered by the persons deputed or chosen for that service."

Thank you to all who made YM 2025 possible – a super clerking team who sifted the disparate contributions to sessions into clear records of our discernment, the professional staff at Friends House, all those who introduced their topics and reports clearly and concisely, and all who participated faithfully whether in the flesh or online.

Portobello & Musselburgh Friends (and some from elsewhere) have provided brief reflections on the weekend, which **Cathy Holman** has passed on:

THIS WAS a very emotional BYM with deep ministry from Friends' personal experience, witness and family history. Months of hard work planning the agenda changed into the feeling of the Meeting of the need to minute our belief that genocide was taking place in Gaza. This took an enormous amount of discernment and time and the most amazing, and patient, clerking. Eventually the minute was good enough and the tried and trusted Quaker processes showed their historical validity. As well as much emotion (and some tedium), BYM enabled conversations with those I have met on courses, served with on committees, or travelled with; also time to talk to Friends I have never met before.

BYM is exhausting and I can no longer go to every session. Highlights are the

Swarthmore, with valuable insights, and the Salter Lectures, and I was very glad that the Salter was, again, held at Friends House. A truly gathered Meeting with the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.*

I WILL REMEMBER BYM 2025 for many things: the reports of the Fox Cubs and other children's groups; the idea of Quaker 'mocktails' from JYM, including the Margaret-a Fell; the incredible intensity of the silence at several points; the sight of those at the table conferring over the right wording for a minute, like the slowest-ever *University Challenge* team. When Adwoa Burnley as clerk asked was the Gaza minute 'good enough', I, along with others, was happy to say 'Hope so' in time-honoured Quaker fashion; but round the hall there was a scattering of Friends saying 'I hope *not*'. The day's timetable was speedily (and apparently seamlessly) re-arranged to allow us another period of time to work on it. We were reminded that unity is not necessarily unanimity, and eventually the minute was agreed.

I APPRECIATED *small things*. In the session 'We all make Yearly Meeting' I was moved by the Friend who said she found a small stone in her pocket at the first Quaker Meeting she attended. She has kept it there and it has helped ground her ever since. I was delighted to bump into Bridget Holtom who attended Portobello & Musselburgh for a time and now works for Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

AS SOMEONE ON HER FEET when the clerk invited people who felt they were new to Quakers to stand for welcome, I left BYM with a deepened sense of community, belonging and challenge. Emily Provance's ministry that we are *always* in involuntary and infinite community, that our choice is how we show up these communities, is a truth I suspect I'll carry in my heart for the rest of my life. The worship, discernment and witness I was part of underlined the challenge of faith in action. I know I'll need the company of Friends (and friends) to work out how my slow, silent steps behind the Green Spirits [*costumed figures at the Monday vigil*], to witness to the world we love and are destroying, can continue in my walk through daily life. I hope that in our togetherness and worship, I can find a way for my steps to be good enough and to uphold F/ friends in their journey too.

THIS WAS MY FIRST visit to BYM and, although it was curtailed for various reasons, I'm really glad I made the effort. I feel much better informed, and it was good to experience in person the Quaker process of debate and discernment.

I found it ... *Mysterious*

Culturally challenging

Intriguing

Engrossing

I suspect I will still be considering and analysing it for years to come.

* Last year Jeremy Corbyn was one of the two lecturers, and it was feared that Yearly Meeting might be labelled 'anti-Semitic' if he spoke at Friends House (despite the Salter Lecture's not being part of the YM programme) with possible adverse consequences for EAPPI, which Friends coordinate for Britain & Ireland. It was held instead at another venue nearby. – ED.

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING 2025 was for me uplifting, joyous, uncomfortable, spiritual and sociable. The Swarthmore Lecture was a highlight and gave me much to reflect on.

Session 2: Radical Peacemakers was a powerful lesson in discernment and minute writing, as I listened to ministry and watched a well-crafted minute emerge. We were reminded that to be a Quaker is to be a radical peacemaker. Friends wept during ministry, recognising the suffering and injustice in the world, asking for us to go further as a Society in condemning the behaviour of the Israeli government. Deep discernment and ministry followed; I felt held by the Quaker process and the feeling of the spirit moving among us. The recognition that there is a need to listen and recognise the views and fears of others is a powerful lesson for me, moving towards the discomfort with love and a hope that transformation will happen.

WHAT IMPRESSED ME was:

The deep discernment, especially over the Gaza item.

Some of the ministry, particularly on Monday morning.

The light-touch, humble, but incredibly strong clerking from a team that worked so well together.

The young people's epistle.

The last session, on Monday afternoon, when the children and young people joined us.

Knowing that I had many good friends around me but delighting in meeting some that I hadn't seen for a long time and having lovely conversations with folk I had never met before.

The way everything seemed to work so seamlessly – and much gratitude to all those behind the scenes who made that happen.

I WAS VERY MOVED by the last session on the Palestine minute and the beautiful Quaker clerking experienced not only by newer Friends and first time attenders at BYM, but by us all. I felt that Emily Provance's Swarthmore Lecture about 'Community' with its first-hand experience, spiritual searching, vulnerability and illuminating story-telling was a model of communication. And very touching to begin to see its influence on the way some Friends ministered/spoke in later sessions/events.

IT WAS INSPIRING and encouraging to feel part of the wider Quaker world, and to join in the shared process of worship and creative thinking. I found the work of writing the Minute about Israel/Palestine moving and impressive. It felt important to be present, but I was really pleased that it was possible to attend the final day online (as we couldn't stay in London the whole time): having been there for the start of the process, it was possible to hold on to the feeling of participation through to the final minute.

I REMAIN AWESTRUCK at the skill of the BYM clerks, but also the love and humility and grace expressed by so many of those working to help the Meeting work well. It was an exhausting weekend in many ways, includ-

ing mental exhaustion at times. Patience was required to navigate the complexity of the building, not to mention the business! I left feeling relieved that the way opened to allow such a powerful minute about Gaza and take that as having a lesson in faith in the process. We were reminded that perhaps we might not come to unity and I was prepared for that outcome. One thing I continue to reflect on is the thought that inaction, in the face of injustice, is itself a kind of action which, as choice in our lives ... contains the seeds of war. I appreciated a young adult's ministry that community-building time for all ages during BYM is valuable and merits attention.

MUCH OF THE EXPERIENCE of this year's YM will take a long while to process and incorporate into my life. I found being called to uphold all the business sessions very draining, so was not rushing around squealing and greeting friends old and new. As expected, I was deeply struck by Emily Provance's Swarthmore Lecture – and greatly encouraged by small conversations had with her in passing over the weekend. The thought, prayer, careful discernment and sheer hard work that went into crafting the statement on Gaza was immense – this is what Friends can do when they are attentive to the promptings of the Spirit. I was sorry to have to leave without hearing the minutes from all the other groups meeting over the weekend, but greatly heartened by the presence and contributions of Young Friends throughout. I was delighted to have some time with Sakari, representing Finland YM at BYM, with whom I'd spent a wonderful weekend at Finland's YM gathering the week before: on a much smaller scale, but also focusing on peace and being radical peacemakers.

With thanks to **Kate Arnot (SE); Alastair Cameron; Mary Jane Elton; Claire Chalmers; Harsinger Chisholm; Cath Dyer (F&P); Rosemary Hartill (CE); Cathy Holman; Chris Holman; Carol Jennings (SE); and Mary Woodward**

Following on from Yearly Meeting *Gaza*

“Making a statement is not enough” the minute says – for anyone wanting to DO something about the genocide, but unclear as to what, here are six suggestions by Oliver Robertson, head of witness and worship for Quakers in Britain:

1. **Write to your MP**

You can share the statement in minute 30, and request your MP writes to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, asking that the UK government:

- **Call for an immediate, permanent ceasefire and the return of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.**
- **Immediately ban all arms sales, direct and indirect, that may be used by the Israeli military in Gaza, including components for F-35 fighter jets.**
- **Call for unrestricted humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza to avert an imminent famine. The UK government should actively support and work**

with UNRWA to lead Gaza's aid efforts and call on the Israeli government to rescind its recent laws and attacks against the agency. The UK government should reject the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation model and demand unrestricted access for all aid providers based on established humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence.

- **Send a clear signal that the UK upholds international law** and its institutions by supporting investigations at the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court and enforcing ICC arrest warrants.
- **Suspend the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement (TPA)** in light of the Israeli government's genocide in Gaza and continued illegal occupation of Palestine. The TPA identifies "respect for human rights and democratic principles" as an "essential element" of the agreement. Suspending the agreement would halt the privileged trade terms established by the TPA, with trade between the countries (currently worth £5.8bn) continuing, but conducted via World Trade Organization rules.
- **Pass urgent legislation to ban all UK trade with and investments in Israeli settlements** and ban UK-based companies and financial institutions from engaging in business with settlements or their support structure, in light of the International Court of Justice's 2024 advisory opinion determining that the occupation of Palestine is illegal.
- **Immediately recognise the state of Palestine** and challenge all attempts to encourage and implement the ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

2. Check whether your money is supporting genocide and occupation

Resources to help you ensure it is **not** doing so are:

- The **Boycat app** (downloadable from <https://www.boycat.io/> to your phone) lets you scan products in shops to see if the company selling them is involved in activities supporting the occupation.
- Searchable tools and databases by AFSC (American Friends Service Committee – <https://investigate.afsc.org/>) and **Who Profits** (an Israeli human rights organisation – <https://www.whoprofits.org/>), show if investments are going to companies profiting from the occupation.
- The **Palestine Solidarity Campaign** has information on Barclays Bank at <https://palestinecampaign.org/boycott-barclays-bank/>.
- Advice on contacting councillors about local authority investments is at <https://palestinecampaign.eaction.online/councilloraction>.
- Information for sharing with other churches is at <https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/category/taking-action/investing-for-peace/>

3. Share this discernment and speak out

Material on protests and vigils is at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/advice-on-attending-protests-in-palestine-and-israel-2023-11-09>

and <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/organising-a-vigil>.

A WhatsApp group has been set up for Friends wishing to attend

events together – please email qpsw@quaker.org.uk for details.

4. Reach out to your neighbours

The statement speaks of the pain the discernment may cause to some in Jewish communities; information on interfaith work is at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/committees/quaker-committee-for-christian-and-interfaith-relations>;

to get involved, email faithrelations@quaker.org.uk.

5. Learn about genocide prevention and atrocities elsewhere

Two of the many organisations working to share prevention information and resources are **The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention** and **Genocide Watch**. Their websites – at <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/> and <https://www.genocidewatch.com/> – have information on other atrocities around the world. The Lemkin Institute uses broader criteria for what constitutes genocide than those in the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

6. Build peace in your community

Quakers in Britain has a Peacebuilding in Britain team to support local work; email peacebuildinginbritain@quaker.org.uk to contact it.

[From <https://www.quaker.org.uk/blog/what-you-can-do-to-help-stop-the-genocide-in-gaza>]

The Swarthmore Lecture

You can watch, or re-watch, Emily Provance's Swarthmore Lecture at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkGD_7dacGM

Emily is leading a series of workshops exploring the theme of Quaker community – see opposite.

There is an interview with her (recorded in advance of Yearly Meeting) at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fHWkmcq5TU>;

and Marilyn Higgins's report of Emily's previous workshop in Edinburgh (on 3 July 2022, as mentioned by Zoe Prosser opposite) was in *Sesame* 243.

The Salter Lecture

The lecture itself can be watched at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P-1XNpRPhQ&list=PLPeUpt2GsDX6nWJ3yx1SQhVxu3Ff9iWE6&index=1>

as can several other Salter Lectures from recent years (except for last year's, by Paul Ingram and Jeremy Corbyn MP, which is at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBqfiwrs-HE&t=632s>).

There is information about this year's lecturer, Abimbola Johnson, at

<https://quakersocialists.org.uk/2025/05/18/salter-lecture-2025-pausing-the-police-by-abimbola-johnson/>

Session introductions – prepared ministry, and the video on radical peace-making – as well as the clerks' readings of the YM and JYM epistles, are at

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPeUpt2GsDX4KkNOIoAU0mrCEdoPPNVls>

The Meaning of Community: Exploring the 2025 Swarthmore Lecture

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL
Saturday 12 July: 10.00 am – 3.00 pm

This workshop, led by Emily Provance, builds on the themes of her 2025 Swarthmore Lecture. Throughout the day, Emily will guide participants in exploring the meaning of Quaker community and its central role in Quaker theology and spiritual life.

In her lecture, Emily examines the challenges of living and working within a community—especially when it is not one we have chosen. Drawing on books of discipline from across the theological spectrum and the global Quaker community, she offers a Quaker testimony of community. This workshop will continue that exploration, creating space for collective reflection and discussion.

Tea and coffee will be provided but please bring your own lunch.

Only 20 places are available at this event.

The cost for the day is £40 – book at
<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/the-meaning-of-community-exploring-the-2025-swarthmore-lecture-edinburgh/>

Zoe Prosser adds:

Emily is an American Friend who is travelling in the ministry; you can find out more about her experience and interests here

<https://quakeremily.wordpress.com/about-emily/>

and her travelling minute from Fifteenth Street Monthly Meeting is at

<https://quakeremily.wordpress.com/about-emily/the-travel-minute/> .

She has a particular interest in building community and supporting changing Quaker meetings. She has experience of both programmed and unprogrammed worship, and her experience of American meetings is a fascinating lens through which we can explore our Scottish ways of being Quaker together. I have enjoyed attending her workshops and chats immensely, she often “opens a way” in my thinking that I had not explored before.

She came to Scotland a few years ago and those Friends who were lucky enough to meet her (in Central Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness) found her workshops and chats interesting and helpful.

She will be available to Friends in Scotland from **Saturday 12 July through to 31 July**. Please could you contact me in the first instance if you are interested in booking her; I want to put together an itinerary of visits that makes sense for her time and travel.

Zoe Prosser – email: ZoeP@quaker.org.uk

(Zoe Prosser is the Quakers in Britain Local Development Worker for Scotland)

Violent Death of a Persecutor

Fox's account of the death of Godfrey Clarke JP, the particulars of which may not have been as grotesque as he was led to believe (see Sesame 259) might be thought to show distasteful satisfaction at the magistrate's undignified and painful end, as he supposed it to have been. An essay by Naomi Pullin of the University of Warwick, 'Providence, Punishment and Identity Formation in the Late-Stuart Quaker Community, c.1650–1700', considers the importance of such stories in strengthening Friends' resilience in the face of persecution, see <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/83262/14/WRAP-providence-punishment-late-community-Pullin-2016.pdf>

Another use – “to threaten disaster to persecutors” – is stressed by Rosemary Moore in The Light in Their Consciences; Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666 (2000, revised 2020):

It was not until the Protectorate came to an end in 1659 that Quakers found a clear case of the intervention of the Lord on behalf of his people. The Protectorate government had persecuted the Children of Light, and it had fallen, so the governments that succeeded were warned not to go down the same path. It was common practice in the seventeenth century to collect “Examples” of the fate of wicked people, and about this time Friends began to do the same. The first collection was published in 1659 in a pamphlet by Edward Billing. He had found forty-two Examples, and he appended a further list provided by his friend Humphrey Smith “that he was an eye-witness of”. Also in 1659, Alexander Parker wrote to Margaret Fell about someone who had disturbed meetings. “Wicked Cumberland the common disturber is forced to fly for debt, and shut up his shop ... and thus God blasts his enemies and confounds the devices of the wicked and brings them to naught.”

The practice of collecting such examples gathered pace, and continued until 1701.

Like Godfrey Clarke (and Geoffrey Shakerley – see Sesame 258) Thomas Robinson was a Royalist who was rewarded at the Restoration regardless of his fitness or otherwise for the office of magistrate. His fate overtook him on a day he had planned to harass dissenters ...

[I]N CORNWALL there was one Colonel Robinson, a very wicked man, one who had forsaken the nation before the King came in, for ravishing a woman, who after the King came in was made a Justice of [the] Peace and became a cruel persecutor of our Friends, and sent many to prison. And hearing that they had some little liberty through the favour of the gaoler to come home sometimes to visit their wives and children, at the Assizes he came and made a great complaint to the judge against the gaoler and Friends; whereupon the gaoler was fined a hundred marks and Friends were kept very strictly up for a while. And the week after he returned from the Assizes he sent to a neighbour justice to desire him to go a fanatic-hunting with him. And the day that he intended and was prepared to go a fanatic-hunting, he sent his man about with his horses, and he walked afoot from his dwelling-house to a tenement, where his cows and dairy were kept and where his servants were milking. And when he came there, he asked for his bull, and the servants said they had stopped him into the field because he was unruly amongst the cows, and hindered their milking. So he went into the field to his bull, and having formerly accustomed himself to play with the bull, he began to fence with his staff at him.

And the bull snuffed at him and passed a little back from him, and then turned upon him again and fiercely run upon him, and struck his horn into his thigh and so tore up his thigh to his belly, and heaved him up upon his horns and threw him over his back. And when he fell, he gored him with his horns and would run them into the ground in his rage and violence, and roared and licked up his master's blood. And the maid-servant hearing her master cry, came running into the field; and came to the bull and took him by the horns to pull him off from her master; but the bull gently put her by with his horns, and still fell a-goring of him with his horns and licking up of his blood. And then she run and got some carpenters and other people that were at work not far off to come and rescue her master. But they could not all beat off the bull till they brought mastiff dogs, upon which the bull fled in great rage and fury. And after, his sister came and she said unto him, 'Alack, brother, what a heavy judgement is this that is befallen you!' And he answered, 'Ah, sister, it is a heavy judgement indeed. Pray let the bull be killed and the flesh given to the poor.' And they carried him home, but he died soon after. And the bull was grown so fierce that they were forced to shoot him with guns, for none could come near him to kill him.

Thomas Robinson was M.P. for Helston, and so is there is a short biography of him at <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/robinson-thomas-1608-65>

It echoes the main details of Fox's story. Robinson himself said he had been "fourteen years beyond the seas, doing all he could for the Restoration" – which, if true, would mean he had started even before Charles I's final defeat – but there was indeed a rape charge hanging over him, and he remained in exile abroad for some months after Charles II's return to England in May 1660. (He claimed the charge was political, and would have been dropped had he agreed to serve the Commonwealth in Ireland.) His persecution of "fanatics" included all nonconformists, many of whom, like Fox, saw his death, which occurred on 12 August 1665, as divine punishment. Six years later, "an old woman, said to be either a Presbyterian or a Baptist, was tried at the Cornish assizes for bewitching the bull." Like most witchcraft trials at Launceston, it ended in acquittal; she had also been accused of hindering the English fleet in the war against the Dutch, and causing the barrenness of the Queen. The chief evidence was that cats had been seen "dancing in the air" near her house. A mark was two-thirds of a pound – the fine imposed on the indulgent gaoler amounted to £66 13s 4d, therefore.

THE BOOK OF MEMBERS & ATTENDERS

lists everyone known to be associated with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Scotland, giving their home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers. Within the four Area Meetings, names are grouped alphabetically under the meeting with which the person is most associated. As a **CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT** it is available only to those included in it; it is assumed *Sesame* readers have access to it.

General Meeting for Scotland: Aberdeen, 7 June

75 participants (69 Friends, five Attenders and one visitor) were at General Meeting: 46 online, and 29 in person at the Meeting House, 98 Crown Street.

Dates of meetings

The dates (all Saturdays) and host AMs for General Meeting in 2026/27 were agreed as follows; to be used for QiS meetings if transition occurs:

7 March	2026	West Scotland AM (<i>already agreed</i>)
6 June		East Scotland AM
19 September		North Scotland AM
7 November		South East Scotland AM
6 March	2027	West Scotland AM

Trustees Annual Report & Accounts for 2024

Robin Waterston, clerk of General Meeting Trustees, spoke to the report. The accounts show that income in the year was £30,520 and expenditure £24,452, giving a surplus of £6,068; the balance at the end of the year was £49,554 – more than the reserve policy requirements. Since additional funding could be needed for the transition to Quakers in Scotland, it had been felt this was justified. It was agreed on the recommendation of Trustees that the quota from AMs for 2025 should be reduced from £16,000 to £12,000, and that the contribution to BYM for the Parliamentary Engagement Officer's post be increased to £6,500.

Families weekend

Mary Troup, children and young persons advocate, reported on the Families Weekend held 2-4 May 2025 at the Atholl Centre in Pitlochry.

Transition to Quakers in Scotland

General Meeting received our minute 2025/05/09 [see pages 49-50].

The transition of General Meeting for Scotland to Quakers in Scotland was agreed. GM clerks were appointed to serve as clerks designate of QiS until the end of 2025; General Meeting for Scotland will be called for 20 September, but then **laid down** and Quakers in Scotland will formally hold its first meeting. Half Yearly Meeting for North Britain, established in 1786, became General Meeting for Scotland in 1807. We are now at the next stage in our history and evolution.

GM minute 25/06/09 was sent to the Recording Clerk and Meeting for Sufferings.

Appointments

Among a number of appointments, **Mary Woodward** was re-appointed to the Ecumenical Officers' Forum of Scottish Christian Forum, to serve for a second triennium, 1/07/2025 – 30/06/2028.

Reports

Elaine Miller's report of **Meeting for Sufferings** in March, of which she gave a verbal summary at the last General Meeting, is in the latest issue of *The Scottish Friend* (see page 8).

Carolyn Burch, co-convenor of the **Parliamentary Engagement Working**

Group (PEWVG), spoke to its written report, which gave updates on current work, including the consequences for Scottish Quaker advocacy of the police raid on Westminster Meeting House in March; a letter to the First Minister about the new Programme for Government; meetings with party manifesto writers for the 2026 Scottish election; and Peacebuilding and Peace Education (including a report on IDEAS – the International Development Education Association Scotland). Richard Raggett (the other co-convenor) had led the Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament on 13 May [see page 35]; this was the day the Assisted Dying Bill was introduced. His message about honesty and integrity in listening and speaking and finding kinder ground had proved timely, and was referenced in the debate.

The report included a request, to which Richard spoke, for extra funding for Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) which is the PEWVG's 'main ally for general advocacy for climate action'. GM agreed, as asked, to give £500; SCCS is organising a mass lobby of MSPs, on Thursday 18 September at Holyrood and on Friday 19 September in local constituencies, at which voters meet their representatives to explain to them in their own words why meaningful, rapid climate action is so important to them.

Kate Arnot gave a brief report on **Faith in Community Scotland**.

Mary Woodward reported on **Finland Yearly Meeting**, 16-18 May.

Wiston Lodge weekend, 5-7 September

The Meeting was reminded that this event is open to all Friends and Attenders in Scotland – see page 40.

Donald Trump

It was agreed in March that an informal group be convened on responding to a potential visit to Scotland by President Trump later this year. The group has been drafting a letter of appeal in conjunction with Scottish ecumenical and interfaith groups. Susan Mitchell (WSAM) gave an update.

Local Development Worker – Priorities for 2026

The current priorities for Zoe Prosser's work are:

1. *Continue to strengthen and develop support for role holders.*
2. *Supporting Quaker communities to be loving, inclusive and all age.*
3. *Pointing the way to information about available resources and materials, including videos and non-traditional resources, to help Quaker Meetings and role-holders identify what they need, and developing and creating further resources where there is a need.*
4. *Supporting the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group to work for change.*

Reviewing them starts now; priorities for 2026 will be set in November.

Yearly Meeting

Friends and meetings were asked to send the Clerk, *before the end of June*, ideas for suggestions to YM Agenda Committee for BYM 2026.

The next (and last) General Meeting will be at Perth on 20 September.

[Notes prepared by the Editor, based on the Minutes]

Fringe 2025: Meeting House arrangements

As in 2024, in late July and August this year we will be giving over Edinburgh Meeting House to C Venues, to run it as a venue on the Festival Fringe. They will be using the Hall, the Meeting Room and the Bow Room as performance spaces, and they may run a cafe in the foyer.

Please note that between **SUNDAY 20 JULY** and **SUNDAY 31 AUGUST** therefore:

- The **9.30 am Meeting for Worship** on Sundays will be **ONLINE ONLY**.
- We will have **REDUCED SPACE in the Meeting Room** for Meeting for Worship on Sundays at 11.00 am: a square of roughly two-thirds of the room. **Tea & coffee afterwards** will be served in the Meeting Room rather than the Hall.
- There will be **NO soup and bread & cheese lunches** after Meeting. The last one will be on **13 JULY**; they will resume on **7 SEPTEMBER**.
- **Midweek Meeting** on Wednesdays is likely to be at a **CHANGED TIME** (unknown as we go to press – yet to be agreed with C Venues). It will revert to 12.30 – 1.00 pm on **3 SEPTEMBER**. The Meeting House website, <http://www.equaker.org.uk/>, will show the time of meetings in the Fringe period, or you can contact the office (*see below*).
- There will be **NO ACCESS TO THE AM LIBRARY** during these six weeks.
- The **Meeting House office staff** will be working, and contactable by email (office@equaker.org.uk) and telephone (**0131 225 4825**) – but dropping in on them in person is **NOT** recommended.

Fringe Events

Majk Stokes is performing his show *Songs for the 2020s: 2025 Remix* from Monday 4 August to Friday 8 August, at **3.00 – 4.00 pm**, at **Venue 197** (St Vincent's Chapel, St Vincent Street, EH3 6SW – on the New Town/Stockbridge border). Tickets (from <https://www.edfringe.com/tickets>) are **£8** (£6 concessions). More information at his website, <http://www.majk.co.uk/>.

Adam Holmes will also be appearing on the Fringe (*and at Wiston Lodge, 1-2 August*); see <https://www.adamholmesmusic.co.uk/> or Facebook for details.

At **Words & Actions for Peace** (58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 1ST) two exhibitions are planned: **BEYOND HUMAN RIGHTS**, a 'mixed-media exhibition with music and poetry' and **NOT IN MY NAME**, 'portraits of quiet resistance to war fever, by painter Phoebe Ryrkro' – more information will be at <https://www.securescotland.scot/event-list> nearer the time.

Words & Actions will be a '**Festival/Fringe Respite Space**' for the duration: somewhere you can get a friendly chat, free WiFi, a cuppa, books to browse and a sit-down, without it costing you: a chance to tune in to peace & hope!

Woodbrooke Courses: July – September

UNLESS MARKED OTHERWISE, events are online. Many are FREE or ‘pay as led’. It is necessary to book (at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>) as places are limited. If a price is shown, it is the **standard** fee, and a **50 % discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35.

Business Method Surgery for Clerks and Elders

Tuesday 1 July, 19:30-21:00

*[One of Woodbrooke’s staff tutors, an experienced clerk and elder, will be on hand to listen and help find solutions. All are passionate about helping meetings ensure this deeply spiritual process runs smoothly. Sessions are held on the first Tuesday of every other month, so next on **2 September** and then on **4 November**. It is not a drop-in but you can book right up to the start of the session at 7.30 pm.]*

A Short Guide to Stilling the Mind

Wednesday 2 July, 17:30-18:30 BST

Diana Lampen

People Need People: Practicing Possibility

£48

5 sessions: Thursdays, 3 – 31 July, 19:00-21:00 BST

Emily Stewart

What Happens When We Worship Online?

£48

4 sessions: Thursdays, 3 – 24 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

Simonne Wood

The Meaning of Community: Exploring the 2025 Swarthmore Lecture

£40

[IN-PERSON WORKSHOP]

Bristol Redland Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road,, Bristol BS6 6JE

Saturday 5 July, 10:00-15:00 BST

Emily Provance

Moved To Speak by the Spirit?

£72

– Theology From Our Experience of Quaker Worship

6 sessions: Tuesdays, 8 July – 12 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

Rhiannon Grant

Property Review and Renewal: Current Situation

Tuesday 8 July, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Are Quakers a Radical Faith? Fired by the Spirit

Wednesday 9 July, 18:30-20:30 BST

Imi Hills

Facilitating and Feeding Back as an Elder

£20

2 sessions: Wednesdays, 9 & 16 July, 19:00-21:00 BST

Elizabeth Bayliss, Elize Sakamoto

Climate Justice As Radical Peacemaking

Thursday 10 July, 18:30-20:30 BST

Peter Lux, Andrew Metheven, Mitzi Jonelle Tan, Kim Harrison

Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant

Thursday 10 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

Paulette Meier

The Meaning of Community: Exploring the 2025 Swarthmore Lecture

£40

[IN-PERSON WORKSHOP – SEE PAGE 19]

Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL.

Saturday 12 July, 10:00-15:00 BST

Emily Provance

Meet the Students: David Tatum

Monday 14 July, 19:00-20:00 BST

David Tatum, Rhiannon Grant

Exploring Quaker Business Method**£10**

Wednesday 16 July, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Enquiring Into: Accepting the Fact of Death

Thursday 17 July, 19:00-21:00 BST

Rosie Carnall

Space for Joy

Saturday 19 July, 10:00-12:00 BST

Till flo* Krapoth, Susan Groves

The Teachings of Buddha and Jesus**£48**

4 sessions: Mondays, 21 July – 11 August, 19:00-21:00 BST

Benjamin Wood

Texts of Terror: Healing the Bible With Queer Theology

Tuesday 22 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

Revd Fr Kieron Rowley

Spiritual Wholeness**£54**

4 sessions: Wednesdays, 23 July – 13 August, 18:30-20:00 BST

+ a follow-up session on Wednesday 14 January 2026

Kate McNally

Isaac Penington and Early Quaker Spirituality

Thursday 24 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

Lily Chadwick, Phil Dahl

Story Weaving: Rejoicing in God's Continuing Creation

Saturday 26 July, 11:00-12:30 BST

Till flo* Krapoth

Simplifying Our Quaker Structures

Wednesday 30 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

[Speakers to be confirmed]

Exploring Our Spiritual Gifts**£36**

3 sessions: Thursdays, 31 July – 14 August, 19:00-20:00 BST Wendy Hampton

George Fox: Nontheist Quaker Perspectives

Thursday 31 July, 19:00-20:30 BST

Tim Regan, David Boulton, Lily Chadwick

Quakerism: A Mystical Church

Monday 4 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

An Angelic Trouble-Maker: The Life of Bayard Rustin**£48**

5 sessions: Thursdays, 7 August – 4 September, 19:00-20:30 BST Xavier Johnson

Essentials of Quaker Eldership: Spoken Ministry

Monday 11 August 19:30-21:00 BST

[Facilitation provided by staff tutors from Quaker Life (BYM) or the Woodbrooke team.]

The Joseph Rowntree Society Centenary Celebration:***Introduction to Rowntree Histories***

Monday 11 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

Nick Smith, Lily Chadwick

Property Review and Renewal: Financial Considerations

Tuesday 12 August, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Conversations With Our Children: Diversity

Wednesday 13 August, 20:30-21:30 BST

Rachael Swancott

Finding the Words: How To Explain Being a Quaker

3 sessions: Thursdays, 14 – 28 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

Simonne Wood

Finding the Blessed Community

Monday 18 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

Mark Russ

Caring for the Earth Through Parables

Tuesday 19 August, 19:00-20:30 BST

Revd Fr Kieron Rowley

A Meeting of Quaker and Buddhist Mystics: Thomas R. Kelly and Shinran

Tuesday 26 August, 19:00-20:15 BST

Satya Robyn

Exploring Threshing and Clearness for Quaker Role Holders**£15**

Wednesday 27 August, 19:00-21:00 BST

Rachael Swancott

Multiple Religious Belonging**£72**

6 sessions: Mondays, 1 September – 6 October, 19:00-20:30 BST Rhiannon Grant

Spiritual Practice: Grounding Us and Our Work**£72**

6 sessions: Mondays, 1 September – 6 October, 19:00-21:00 BST

Deborah Shaw, Wendy Hampton

Business Method Surgery for Clerks and Elders

Tuesday 2 September, 19:30-21:00 BST

[See note for session of 1 July]

Wisdom From Middle Earth**£60**

6 sessions: Tuesdays, 2 September – 7 October, 19:00-20:30 BST Benjamin Wood

Creating a Nonviolent World**£86**

6 sessions: Wednesdays, 3 September – 8 October, 19:00-21:15 BST

Özge Altinkaya, Jenny Tipping

THE GEORGE RICHARDSON LECTURE:***George W. Taylor, a Practical Antislavery Man***

The Lecture is jointly organised by the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies
and the Quaker Studies Research Association.

Wednesday 3 September, 19:30-21:00 BST

Julie Holcomb

Essentials of Quakerism**£25**

4 sessions: Thursdays, 4 – 25 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Wendy Hampton

Story Weaving: New Symbols Are Being Born

Friday 5 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Till flo* Krapoth

Spiritual Friendship Groups: A Practical Introduction**£54**

4 sessions: Mondays, 8 – 29 September, 19:00-20:45 BST

Simonne Wood

From Spontaneity To Structure: The Evolution of Quaker Meeting Systems**£48**

4 sessions: Tuesdays, 9 – 30 September, 19:30-20:30 BST

Lily Chadwick

Lifting Our Hearts Around Money**£48**

5 sessions: Tuesdays, 9 September – 7 October, 8:30-20:00 BST

Katie Barron

The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path To Unlock Creativity**£140**

12 sessions: Wednesdays, 10 September – 26 November, 19:00-21:00 BST/GMT

David Curtis

Whose Stories Are Missing From Quaker Archives?

Wednesday 10 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Mary Crauderueff

Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant

Thursday 11 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Paulette Meier

Simpler Meetings: Starting With Fundamentals**£12.50**

Thursday 11 September, 19:00-21:15 BST Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Lectio Divina: Reading Rufus Jones With the Heart**£60**

6 sessions: Fridays 12 September – 17 October, 19:00-21:00 BST Barbara Birch

Disrupting Injustice: Peacebuilding in Action

Tuesday 16 September, 18:30-20:00 BST

Lucy Roberts, Ella Asheri

Property Review and Renewal: The Ministry of Our Meeting

Tuesday 16 September, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

Clerking Quaker Discernment Online

Wednesday 17 September, 19:00-21:00 BST

Christine Habgood-Coote

Enquiring Into: Doubt and Questioning

Thursday 18 September, 19:00-21:00 BST

Rosie Carnall

Hope as a Practice**£54**

4 sessions: Thursdays, 18 September – 9 October, 19:00-20:30 BST

+ a follow up session on Thursday 8 January 2026

Ella Asheri, Simonne Wood

Simpler Meetings: Simpler Roles Revisited**£12.50**

Thursday 18 September, 19:00-21:15 BST Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

The Creation of Modern Quaker Diversity, 1830-1937**£68**

6 sessions: Thursdays, 18 September – 23 October, 19:00-20:30 BST

Lily Chadwick

Voices of the Earth* [RESIDENTIAL]*£295**

Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH

The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 19 September

and ends at lunchtime on Sunday 21 September. Philip Gross, Zélie Gross

To book, please email info@glenthorne.org or call Glenthorne on 015394 35389.***Community Surgery Hour for Treasurers***

Monday 22 September, 12:30-14:00 BST

Oliver Waterhouse

Quaker Studies Research Gathering* [RESIDENTIAL]*£725**

Gladstone's Library, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire, N. Wales CH5 3DF

The gathering will begin with lunch on Monday 22 September and end with lunch on Thursday 25 September.

Rachel Kirkwood, Erica Canela, Rhiannon Grant, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

The Quaker Spiritual Path: From Discomfort to New Life**£48**

Monday 22 September – Sunday 19 October 2025 on Moodle

+ 2 Zoom sessions on Thursdays, 2 & 16 October, 19:30-20:30 BST

Stuart Masters

Quakers and Anabaptists: A Shared History of Nonviolence

Wednesday 24 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Ella Asheri

Simpler Meetings: Starting on Simpler Roles**£12.50**

Thursday 25 September, 19:00-21:15 BST Alistair Fuller, Jonathan Carmichael

Spirit-Led? Faith and Activism: A Quaker Perspective

Tuesday 30 September, 19:00-20:30 BST

Ella Asheri, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Bursary help with the cost of participating in events may be available; speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com for further information.

The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in Sesame.

Christian Aid News

Myanmar Earthquake Appeal

In the first month of this appeal, more than £1.5 million was raised in Scotland. As a member of the DEC [*Disasters Emergency Committee*], Christian Aid is responding through our local partners, providing food, shelter, clean water, hygiene and dignity kits. Donations can be made at:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/myanmar-earthquake-appeal>

Prayers for Peace in the Middle East – Monthly Online Meeting

Join Christian Aid and its partners at 7.00 – 8.00 pm on the 24th of each month as they continue to pray for peace in the Middle East. The meeting is now on Teams; sign up at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>

On 24 June, we will welcome **Salim Munayer**, Founder and Senior Consultant of the reconciliation organisation Musalaha (see <https://musalaha.org/>).

Restore Campaign

Tackling the debt and climate crises through Christian Aid's Restore Campaign is one way we can join in God's work to restore creation and see the flourishing of all people. Find out more at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/campaigns/restore-campaign-explainer>

and sign the petition to the UK Government at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/restore-campaign-launch-petition>.

Creative for Climate Justice

We are inviting schools to be part of our Creative for Climate Justice exhibition in the Scottish Parliament later this year. Our aim is to amplify the creative voices of young people to encourage decision makers in Scotland to keep the climate justice promises they have made. More details at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/creative-climate-justice-scotland-resources>,

or you can email edinburgh@christian-aid.org.

Going Bananas – new report

Latin America and the Caribbean are responsible for 80 % of banana exports supplying supermarkets around the world, but 60 % of the most suitable banana-growing areas there could be lost by 2080 due to rising temperatures and extreme weather. After wheat, rice and maize, bananas are the world's fourth most important food crop; more than 400 million people rely on them for 15 % to 27 % of their daily calories.

Going Bananas: How climate change threatens the world's favourite fruit details the threats, and features first-hand accounts from banana growers who work with Christian Aid partner organisations. It can be downloaded as a 22-page PDF at

<https://mediacentre.christianaid.org.uk/going-bananas-new-report-shows-how-climate-change-threatens-the-worlds-favourite-fruit/>

Climate Justice and the Rule of Law – recent news items

THE ANNUAL REPORT of Amnesty International, *The State of the World's Human Rights, April 2025* (which can be downloaded as a 410-page PDF at <https://amnesty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/24-April-en-screen.pdf>), says that “A multiplicity of assaults – against human rights accountability, against international law, and against the UN – have been but some of the hallmarks of the first 100 days of US President Donald Trump's ‘reign’ in 2025”: growing inaction over the climate crisis, violent crackdowns on dissent and a mounting backlash against the rights of migrants, refugees, women, girls and LGBTQ+ people can be traced to the so-called Trump effect, undermining decades of progress and emboldening authoritarian leaders.

LACK OF PROPER FINANCIAL REGULATION has enabled the City of London to become “Europe's stronghold for financing fossil fuel expansion” according to Lucie Pinson, the director of the campaign group Reclaim Finance. Banks based there have put more than \$100 billion into companies developing ‘carbon bombs’: huge oil, gas and coal projects each of which could in its lifetime emit more than a gigaton of CO₂. A study by the Leave It in the Ground Initiative (see <https://www.leave-it-in-the-ground.org/>) found that nine banks are involved in financing the companies responsible for at least 117 carbon bomb projects in 28 countries between 2016 (the year the Paris Agreement came into effect) and 2023. The details are set out at

<https://www.leave-it-in-the-ground.org/resources/uk-involvement-in-overseas-carbon-bombs/> and there is more at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/01/uk-banks-put-75bn-into-firms-building-climate-wrecking-carbon-bombs-study-finds>

(A gigaton is 1,000,000,000 tonnes, a billion metric tons; according to the website Energy Education (<https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Gigatonne#>), this is “roughly the mass of all land mammals (other than humans) in the world ... [or] roughly twice the mass of all of the people in the world.”)

ON 30 APRIL, the US Department of Justice (DoJ) filed lawsuits against Hawaii and Michigan over plans to apply state laws that “impermissibly regulate out-of-state greenhouse gas emissions and obstruct the Clean Air Act’s comprehensive federal-state framework and EPA’s regulatory discretion” – EPA = the [federal] Environmental Protection Agency, now headed by Lee Zeldin (see *Sesame* 260). Neither state had brought a case to court; Dana Nessel, the Michigan attorney general described the DoJ’s action as “frivolous and arguably sanctionable”, adding: “If the White House or big oil wish to challenge our claims, they can do so when our lawsuit is filed; they will not succeed in any attempt to pre-emptively bar our access to make our claims in the courts. I remain undeterred in my intention to file this lawsuit the president and his big oil donors so fear.” His Hawaiian counterpart did not immediately comment, but academic lawyers pointed out the inconsistency in claiming that the Clean Air Act “displaces” states’ ability to legislate at the same time as attempting to prevent its provisions from being applied, and they agreed that the Department’s action was unlikely to succeed:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/01/justice-department-lawsuit-climate-hawaii-michigan>

Nevertheless, two days after the DoJ filing, in a move that has been seen as linked to it, Puerto Rico voluntarily dismissed its 2024 lawsuit against Exxon Mobil, BP, Chevron and others for misleading the public about the climate dangers associated with their products.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/02/puerto-rico-climate-lawsuit-trump>

RESTRICTIONS ON PROTESTERS rejected by Parliament but which Suella Braverman, then home secretary, introduced anyway by means of a statutory instrument for use against climate activists (Greta Thunberg was charged under them) have finally been struck down. The High Court held last year that they had been introduced unlawfully; disgracefully, the Home Office’s efforts to retain the illegal powers were not halted by the incoming government (see *Sesame* 256). In May, the Court of Appeal upheld the previous ruling; nevertheless, a Home Office spokesperson said:

“The court has ruled that specific regulations made by the previous government were unlawful. However, the central powers currently used by policing to manage protests and ensure that they remain peaceful are not affected by this judgment.”

Further measures are planned, including – ironically – one to “prevent intimidatory protests outside places of worship”. (Intimidatory action by those who break into one might seem to some of us a much greater concern.) See

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/may/02/campaigners-claim-victory-as-judges-quash-braverman-move-against-protests>

Akiko Hart, director of Liberty, which first challenged the new powers, writes about how the Labour government must rethink its attitude to protest and should repeal its predecessor’s repressive new laws, at

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/02/government-britain-protest-laws-appeal-court-labour-democracy>.

DOUg PAULLEY AND KEVIN JORDAN are two disabled men, who, with Friends of the Earth, argued unsuccessfully in the English courts that the UK Government's climate adaptation programme takes insufficient account of the needs of marginalised groups such as people with disabilities (see *Sesame* 256 & 257). They are now taking their case to the European Court of Human Rights, bolstered in their arguments by the latest report to Parliament of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), released on 30 April (<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-adapting-to-climate-change-2025/>), which is scathing about the UK's lack of preparedness. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/05/two-britons-to-challenge-uk-weak-response-to-climate-crisis-in-european-echr-court>

The CCC has also published advice to the Scottish Government on carbon reduction; past targets have been missed, but Net Zero by 2045 is possible: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2025/05/21/electric-technologies-will-help-scotland-decarbonise/>.

FINANCIAL, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS surrounding its Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Mozambique, on which there have been items in our last two issues, have now been resolved, according to Patrick Pouyanné, CEO of TotalEnergies; construction work will re-start by the middle of the year.

<https://energycapitalpower.com/construction-of-mozambique-lng-project-to-resume-by-mid-year/>

The project is a 'carbon bomb' as defined in the second item above.

SHELL SUCCEEDED, in November last year, in getting a 2021 ruling, that by 2030 it must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a set amount, overturned on appeal; that decision is awaiting a final judgment by the Dutch supreme court (see *Sesame* 257). Milieudefensie, the Netherlands arm of Friends of the Earth, which brought that case, has announced it is starting a separate action against the company, to ban Shell from developing new oil and gas fields, rather than setting an emissions target:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/13/dutch-climate-campaigners-vow-to-take-shell-to-court-again>

(The article also notes that in 2023 the High Court in London refused to hear a similar case against Shell, brought by the group ClientEarth.)

THE BRAZILIAN SENATE, on 21 May, passed what environmentalists have called a "devastation bill" by 54 votes to 13; it has to be approved by the lower house before becoming law, but is not expected to meet significant resistance there. The bill has been described as a historical setback that ignores the reality of the climate crisis and flies in the face of Brazil's commitments to combatting climate change.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/22/brazil-environment-devastation-bill>

There is more on the situation in Brazil at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/31/brazil-environmental-movemen-lula-oil-industry>

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN ENGLAND does not prevent all dumping of hazardous waste: a total of three tonnes of uranium was discharged into the Ribble estuary, a marine conservation zone, between 2015 and 2024, according to the online environmental newsletter the *ENDS Report* (<https://www.endsreport.com/article/1918899/revealed-nuclear-fuel-plant-allowed-dump-three-tonnes-uranium-marine-conservation-zone>). Springfield Fuels Ltd, a subsidiary of Westinghouse, manufactures fuel rods for reactors in 11 countries; in 2015, it released 703 kg of radioactive waste, and although this has not been equalled in any year since, alarm has been expressed at the high radiation levels to which organisms in the estuary were exposed. Under the site's current permit, there is *no* limit on the weight of uranium discharges.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/22/revealed-uranium-from-uk-nuclear-fuel-factory-dumped-into-protected-ribble-estuary>.

The Labour Government is looking to expand UK nuclear fuel production capabilities, with a target of 24 GW of new nuclear capacity by 2050, which will entail greater output at Springfield Fuels, and so heavier discharges.

SENTENCES OF BETWEEN eighteen months and two-and-a-half years were passed on four Just Stop Oil activists at Minshull Street Crown Court in Manchester on 27 May; they had planned to disrupt Manchester Airport by glueing themselves to the taxiways, but were arrested on their way to the airport on 5 August last year. A fifth accused, who had not been with them, was acquitted.

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/just-stop-oil-manchester-airport-31729820>

Indigo Rumbelow, one of the four, writes about the trial, and the judge's comments in passing sentence, here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/03/climate-protest-jail-sentence-resistance-just-stop-oil>

SÁUL LUCIANO LLIUYA is a Peruvian farmer and mountain guide who lives in the Andean town of Huaraz, large parts of which were destroyed in 1941 when Lake Palcacocha overflowed, causing floods that killed thousands of people; his house, he believes, is at particular risk from a possible glacial flood occasioned by global heating. The Essen-based energy company RWE [*Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk [Aktiengesellschaft]*] does not operate in Peru, although it is a major international concern – it is the leading power generator in the UK – and will be, according to its website <https://www.rwe.com/en/>, carbon neutral in its operations by 2040. In the meantime, it is a major polluter and a significant contributor to global heating, on which basis Lliuya started an action against it in 2015 with the support of the NGO Germanwatch. After a lower court in Essen rejected the case, the appeal court at Hamm ruled it admissible; but the action has now failed, with no prospect of a further appeal. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/28/rwe-peruvian-farmer-court-germany>

Nevertheless, the judgment has been described by Lliuya's lawyer as a milestone in climate litigation, because *"for the first time in history, a higher court in Europe has ruled that large emitters can be held responsible for the consequences of their greenhouse gas emissions"*; this could affect the outcome of similar cases, such as those of Hughes Falys, a farmer suing TotalEnergies in Belgium, and four Indonesians whose action against the cement maker Holcim is before the Swiss courts.

TWENTY-TWO YOUNG AMERICANS aged between seven and 25, from the states of Montana, Hawaii, Oregon, California and Florida, have filed a lawsuit against President Trump and his administration, alleging that by boosting oil and gas production and blocking the development of carbon-free energy, federal officials are violating their constitutional rights to life and liberty. They claim that breaching congressional mandates to protect ecosystems and public health is unlawful executive overreach, and that orders to allow increased emissions and to suppress climate research are in violation of the 'state-created danger' doctrine, the principle that government actors should not inflict injury upon their citizens.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/29/trump-administration-sued-anti-environment-orders>

The suit has been brought by Our Children's Trust, the non-profit law firm involved in a successful case in Montana (see *Sesame* 258), and others of the kind described in the report on youth-focused litigation cited in *Sesame* 260.

AN 'EXPLAINER' in *The Guardian* asks *"What is ecocide and could it become a crime under international law?"* – questions to which *Sesame* readers already know the answers, although other information may come as news:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/28/what-is-ecocide-and-could-it-become-a-under-international-law>

In 2024, Belgium was the first EU state to criminalise ecocide domestically and internationally; see

<https://www.stopecocide.earth/2024/belgium-becomes-first-european-country-to-recognise-ecocide-as-international-level-crime>;

and thirteen other jurisdictions, as well as the European Union, have proposed or enacted legislation: see <https://ecocidelaw.com/existing-ecocide-laws/>. Scotland may soon be another – see opposite.

A reader has questioned why so many of the articles referred to in this regular feature are from The Guardian. The main reason is that they can be read without payment, whereas other newspapers such as The National (which frequently carries reports of news ignored elsewhere) limit the number of times that their articles can be accessed by non-subscribers. Another is that they do often seem to be the only coverage of a topic available (e.g. of the prison experiences of climate activists, mentioned here and in our last two issues, or the 'carbon bombs' article, which was front-page news). In any case, links are given to original sources wherever possible, such as the Amnesty International report cited in the first item above. – ED.

Criminalising Ecocide

MONICA LENNON's **Ecocide (Scotland) Bill** was published in May; its text is at <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/ecocide-scotland-bill>. If enacted, it would be a criminal offence to cause widespread, long-term, or irreversible environmental damage, with potential penalties including up to twenty years in prison for individuals and unlimited fines for companies. The Bill's title has been shortened; it was originally the Ecocide (Prevention) (Scotland) Bill, but prevention is implicit in defining ecocide as a crime. It will now be considered by the Parliament, with committee scrutiny and evidence gathering expected to begin before July. A full parliamentary vote, in which Members of the Scottish Parliament can have their say on ecocide, could take place later in 2025, ahead of the next Scottish election in May 2026.

Monica Lennon writes:

Publishing this Bill has been the culmination of years of hard work, with thousands of contributions, input from over 134 organisations, and your steadfast support. This progress would not have been possible without you and the 3,379 people who responded to the consultation on the proposed Ecocide (Prevention) (Scotland) Bill. Thank you once again to everyone who submitted their views.

Because of you the campaign for ecocide law in Scotland is now stronger than ever. Together, I believe that we will make ecocide law a reality in Scotland. But I need your help to keep the momentum building. Let's make ecocide a priority for Scotland, so raise your voice on social media, share your thoughts with your regional MSPs as the Bill progresses to vote, and stay informed.

How you can help

- Use <https://www.writetothem.com> to email your MSPs, MPs and councillors to make them aware of your support for ecocide law in Scotland and the progress of the campaign so far.
- Ask if they agree with you and whether they support the aims of the Ecocide (Scotland) Bill.
- Share updates on social media via [@monicalennon7](https://www.facebook.com/MonicaLennonLabour) and <https://www.facebook.com/MonicaLennonLabour>.
- Please use #StopEcocide on social media.
- Encourage people to become Earth Protectors at <https://www.stopecocide.earth/become>.

Stay informed

There's been quite a lot of work involved in this process and more to go, but we will keep everyone updated at <https://www.ecocidelaw.scot/>.

[Thanks to **Janet Saunders** for passing this on. With Mercedes Villalba, Monica Lennon signed a letter in support of trans rights – see page 37 – the only Labour MSPs to do so.]

*Following Mark Bitel and other Friends before him, **Richard Raggett**, co-convenor of the GM Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG), led Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 13 May. His introduction can be watched at <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/time-for-reflection-may-13-2025>*

The Supreme Court Judgment – *recent developments*

Readers will no doubt be aware that, contrary to Lord Sumption's prediction mentioned in the last *Sesame*, the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) issued interim guidance on how the Supreme Court's ruling is to be interpreted which MPs have criticised as "overly literal" for taking it as a blanket ban on trans people using services for their chosen gender.

The Court ruling itself was described as "*scientifically illiterate*" and "*biologically nonsensical*" in a motion passed at the conference of the British Medical Association's Resident Doctors Committee, which took place 25-26 April. (Resident doctors, working in hospitals, used to be called 'junior doctors'.) This vote has itself been attacked by Louise Irvine, co-chair of the Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender, who is quoted in the *British Medical Journal* as having said that it risks "*destroying trust in medicine and perpetuating the profession's long history of misogyny*" – see

<https://www.bmj.com/content/389/bmj.r900>

– 'misogyny' being a charge that is as readily hurled against defenders of trans rights by their opponents as 'anti-Semitism' is against critics of Israel. The BMA conference ('annual representative meeting') is not until late June, when the position of the Association as a whole will be determined.

The group Sex Matters has written to the CEO of NHS England demanding that young transgender people be prevented from transitioning, or at least strongly discouraged, since, following the ruling, "*their future lives and freedoms will be seriously curtailed*" – an expression of concern that might seem like crocodile tears, coming from one of the interveners seeking precisely this outcome in the Supreme Court case. The text of the letter is at

<https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/20250428-Letter-to-Sir-James-Mackey-and-Wes-Streeting.pdf>.

Victoria McCloud, the former judge whose application to join the litigation was denied by the Supreme Court, is taking the UK to the European Court of Human Rights, invoking Article 6 of the European Convention (the right to a fair trial) – see

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/29/uks-first-trans-judge-victoria-mccloud-appeals-to-european-court-over-supreme-court-ruling>

The Good Law Project is acting in a claim by three individuals against the EHRC and the Equalities Minister under Article 8 (the right to private life):

https://goodlawproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Letter-to-the-Equality-and-Human-Rights-Commission-16-May-2025_Redacted.pdf.

At Holyrood, Maggie Chapman MSP survived a Tory/Labour attempt to oust her from the Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee for imputing "*bigotry, prejudice and hatred*" to the Supreme Court. Legislation on misogyny has been dropped following the ruling; Helena Kennedy KC, whose report had led to its being proposed, told the BBC she was "disappointed but not surprised" (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0el3j5j021o>).

The Parliament's own new rules on the use of toilets have been challenged in a letter to the Presiding Officer, signed by all seven Green MSPs, six SNP MSPs, including Keith Brown, the deputy party leader, two Labour MSPs, and, from the Liberal Democrats, our Friend Alex Cole-Hamilton and Jamie Greene, the Tory defector. The text of the letter is at

<https://goodlawproject.org/open-letter-scottish-parliament-urged-to-change-its-transphobic-toilet-rules/>

31 members of parliamentary staff have also signed it.

At Westminster, criticism has focused more on the EHRC and its guidance than on the Supreme Court ruling; one unnamed Labour MP was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying: *"The EHRC's interim advice is the main cause of the problem so far. [The Commission] seems to have been quite poorly led by a right-wing chair appointed by Liz Truss who I don't think is particularly competent."* However there have also been complaints about the Labour leadership's handling of the matter, in particular the assertion that the ruling had given "clarity". The Labour Party's Women's Conference later this year has been cancelled owing to uncertainty as to who might attend.

Baroness Hale, former president of the Supreme Court, was a speaker at the Charleston literary festival in East Sussex, and while at pains to stress she was not criticising the justices, did attack the interpretation put on their words, telling her audience *"there's nothing in that judgment that says that you can't have gender neutral loos, as we have here in this festival"*. Even so, she did say there were *"plenty of things to quarrel with"* about the judgment, mentioning specifically the notion of 'biological sex'.

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/may/22/court-ruling-legal-definition-of-a-woman-misinterpreted-lady-hale>

Nothing was minuted at Yearly Meeting concerning the ruling or the guidance, but the Recording Clerk, citing Minute 31 from YM 2021 (quoted in *Sesame* 260), told one of the sessions that trans people present could use the Friends House toilets for their chosen gender. This was extravagantly denounced in *The Daily Telegraph* as *"defying the UK's highest court and removing protections for women and girls"*; by which, it was alleged, *"Quakers are courting legal risk and demonstrating a lack of care and responsibility, in the pursuit of a fashionable dogma"* – see

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/05/26/quakers-detracting-reputation-trans-inclusive-toilets/>

However, the Society was praised in *The Pink News* for its stance:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/05/27/quakers-trans-facilities-helen-joyce/>

Lili Owen Rowlands' *Diary* in the *London Review of Books* (8 June) notes that previous guidance by the EHRC from 2022 *"peddles phobic fantasies of trans woman, [and] appears to contradict the 2010 Equality Act, which legally requires organisations to act with proportion on single-sex matters and to adopt a case-by-case approach. The point of making gender reassignment a protected characteristic was precisely to mitigate blanket exclusions of trans people from public life."*

Statement by the N.F.P.B. on the Atomic Bomb, drafted September 1945

This statement is one of three documents now re-published on the NFPB website at <https://nfpb.org.uk/voices/1945-echoes-and-resonances/> to remind us how the end of the war and its aftermath were understood at the time. As is pointed out, *"the language, perspective and perhaps even the theology are those of earlier generations"*. Nevertheless, *"Friends then spoke what is still our truth – military might and war are not the answer and in the end [are] antithetical to a peaceful world and a just international community."* – ED.

THE RELEASE OF ATOMIC ENERGY for destructive purposes is recognised as opening a new epoch in human relationships. Much has been said about the only two alternatives now before mankind – complete self-annihilation or abolition of war; but the deeper implications of the new position have been largely overlooked. It rests with those who believe that the Christian faith is the only way of bringing peace to the peoples of the world to make these implications clear.

We are concerned to stress the urgency of the present situation, and in particular to emphasise three aspects of the new development.

1. The moral disintegration resulting from all war has reached its climax in the atomic bomb. It is the final atrocity reached progressively by way of the destruction of the Mohne and Eider [sic] dams, obliteration bombing and the attacks on Southern England by rocket bombs. These atrocities will fade into insignificance before the bar of history in the light of this last and greatest atrocity. Mitigation can be gained only by a deep and searching repentance. But repentance is not merely a matter of words or even of restitution. It must be manifested in a total renunciation of power politics, with its inevitable recurrence of war, and a determination to frame a foreign policy in terms of the service of mankind.

2. No scientific research can be carried on except under conditions of freedom; but the ultimate result of research on the structure of the atom, the atomic bomb, shows the immorality arising when freedom is divorced from responsibility. Peace and freedom are inseparable, but unless we proclaim the need for a sense of responsibility, both to God and to man, with as much fervour as we extol freedom our civilisation will end not in peace but in licence and chaos.

3. There is the temptation to try to guide people into the way of peace by the threat of the alternative, total destruction. But if we do this we deceive ourselves. Fear of what it will bring has never prevented war. There is in man everywhere a courage that scorns fear. Only active goodwill, born of justice and a determination to share good things can overcome war and build peace. America possesses enough atomic bombs completely to destroy all Britain, and she could fly them here in a few hours. But this does not frighten us because we know that between us and America there exists a spirit of Goodwill. Let us demand from our government that they consistently follow that policy which will build goodwill between all peoples. Let us show that we care about the standard of living in other countries as much as in our own, that we are willing to sacrifice for the good of the whole. Thus will come real peace, which is born of a spirit of cooperation in the whole family of God.

Northern Friends Peace Board – Edinburgh, 28 June

The Board's Summer meeting will be in the Library at 7 Victoria Terrace (and online) on Saturday 28 June, starting at 11.00 am and concluding at 4.00 pm; local Friends and Attenders are welcome to join us. The business will include, in the morning, reports and updates on recent developments: following Yearly Meeting, there may be changes to central work on peace issues, and **Dixie Wills** of QPSW will be joining us, to speak on what is being done currently and what is planned. We will no doubt discuss the global situation and emerging concerns in the UK, such as the repercussions of the recent defence review (on which see Philip Austin's comments at <https://nfpb.org.uk/2025/06/10/ploughshares-into-swords/>). In the afternoon, we will be reviewing priorities for the Board's future work.

South East Scotland currently has no AM representative on the Board; if this is a service you might consider offering, then coming for all or part of the day would be a good way to experience some of what being being a rep entails. It can be extremely rewarding personally; I was reminded in the Saturday session at YM that it was through being appointed, at the age of twenty, to represent what was then East Midlands of Scotland Monthly Meeting, that I got to know such inspiring radical peacemakers as Jessie Baston of Sheffield, Leonard Bird of Hull, John Hamilton of Liverpool, Eva Pinthus of Leeds – and, of course, Geoffrey Carnall of Edinburgh.

Like previous meetings at Victoria Terrace, this one clashes with Armed Forces Day; fortunately, the celebrations of that are to take place around St Andrew Square in the New Town, so should, we hope, be out of earshot.

Board members from south of the Border often combine attendance at our meeting in Scotland with participation next day in the meeting for worship at Faslane; some may opt this year to join instead the witness in **Princes Street Gardens** (at 10.30 am on Sunday 29 June, between the bandstand and the fountain), which all in the Area Meeting are also invited to attend.

The NFPB publication *Responses to War* is now out; **Ian Robertson** of South Edinburgh meeting is among the contributors. *It will be on sale at the June Board meeting at the reduced price of £5*. Other merchandise may also be available. If you are thinking of attending in person, it is helpful if you can let our coordinator, Philip Austin, know in advance, by emailing him at nfpb@gn.apc.org; he can also provide the Zoom link to attend online.

Alan Frith

*The Palestinian-American Edward W. Said (1935-2003) was married to a Quaker; calling the fifth of his 1993 Reith Lectures "Speaking Truth to Power" gave wider currency to a phrase coined in the 1950s by the American Friends Service Committee. His 1979 book, **The Question of Palestine**, has been re-published, with a 1999 essay on 'The One State Solution', and a new preface by Saree Makdisi reviewing what has changed since they first appeared. Fitzcarraldo Editions (2024) paperback, ISBN 978-1-80427-135-3 £14.99*

WISTON LODGE: Friday to Sunday, 5-7 September

The weekend, with the theme *Love Your Neighbour*, is open to all Friends and Attenders in Scotland

**Wiston Lodge, Millrigg Road, Wiston, near Biggar,
South Lanarkshire ML12 6HT**

Places are still available – the weekend will start at around 5.00 pm on Friday (with a buffet supper at 6.00, and a bonfire afterwards), and will end after lunch on Sunday, at around 2.00 pm. Activities so far offered include puppetry, brambling, dialogue poetry, a nature walk, climbing Tinto Hill, *Qi Gong* after breakfast, and a Saturday evening ceilidh. On Sunday morning, participants will join Lanark local meeting Friends in meeting for worship.

Accommodation is in shared rooms in the Lodge, in the three-bed cabin rooms or camping. All the hearty, vegetarian meals will be provided, from supper on Friday to Sunday lunch at 1.00 pm. To make best use of the space, you are asked to consider sharing with friends or family members. Bedrooms are for 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 people to share; some smaller rooms *may* be available for one or two people, depending on the total number coming. Wiston is not directly served by public transport, so car-sharing is encouraged. **Please indicate on the booking form** if you can give a lift or need one, and from where. Lifts from Biggar (the 101 service departing Edinburgh Bus Station at 16:05 arrives at Biggar High Street at 17:40) or Lanark (the 16:50 train from Glasgow Central arrives at 17:46) are also a possibility.

Costs

Full adult price for the whole weekend	£140
Concession/ first dependent child, aged 4-16	£105
(Children aged 3 or less	Free)
Second concession in a family	£90
Other concessions	£80

It is possible to come just for the day on Saturday; the charges for meals (to be paid on the day, with a donation if you can) are: breakfast £8; lunch £12; dinner £15; and 'tea & coffee and fruit' £5.

N.B. Bursary help may be available: speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com for further information.

The booking form is at <https://bit.ly/wiston25>.

If you have any questions, email QuakerWistonWeekend@gmail.com.

Wiston Lodge has its own website at <https://wistonlodge.com/>, which has more information about the facilities, including floorplans and pictures of the rooms and grounds.

MEMORIAL MINUTE – Margaret Paterson, 1.2.33 – 5.5.25

The following minute of Kelso Local Meeting, held 18 May 2025, has been sent to us by the Clerk, Anne Macnaughton.

WE RECORD THE DEATH of our Friend **Margaret Paterson** on 5th May 2025 in a Nursing Home in Selkirk. Margaret was Clerk of Kelso Meeting in the early days of Kelso Meeting House.

She was born Margaret Renwick on 1st February 1933. Margaret recalled living at Gorgie Farm House, Edinburgh with her mother and sister. Her father was often away as he was in the Army. Here she attended Mary Erskine's School. Later she was sent to a Convent School in Belgium and then a Forces School in Germany, giving her excellent French and German. At the age of 20 she joined the WRAF and spent time in Germany where she was a commissioned officer with command duties; a time of her life she really enjoyed and often referred to in her later years.

Whilst taking her degree at Edinburgh University, Margaret met Ian Paterson, also a mature student, who was to become her husband. They were married in Canada and after a spell back in the UK returned to Canada, to a remote town in British Columbia with their two-year-old son Graham.

On their return to the UK, they had a few moves around Scotland and England, with Margaret teaching or tutoring. She continued to study Russian and spent three months in Moscow teaching English.

They opted for Jedburgh for their semi-retirement, where they offered language tutoring and Bed and Breakfast accommodation from their home. Meetings were often held there before we had Kelso Meeting House.

Margaret is remembered for her service to Kelso Meeting, for her intelligence, sharp humour and *joie de vivre*.

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

A few weeks ago I found on our Library's shelf *The Guided Life* by Craig Barnett, published in 2018. It was an easy read. And I rapidly followed it with *Quaker Roots and Branches* by John Lampen and *Why I am a Pacifist* by Tim Gee. They are all in the series **Quaker Quicks**, a series promoted by Jennifer Kavanagh (whom some will know). There are many more than the three I have read. Why not buy some and donate them to the library? The authors all write from experience and show how their subject fits into Quaker history. I enjoyed them all – apart from John Lampen's not recognising that Ada Salter was a more inspirational figure than her husband!

Rachel Frith

*[There are more than twenty Quaker Quicks; several have been mentioned in Sesame over the years. **Helen Holt** of Tweeddale LM has contributed three titles to the series; **Rhiannon Grant** has written four, the latest of which, *Speaking in Quaker Meeting for Worship*, was published in May, and **Jennifer Kavanagh** two. – ED.]*

Financial Commentary

to accompany the Report and Financial Statements for 2024

This financial commentary, circulated ahead of May's Area Meeting, was produced to be read alongside the fuller account in the Report & Financial Statements, which is too long to include here but of which copies are available on request from the treasurer team. References in this commentary in the form (e.g.) "pp. 15-17" refer to page numbers in that document, not to pages of Sesame.

THANKS TO a generous legacy from the estate of Sue Freshwater (*included in Table 3 below*), we ended the financial year in surplus but the underlying position remains difficult, with expenditure exceeding income.

SESAM's accounts comprise the Area Meeting's direct income and expenditure, along with the accounts of all our local meetings and committees including Fàilte Edinburgh, which was set up to bring a refugee family to Edinburgh under the Home Office/UNHCR Community Sponsorship scheme. The Fàilte Edinburgh account was closed at the end of the financial year.

The accounts were prepared by our accountant, Heather Hartman, and then audited: the size of the legacy meant that a full audit was required, rather than the normal examination. You may notice that there is an additional page in the accounts this year, p. 20, a statement of cash flows, which was required for the audit, and the auditors' report (pp. 15-17) is much longer than that provided after an examination. The treasurer team was grateful to all our local meeting treasurers for their help in providing answers to some of the many queries we received, most of which were dealt with by Heather.

Following the Trustees' Report which incorporates a financial review on pp. 7-10, there is an overview of the year on p. 18 (the 'SOFA' – Statement of Financial Activities) and on p. 19 (Balance Sheet), and the detail behind those summary figures is presented in the notes on pp. 25-36.

In this commentary, information is presented in a way similar to that used in previous years so that you can compare if you wish to do so. However, the accounts themselves are subject to continuous review and small items may be moved between categories. The main aim of the commentary is to try to make it a bit easier for you to understand what is going on, but there are references for those who wish to look up the formal financial statements.

MEETING HOUSES

Lettings at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House are still substantially below 2019 levels and income has fallen since 2023. During the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the building was occupied by C Venues, an independent promoter, who put on wide range of events but they paid us less than we had received for the Fringe activity in 2023.

Kelso Quaker Meeting House employs no staff but lettings were good and we thank Kelso Friends for their work in keeping track of rentals and income and looking after the Meeting House.

Table 1

INCOME (unrestricted) associated with 'Trading Activities' (<i>Note 5, p. 25</i>). <i>For donations income, see Table 3 below.</i>	2024 £	2023 £
Room lettings, Edinburgh and Kelso	62,972	69,013
Catering associated with lettings in Edinburgh	24,903	22,925
Festival: sales in the meeting house foyer; misc. (2023 figure includes B&B income; in Donations in 2024)	19,935	23,153
TOTAL INCOME under these headings	107,810	115,091

Table 2

EXPENDITURE (<i>Note 9, p. 28; Note 7, p. 26.</i>) <i>For expenditure on Quaker activities, see Table 4 overleaf</i>	2024 £	2023 £
Wages, salaries, pensions	80,936	75,995
Building costs (<i>Council Tax, utilities, maintenance, up-grades, professional fees, insurance, cleaning, purchases, recruitment/training; but excluding depreciation costs</i>)	72,689	74,512
Professional support (<i>accounting, audit, investment fees, computing</i>)	20,718	11,521
Expenses associated with lettings (<i>mostly catering</i>)	14,422	12,722
TOTAL EXPENDITURE on above items	188,765	174,750

As can be seen, professional support fees were much higher, because of the cost of the audit as compared with a normal examination. The table does not include depreciation, nor a change resulting from a decision to tidy up the fixed asset register by removing items valued at less than £1,000.

DONATIONS

Besides Meeting House lettings, our regular income comes from donations made by you, our members and attenders. The figures below include sums specifically given ('earmarked') for local meetings, Fàilte Edinburgh, the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust, General Meeting for Scotland and Britain Yearly Meeting. Some local meetings have not resumed cash collections. The huge difference between 2024 and 2023 is accounted for by the welcome legacy from Sue Freshwater.

Table 3

DONATIONS INCOME (<i>Note 3, p. 25</i>)	2024 £	2023 £
Donations and legacies for Area Meeting use (<i>includes grants received from the Francis Camfield Trust</i>)	386,183	67,475
Earmarked donations and legacies, and grant from the Home Office to Fàilte Edinburgh in 2023	47,527	50,902
TOTAL	433,710	118,377

EXPENDITURE ON QUAKER WORK *(see table 4)*

We made payments as part of our ongoing commitment to bodies such as the Northern Friends Peace Board and Northern Friends Youth Events SCIO (*formerly Northern Friends Youth Events Trust*) which organises Shindig. We provided bursaries to Friends, and in particular to young people to enable them to attend Young Friends General Meeting, Junior Yearly Meeting and Shindig – for the last, that support was in addition to the grant to NFYES. SESAM added £25,000 from its own funds to donations earmarked by Friends for Britain Yearly Meeting (to which we know some Friends make direct personal donations). Some Friends also earmark for General Meeting for Scotland and those sums are passed on to GM along with an agreed quota payment.

The payments to the Edinburgh Refugee Sponsorship Circle were made from the residual funds of Fàilte Edinburgh when it ended its own project for supporting a refugee family.

Table 4

EXPENDITURE (Note 8, p. 27)	2024 £	2023 £
Conference fees, bursaries, committee & admin. costs, newsletters, membership fees, <i>etc.</i>	6,255	8,807
Local Meeting activities and premises costs	27,619	23,035
Fàilte Edinburgh activities	1,000	1,407
Grants / Contributions paid		
Britain Yearly Meeting	35,534	35,885
General Meeting for Scotland	6,937	7,651
Northern Friends Peace Board	2,370	2,160
Northern Friends Youth Events SCIO (<i>'Trust' in 2023</i>)	1,232	1,248
Edinburgh Refugee Sponsorship Circle	10,796	-
Various other grants (<i>less than £1,000 each</i>)	18,089	16,077
TOTAL	109,832	96,270

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY (SOFA) *(See p. 18)*

As a result of the legacy, we ended 2024 with a net financial surplus of **£258,190**, compared with a loss of **£15,521** in 2023.

Our portfolio of investments with Greenbank is revalued every year. The amount we had invested at 31 December 2024 was **£259,311** (Note 15, p. 31) whereas the figure at 31 December 2023 was **£251,659**. On the same dates, the amounts held at the bank and in cash were **£425,377** and **£222,311** respectively (*Balance Sheet, p. 19*).

The net financial result, including restricted funds but taking out the legacy and gains on investments, would have been a loss of **£61,769** as compared with **£24,572** in 2023. The increased loss was due to a decrease in rental income in Edinburgh, increases in costs – salaries, professional fees – and the

transfer of restricted donated funds to Edinburgh Refugee Sponsorship Circle. The loss on unrestricted funds would have been £51,158.

If you read nothing else in the Report & Financial Statements, please look at the paragraph headed 'Overview of Income and Expenditure' on p. 8.

2025

Our costs, including utility costs, continue to rise. Our pay rates are related to the Real Living Wage which rose in late 2024 by 5 % following two years in each of which the increase had been 10 %. For repair work on the courtyard side of the building, which we had hoped would take place in 2024, we are still awaiting formal documents from our architect but that work is necessary and will be costly. We have had initial results from most of the Quinquennial Surveys undertaken by our architect in 2024 and know that there is other urgent work – we hope not too expensive – as well as recommended work, some of which will indeed require substantial funds. We shall explore the possibility of obtaining grants towards the cost of work we need to do to reduce our impact on the planet.

We remain committed to supporting the activities of Friends. We encourage you (members and attenders) to apply for bursaries so that you can learn more about what it means to be a Quaker (including by attending Yearly Meeting) and our testimonies, and training for the Quaker roles which you undertake. More information is available from the treasurer team (email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com).

THANKS

The treasurer team thanks:

All Friends who contribute to the life of our meetings whether by joining us in worship, by offering service or/and by contributing financially; the Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House staff; Friends in Kelso, including their Premises Committee, who voluntarily help service and maintain their Meeting House; our Trustees, the Area Meeting clerking team, the Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House Management Committee, our accountant and auditors, and of course local meeting and Fàilte Edinburgh treasurers who have collected monies, paid bills, and have done some of the work that would otherwise come the way of the Area Meeting treasurer team.

We are grateful to you all.

*Commentary prepared by **Jacqueline Noltingk** (treasurer to 30 September 2024).*

Jonathan Riddell is now treasurer, and the other member of the treasurer team over the past twelve months has been **Philip Corrie-Hawes**.

Ross Campbell, a former team member, continues to be treasurer for the John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust and Midweek Meeting.

At Area Meeting on 6 May, **Chris Jardine** was appointed to join the treasurer team, to serve from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028.

If you would like a paper copy of the Annual Report & Financial Statements, 2024, please email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Tuesday 6 May 2025
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and by remote videoconferencing**

2025/05/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship, we have heard read from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 25.04: all creation is interconnected and our Quaker lives are a process of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful creation.

We have remembered the life of Margaret Paterson of Kelso Local Meeting who died on 5 May.

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

...

[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]

We record our thanks to the meeting house staff for their support this evening.

We next meet on Saturday 21 June 2025 hosted by East Lothian Local Meeting. Arrangements will be circulated when finalised.

(Signed)

Alastair Cameron, *Clerk*
Cath Dyer, *Assistant Clerk*

Final evaluation and financial expenditure of the Woodbrooke 'Spiritual Nourishment' series, 2024/25

Woodbrooke delivered five Saturday sessions at Edinburgh Meeting House between February 2024 and January 2025: 'The Essentials of Quakerism', 'What Happens in Meeting for Worship', 'Trusting the Spirit: Understanding Discernment', 'The Spiritual Roots of Quaker Testimony' and 'Telling our Spiritual Stories'. In total, there were 144 participants across the five days, from six local meetings throughout the Area Meeting.

Feedback for each day was collected by Woodbrooke and shared with Central Edinburgh Elders, who organised the events, and it was very positive, as were many comments given later by the participants. The series helped new attenders learn more about Quakers and reinvigorated more experienced members, as well as building a stronger sense of community across the Area Meeting by being inclusive, engaging and interactive.

Several Friends commented that the series came at a good time to help us think about future Quaker structures in Scotland. Role holders said it increased their confidence. The aims were to deepen our spiritual life, our sense of community and our understanding of Quaker principles, and these were met, as evidenced through the feedback.

The Woodbrooke cost of £6100 was met by the Sylvia Marshall Bequest, a legacy that was left to Central Edinburgh Meeting (approved by local meeting minute 2023/09/07).

Area Meeting agreed (minute 2023/09/07) to meet the catering cost (coffees and lunches), estimated to be £200-300 per session. The total catering cost was £1351.18 but welcome donations, totalling £368.75 from local meetings and individuals, left Area Meeting with a cost of £982.43, well within the budget. Room hire and staff costs are not usually charged for AM events. One session had to be rescheduled at short notice due to the illness of the tutor. £101.80 had to be paid out for unrefundable costs but Woodbrooke gave us a credit note for £120, so these were cancelled out. The sessions represented good value for money.

Marilyn Higgins
on behalf of Central Edinburgh Elders

The next Woodbrooke event at Edinburgh is Emily Provance's workshop – see page 19.

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

Sundays at 9.30 & 11.00 am. Tea & coffee afterwards; soup and bread & cheese lunch, 12.30.

Wednesday, 12.30–1.00 pm. Tea & coffee; you may bring your own lunch.

Contact the office for updates, and **SEE PAGE 24** for changed arrangements in July/August.

Central Fife – The Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EH

On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am. On 1st Sundays, also at 10.30 am, at

Linburn Scout Hall, Abbey View, Dunfermline KY11 4HA.

Contact **Laura Pearson** for further information.

East Lothian – Dunbar Town House, 79 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1ER

On the 1st, 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Worship on 1st Sundays is all-age; there is a children's meeting on the last Sundays. Contact **Phil Lucas** for updates.

Falkirk & Polmont – Trinity Church, Manse Place, Falkirk FK1 1JN

Sundays, 10.30. Contact **Denise Marshall** if bringing children; **Anna Levin** for updates.

Kelso – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

Sundays at 10.30 am. Contact **Anne Macnaughton** for updates.

North Edinburgh worship group – 4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm, meeting in Friends' homes. Contact **Tony Gross** or **Rufus Reade** for further information.

Penicuik – For confirmation of the venue, contact penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk

1st Sundays at 11.00 am – contact **Mark Hutcheson** for updates and further information.

Portobello & Musselburgh – Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am, with a children's meeting.

1st Sundays: Evening meeting at 7.00 pm; NO children's meeting.

3rd Sundays: Hollies Community Hub, 183 High St, Musselburgh EH21 7DE, 7.00 pm

Contact **Robin Liebmann**, **Sarah Martin** or **Marian Willoner** for further information, portymussclerks@gmail.com.

South Edinburgh – The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 5HY

Sundays, 10.30 am. For information contact the clerking team, sedclerks@gmail.com.

Tweeddale – 2nd Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, meeting in Friends' homes. For further information contact **Lesley Morrison**

MEETING BY ZOOM

Central Edinburgh – for login details contact centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk

Every Sunday at 9.30 am **ONLY** (blended with the meetings in person).

Central Fife – for login details contact **Laura Pearson**

Every Sunday at 10.30 am; blended with the meeting in person on 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th.

Penicuik – available if requested in advance – for details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

South Edinburgh – for login details contact sedclerks@gmail.com.

Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with meetings in person.

1st Thursdays at 7.30 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.