

# TAYSIDE QUAKER

Vol 39 No 2 April 2015



*The Subud Centre where Perth Friends meet and which is to be used  
for Area Meeting in May.*

**Closing date for the next edition is Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

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**(I am happy to receive documents in formats such as rtf, doc or docx.)**

**A note from the Editor:**

Thank you to all our contributors to this edition. Please keep your contributions coming in! In addition to reports of events and conferences, please do think about whether you could write a short article. What's happening to you, or what are you thinking, that might interest Quakers in Tayside? Pictures are particularly welcome.

East Scotland Area Meeting:  
Scottish charity number SC0020698  
All opinions in Tayside Quaker are those of the individual  
writers and not necessarily of The Religious Society of Friends.

## East Scotland Area Meeting, May 2015

Dear Friends,

The next Area Meeting will take place in Perth on Saturday 9 May, at 11 am with refreshments available from 10.30 am. All are welcome. The venue is the Subud Centre, 7 St. Leonards Bank, Perth PH2 8EB. Limited parking is available at the centre with other parking nearby.

We will have reports of recent conferences and gatherings, including sharing of experiences by those who were at Britain Yearly Meeting in London the previous weekend.

In the afternoon session we will have a different type of activity. The “Boundaries Game” has been developed by Quaker Life to encourage us to discuss and explore our unwritten and often unspoken rules (for example, about speaking twice in a Meeting for Worship), to make these explicit and consider whether they are all still relevant. These rules or common practices help to maintain the identity of our Meetings. The game allows reflection in groups on issues which can be quite important for right ordering of our worship and business, but in an informal and participatory way. Whether or not you are new to Quaker ways, this should be an interesting and light-hearted way of thinking about sometimes problematic questions.

Please come, and do encourage others who may not be regular participants at Area Meeting. It is a good opportunity to meet Quakers from other parts of our area. Attenders are very welcome, but it would be helpful if they could let Busa Cochrane-Muir know in advance on 01333 360438 or [lekjom@lesliebank.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:lekjom@lesliebank.eclipse.co.uk). Occasionally we have agenda items for members only when attenders are asked to withdraw.

In friendship,

Robin Waterston

Co-clerk

Friends, meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.

George Fox, 1657

## **East Scotland Area Meeting (AM), 14 February 2015 in Dundee**

Dundee Friends hosted Area Meeting at which 21 Friends attended. The reading in the opening worship was taken from QF&P 27.10 which spoke of how in the gathered meeting we can transcend concepts of different religions.

We received a report from Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) from Barbara Davey. Barbara has written a full report for this newsletter.

Forthcoming conferences included QPSW Spring Conference in Swanwick "Making Change Happen" and a workshop in St. Andrews on "Working with a small group of children with a wide age range", both in March, and a Young Person's workshop in Dundee in May, together with a workshop on "God or Whatever you call it".

We heard an update on the work of Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Officer. Her main priorities of work have so far been focused on the coming General Election 2015; Militarisation in Scottish society; Trident replacement and economic justice, sustainability and peace. In discussion, the question was asked about allowing Friends across Scotland to be supported in their concerns and activities. The Co-Clerks have been asked to clarify this with Mairi. GM has been asked to ensure that the Parliamentary Function Group includes representation from each AM. When appointed, this will provide a point of contact within ESAM for furthering this two-way communication.

Under Financial Matters the accounts for 2014 were received for information. They are for the AM Trustees to accept and will be submitted to OSCR as part of the consolidated accounts. The estimates for 2015 were presented. It was agreed to levy £70 per member.

Several appointments to AM were made on the recommendation of AM Nominations Committee.

The rest of the afternoon was given over to Bronwen Currie who shared her experiences of the work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in their non-violent actions and to support concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation. It is a continuous programme first set up by the World Council of Churches in 2002 and has been administered in Britain and Ireland by QPSW.

Bronwen spoke of the challenges for accompaniers in collecting information about incidents that have occurred and disseminating this information. She focused on the issue of settlements and the impact on the Palestinian West Bank and the economic destruction of Palestinian society; of the wall which divides Israel and Palestine as never before – of queuing and exiting totally walled communities; of

the Israeli groups campaigning for Palestinian rights countering Israeli denial; of working alongside both Israelis and Palestinians involved in non-violent initiatives.

Bronwen ended with suggestions of ways that we, as individuals, can become involved in campaigning for justice and truth. Hearing of events first hand was powerful and left us more informed on lives led in this troubled area.

The full minutes have been sent to all LM Clerks, all Elders and Overseers.

*Busa Cochrane-Muir*

*Co-Clerk*

## **Meeting for Sufferings, Friends House, London, Saturday 7th February 2015**

We met once again in the smaller Margaret Fell room upstairs, which felt much more intimate than the refurbished Large Meeting House used in December. Our opening worship immediately reminded us that Sufferings is above all a worshipping *community*: we heard the customary list of recent deaths of former members, and we heard ministry relating to sudden and untimely death in the families of two Friends currently serving. The elder's reading was from Isaac Pennington

*Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness...*

and another Friend quoted from the World Council of Churches document we would be considering later in the day

*Our lives are not private possessions but windows of grace, their possibility kindled by the tenderness of others.*

The day was taken up with four main items of business - reports on

**Quaker Values in Education (Q VinE)**

**Membership**

**The Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)**

**Marriage Procedure**

Also, Chris Skidmore gave an update on plans for Yearly Meeting (YM) in May 2015 and asked that we prayerfully uphold those working on the preparations for this, and Jennifer Barraclough, Clerk, reported back on a recent meeting of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) trustees, in particular the progress with our registration under the new Lobbying Act, which Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) had discussed in December.

Members of **Quaker Values in Education** introduced the work of their recently formed group and MfS was asked to consider supporting the statement agreed at the Threshing Gathering held in August 2014. The statement begins

*Every person is precious - a foundation for Quaker action on education*

*Quakers believe that the spirit of God is at work in every human being and this belief holds true for our work in education*

It is both a very ambitious statement, talking of education bringing about 'a fair, diverse, just and good society', but also very limited, only addressing current issues in state-maintained schools in England. MfS clearly wanted to uphold the group in their concern but we did find this narrowness problematic when it came to endorsing the statement. The group has been working with Woodbrooke to introduce a graduate study pathway towards a Masters or Doctorate in Quaker Pedagogy and have ideas for a book based on Friends' experiences teaching in all kinds of schools. Q VinE also helped prepare an education element for the Quaker Election Guide, and more generally, Meetings are urged to make links with their local schools, for example through peace education and the topic of WW1.

Paul Parker, our Recording Clerk, presented a short paper on **Membership: Responding to Yearly Meeting 2014**, exploring the question of a more flexible approach to membership. This might be particularly relevant for young adult Friends, whose journeys may preclude them committing to a local or area meeting. Paul spoke of community being at the heart of membership and this was two-sided - on behalf of the individual but also on behalf of the meeting especially in terms of pastoral care and the nurturing of gifts. MfS felt that the questions raised were relevant to a wider group than simply young adults because of the age we are living in, with increased mobility and a longer life-span. Quaker Life was asked to consider how best we can support the worshipping life of everyone in our community.

Rowena Loverance, Clerk, presented a report on the work of the **Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations**. It encompasses helping Quakers think more clearly about our faith and supporting Quaker work with other churches and faith groups. She questioned the polarisation present in much of the theist/ non-theist debate

*We need to look at the practice of God, of insight, beyond the words.*

In terms of ecumenical work, there is to be a one day conference on interfaith peacemaking in the autumn and a Woodbrooke weekend in March 2016 on the theme of 'Pluralism and religious Diversity'. Members of QCCIR introduced their

draft response to the World Council of Churches (WCC) consultation paper 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision'. The aim was to promote dialogue. What is the vision of our faith? What can we share with others in the wider church community? We heard that of necessity the language used in the report was deliberately more theological than Friends would normally use. MfS reflected on this, questioning this so-called necessity - plain language is so central to our faith, and clarity is of course important. But on the other hand, clouds can make for interesting skies and they do bring the nourishment of rain! There being no time for a revised version to be brought back to us, Sufferings upheld the work of the committee and supported the statement in general terms with the hope that the language would be given further consideration.

The final item of the day was the revision of **Quaker Faith and Practice Chapter 16 - Marriage Procedure**, necessitated by the new legislation permitting same sex marriages in England, Wales and Scotland. Alongside numerous minor though important changes, there will now be a gender-neutral option for the declaration

*Friends, I take this my friend...to be my spouse, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto him/ her/ <commonly used name> a loving and faithful spouse, so long as we both on earth shall live.*

MfS endorsed the text to be forwarded to Yearly Meeting 2015, with one Friend urging us to "Celebrate the end of a very long journey!"

*Barbara Davey*

## **An invitation to explore Quakerism – with some bursary help**

Thanks to a grant of £1,250.00 to Area Meeting from Dundee Friends' Property Trust, we are once again able to offer bursaries to Friends and attenders who would like to go to a course or conference.

Bursaries are not dependent on being appointed as a representative by Area Meeting. Our procedure is for an applicant to discuss a bursary request with an overseer and then to contact the Area Meeting Treasurer with a letter of support from the overseer. The Treasurer can approve a bursary of up to 50% of course fees and travel costs. Revised guidelines will shortly be sent to overseers.

Already in 2015, one Friend has sought bursary help to attend the Woodbrooke course on *Religious Revolutionaries* and another is interested in going to Swarthmoor Hall for a course on *The History of Early Friends*.

The more that people from East Scotland attend events like these and come back

with new insights and enthusiasm, the better it is for us all, so do please explore what events are coming up. Do not hold back from seeking bursary help – that's what the funding is there for.

We are happy to help young people to attend Shindig and other Quaker youth events, and welcome approaches from families. There is a Scottish Friends' event for families later this year at Pitlochry Youth Hostel which could be of interest – its purpose is to help young people just before the age for Shindig to get to know others of their own age group from different meetings.

Friends who are attached to Dundee Local Meeting are still able to seek support directly from Dundee Friends Property Trust. Those from other meetings interested in bursary help can contact the Area Meeting Treasurer –

Philip Bryers, 15 Spoutwells Place, Scone, Perth, PH2 6NY.

[p.bryers@virginmedia.com](mailto:p.bryers@virginmedia.com) Tel 01738 560250.

*Philip Bryers*

## **Working with a small group of children with a wide range of ages St Andrews Meeting House, Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup>**

This workshop was attended by 13 Friends from ESAM and led by Madeleine Harding and Sophie Smith. Madeleine and Sophie had travelled up from Edinburgh and Lancaster respectively. They are trainers from the Quaker Life Network, and are also supported in this work by the Children and Young People's Programme at Friends House.

The workshop had been arranged in response to St Andrews overseers' focus last year on work with children and young people.

After introductions and an overview of the day's programme, we shared our concerns about working with small groups of children with a wide range of ages. These concerns included unpredictability about who turns up, the validity of the content of what we prepare, and things not going to plan. Madeleine and Sophie then led us through a number of activities and discussions to address these and other issues.

Starting with the question of what children need, we broke into groups to look at different stages of their development: preschool (0-5), primary school (6-10) and adolescence (11-16). Our own knowledge and understanding was supplemented by an excellent handout outlining children's intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral development at each stage, as well as looking at children's spiritual needs and how these can be nurtured.



During the afternoon we focused on practical matters – what to do in our CYP meetings and the resources we need. We tried out a variety of materials provided by the trainers and brainstormed what we would find helpful to have on hand in the room. We were encouraged to become familiar with *Journeys in the Spirit*, the collection of resources for CYP meetings, available free online from the Quaker UK website, as well as *Being Friends Together*, the online Quaker Life resource that I wrote about in the January edition of *Tayside Quaker*.

Members of each local Meeting then had a chance to meet up and discuss how to move forward as a result of the training. As we came to the end of the day we agreed that the workshop has achieved its aims of increasing confidence and inspiring us in our work in our particular type of CYP meetings. This became clear when looking back at our initial list of concerns and dilemmas to find that many of them had either been resolved or at least seemed less daunting.

A big thank you to Madeleine and Sophie for their inspiration and their focused and sensitive response to our needs.

*Alice Curteis*

## **Conscientious Objector to WW1**

On Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 13 St Andrews Friends met to hear extracts from the correspondence to and from an 'absolutist' CO during WW1, the grandfather of Julia Prescott. For over an hour we were enthralled by the faith, courage and conviction of one young man committed to prison for refusing to bow to an authority that asked him to defy principles that were so dear to his heart.

At the same time, the devotion between husband and wife was a testimony to love and care. One sensed that the correspondence (strictly controlled by the authorities in content, length and frequency) was a lifeline. The letters are treasures and sadly present and future internet users are unlikely to leave their like to any future generation.

During the evening, we heard of 'the time of trial', the outcome of committal, the refusal to accept an offer of a non-combatant alternative within the military system, and then three years in a series of prisons. Throughout, the sustenance from faith and love shines in a most extraordinary way in the details of the hardships in everyday life, and the difficulties of living with the reputation of being a 'conchie' or even a member of a 'conchie' family during and long after the war. Details of a similar story from WW2 experienced by the father of another Friend left us with a mixture of feelings: thankful that we and future generations share so much more freedom of conscience and that in some senses at least, national

consciousness has improved for the better for ever. In addition to these two particular family stories we heard of other COs forced to undergo punishments such as cruel work in the granite quarry in Dyce.

We are all privileged to be able to hear such first-hand accounts from living members of our Meeting.

*Len Goad*

## **Nontheist Friends**

In late March I attended the annual conference of the Nontheist Friends Network at Woodbrooke which I found inspiring. This year's theme was "An Inclusive Society of Friends". Although I had heard about this group several years ago I have only recently followed it up. This photograph encapsulates the basic tenets of the group:



The conference started on the Friday evening with a talk by Jan Arriens who spoke about the validity of near-death experiences, telepathy and other mystical occurrences (which not all the assembled company went along with!). Saturday morning saw five workshops being held which we could choose from. These included:

- How Can Nontheists Pray? What do we do in Meeting for Worship?
- A Fish Out of Water: is it awkward being a nontheist when many of our fellow-Quakers believe in God?
- Misunderstandings and the need for inclusive language.
- What Do We Mean by "the Spiritual Life"?

I attended the latter which was interesting but came to no conclusion!

The first part of Saturday afternoon was free and the AGM was held after that. There was time for comments about two proposals, one of which was to wind up the group and both of which were rejected at the AGM in favour of the status quo. Three new members joined the steering group (one of them from Glasgow Meeting). In the evening we were “quaking with laughter” when volunteers told jokes or funny stories.

During Saturday and Sunday there were further discussions about ways forward such as membership, subscriptions, young Quakers and disseminating information about the group; and Jan Arriens gave another short talk in response to feedback from his presentation on Friday. There was also, of course, a Meeting for Worship each day.

I found the weekend informative and friendly and was pleased that I had attended. There were nearly 50 Members or Attenders there, and many areas of the UK were represented - from Devon and Sussex to Glasgow, Dundee and Cork.

*Sheila Phillips*

## **News from Local Meetings**

### **St Andrews**

At the beginning of February we were fortunate to have William Walker, retired Professor at the University of St Andrews, International Relations Department, come to the Meeting House to talk to us about **The Politics of Trident**. He gave a penetrating grasp of the history of nuclear weapons going back to the Manhattan Project in 1942. With the prospect of the renewal of the Trident missile system he looked at a likely Scottish dimension in the decision to be taken. It may be that no party in Scotland supports Trident renewal; there has been no attempt, so far, to win over the Scottish people to nuclear weapon replacement. Billions of pounds have already been spent on the “initial gate” work phase that includes the purchase of specialised steel for hulls and propulsion systems. The “main gate” decision on replacing four submarines is due in 2016. With the UK election on 7<sup>th</sup> May fast approaching there are numerous imponderable scenarios that make the final decision increasingly complex. All the more reason to ask our prospective candidates to explain their position on replacement and continue to question the validity of any claim that renewal is in the best interests of the UK.

**QASTA** (Quaker Action St Andrews) has prepared a questionnaire to be sent to all North East Fife Parliamentary candidates on behalf of our Meeting. Four specific topics are covered of special interest and concern us.

1. Trident replacement.

2. Climate change.
3. Financial management.
4. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. (TTIP)

Under each heading, after a short introduction, 3 follow-up questions are asked. Now answers are awaited that will have an immediate relevance, but also for the future depending on the make-up of the next Westminster Parliament.

**Singing in the Spirit** continues usually on the fourth Sunday of the month at 9.45 am but on the odd occasion this date is changed so please have a look at “What's On” before coming along to a vocal gathering before Meeting for Worship.

Overseers Alice Curteis and Barbara Davey provided soups and a bite to eat for a shared lunch at the end of March. It is always good for F/friends, children and visitors to have a more informal opportunity to catch up on all sorts of things. From the noise level and moments of laughter everyone had plenty to say!

There is a separate report for the “Conscientious Objector to WWI”

*Jill Marshall*

## **Perth**

Curious to know more about the people who own the building where we meet, Perth Friends organised a meeting with people from the Subud community. Three people came and told us about their beliefs and the format of their meetings. We discovered that we have much in common with them.

Subud is not a religion; it is an opportunity for people from a variety of backgrounds to meet together in a spiritual context. The main experience is the latihan. Men and women meet separately and prepare in silence, similar to ‘centring-down’ in a Quaker Meeting, before opening up to whatever comes next. Children are not allowed at the latihan. New people must attend a three month preparation period before being allowed to take part (though this time period is shorter for those over 50!). To quote from the Subud website (<http://www.subud.org.uk/>):

*The latihan, the central experiential practice of Subud, is an awakening of a capacity that all human beings possess: to come to a place free from those worldly influences that distract the mind and feelings, disturbing an overall sense of equanimity. In letting go, or surrendering in the latihan, it is possible to be aware of and feel the 'sound of silence' that is the universal vibration of life.*

*Freed from the turbulence of day-to-day thoughts and feelings, it is possible to become aware of an inner spiritual intelligence that guides our experience in the latihan, as well as in our daily lives. And those who practise the latihan may discover their own truth and understanding, which enable them to develop their individual human potential.*

*Since the latihan is a process of spontaneous inner receiving it is different for everyone, and often changes with each latihan. In letting go and allowing the subtle energy within to move through us, we are better able to follow our inner guidance, which varies from physical movements and sounds, to inner sensations and understanding. It is possible, in this state of quiet acceptance, to feel a deeper connection with the whole.*

With the better weather approaching, we are planning meetings further afield. In May, we visit Sheena Goulty and Humphrey Errington's home in Lethendy. Children are welcome. In June, we go west to Callander to Barbara and Alan Legg's home.

Discussion groups continue in Perth and in Highland Perthshire. A Friendly Bible Study group is also meeting in Pitlochry.

We have news from Peter Cheer who is working with VSO in Papua New Guinea, his fourth placement:

*I am in Papua New Guinea now. Internet connections are patchy and expensive so keeping in regular touch could be a problem. That apart I am settling in and have a nice apartment in Lae where I will be based for the next year, not Mount Hagen as I had thought. The climate was a shock to the system.... very hot and humid but I am getting used to it. There are some problems of course but luckily learning Tok Pisin (Pidgin) is not one of the major ones, lik lik samting, mi olrite.*

*Felicity Bryers*

## **Green Corner**

My comment in the last issue of TQ was premature. No sooner had I said that no Quaker Meeting had joined Eco-Congregations Scotland than I discovered that North Scotland Area Meeting has done so. If they were able to attend the annual gathering in Falkirk on 25 April which has the title *Preparing for Paris* they will have been able to hear talks by Aileen McLeod MSP, Minister for Climate Change, Scottish Government and Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid Scotland.

There's another Quaker event in June at the Quaker Community, Bamford, on

*Human dimensions of climate change.* Some of the questions which will be explored then offer us food for thought. For example:

- How do we approach climate change denial and despair in ourselves?
- How do we deal with conflicting priorities – for example between people's needs and desires (for warmth, or for travel to see loved ones) and our commitment to low carbon living? Can we be both compassionate and sustainable?
- Have we found ways of enabling people to feel they can make a difference?

*Philip Bryers*

## **Two Bikes and a Tent – A Spiritual Journey?**

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at 7.30pm we decided to cycle around the world.

Nine months later, we are busy clearing out our house ready to let and are just five weeks away from our departure day. The 'we' I speak about are myself, Johanna, an attender at Perth Meeting and Jerry my husband. We are both in our fifties and are keen to get on with adventuring whilst we are still young and fit enough. Jerry says he thinks the trip is 'bonkers' but as the time to depart approaches his enthusiasm is rising. Me? I've been keen from the get-go.



We have no timescale, no fixed agenda, and we are not doing it for charity. We are setting off on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May from Perth with two bikes and a tent and seeing where the journey leads us. South is our first direction, heading for Dover and a ferry across to France. We will be travelling on a tight budget of £20 a day to cover all our needs and so will be offering our labour in exchange for meals or accommodation to help this go a bit further. This may be through a few weeks stay on an organic farm or an ecobuild project or undertaking smaller tasks as we travel. We are just going to work it all out as we go along. A bit like life. In between times, we will be travelling light and camping along the way or staying with Warmshowers.org hosts (reciprocal couchsurfing for cycle tourists), friends and friends of friends.

Back to clearing our house.....

We are putting some of our most treasured belongings into storage. We have just one 3 x 4 x 2 metre container. Having such a small space sharpens the mind and finds us looking at books, pictures, objects and furniture and asking 'Do I really want to pay to put this into storage?'. Even after this process we may still end up with more stuff than will fit and we will need to make more choices. Everything else is being put into three piles: charity, recycling/rubbish and take with us. The items good enough for charity are going to a friend's house ready for a car boot sale to raise funds for Perth Youth Orchestra. It is amazing how much clutter we have accumulated despite me having refused to ever put anything in our attic. Things we think we need but I'm not sure that we really do. As we work our way through our house, I find myself thinking of one of the advices and queries:

*Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength.  
Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford.*

Given how little we are going to be taking on our bikes I am starting to think that my life has been more complicated up until now than it might have been. Certainly, I am already enjoying the increasing calm that is descending on our house as it becomes emptier.



If you would like to follow our journey over the next few years and hear about our experiences along the way we are keeping a blog:

[www.twobikesandatent.wordpress.com](http://www.twobikesandatent.wordpress.com)

You can get updates direct to your email by visiting the site and clicking on the little blue 'Follow' button.

*Johanna Babbs*

*Note from the Editor: We wish Johanna and Jerry well as they set off on their adventure and look forward to hearing about their experiences.*

## **Meetings for Worship**

### **Dundee Meeting House, Whitehall Crescent, Sundays 11.00 am**

Children's Meeting, first Sunday of each month

Midweek Meeting at Dundee University Chaplaincy Centre.

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 17<sup>th</sup> June: 1.15 -1.45 pm

Midweek contact: Sheila Phillips

Tel 01382 641043

Children's Contact: Donna Morgan

Tel 01382 775545

### **St Andrews Meeting House, 2 Howard Place, Sundays 10.30 am**

Midweek Meeting Thursday 1.15-1.45pm

Childrens' Meeting - each Sunday during school terms

Enquiries: Genevieve Orr Tel 01333 360396

### **Perth: The Subud Centre, 7 St Leonard's Bank, Second and Last Sundays 11.00 am**

Children's Meeting by arrangement.

### **Angus: Borrowfield, Sundays 11.30 am**

First and third Sundays

Other Meetings are sometimes arranged

Contact: Elisabeth Wilson

Tel 01356 622 708 for details

### **East of Scotland Area Meetings in 2015**

Saturday 9 May, Perth

Saturday 22 August, St Andrews

Saturday 7 November, Perth