

wsqn

- connecting local meetings



God has made us loving and the imparting of love to another satisfies something deep within us. *Intro to Chap 12, QF&P*

April 2021

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Front photo by Mark Stephens, Lanark

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**I see no betrayal of the old good in striving for the new good. David Firth
former editor of the Friend who died recently**

As the spirit moves

Many of us will be familiar with the deep place we can sometimes find in Meeting for Worship or at other times when time seems to stop and we have a feeling of unity with the universe. Deep peace. In fact, life's purpose may be to find that place more and carry it with us in all our life. We practice that and sometimes we succeed. It is characterised by compassion for the world and letting go of our own preoccupations, but it is also where words stop. Many religions and philosophies recognise that aim.

I've been reflecting yet again on Julian of Norwich's well known saying: '... but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'. I once went to visit the old church after which this medieval woman is named, as we don't know hers, and it was moving to see the place where she had sat in her anchorite's cell for so many years. She had this immense ability to be at one with the love of God and see how it empowered everything. And yes, she had the conviction that, ultimately, all shall be well.

I contrasted this with what we find in Quaker Faith & Practice 22.87 where Zoe White tells us that "On the morning of Frances' death, as I stood by her bedside, I made a secret resolve somewhere deep in my being which has only recently come to the surface. I made an agreement with God that from that day onward, everything I have to say about God, everything I have to say theologically, has to stand with me by Frances' bedside. If it cannot stand at the side of death, if it cannot stand by the side of a fifty-five-year-old woman who wanted to live to see the trees again, it had better not stand at all because it is probably not worth very much".

How indeed can we say 'all shall be well' when there is such immense loss, cruelty and destruction in this world? How can we say 'all shall be well' to Sarah Everard and her family? Let alone to those being bombed or tortured in regions of conflict or oppression. The duplicity of some of those in power even here makes one feel like withdrawing altogether.

And yet, and yet. It is not about magic or Utopia, it is about unity with that power that we have glimpsed and wish to live in, that takes away the occasion of all wars and empowers us to live in a way that, ultimately, all shall be well.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow

<p>This opening page is available to Friends who would like to share some of their experience of faith and witness. Do send something for future issues of the newsletter to the Editor.</p>
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West Scotland Area Meeting

From our Clerk Alastair Reid

Looking forward

We are now moving out of winter towards spring. In the last week or so I have been surprised how quickly the flowers are appearing above ground despite the coldest winter for a decade. With the slow advance away from lockdown times, there is a quiet confidence that we will meet again face to face before too long.

While many of our activities are on hold, our Quaker community has continued by other means – for instance by personal telephone call, email, Zoom or newsletters.

We face challenges on many fronts. Some of these we have started to look at – gender violence, white privilege, COP26 and the threat of climate change. Others will emerge from our reflections and discernment. As part of this process at our next Area Meeting on Saturday 10 April we will have time to discuss in small groups the ways we can ‘Build Back Better’:

- Looking back, how have we been supporting each other? What could we have done better?
- Looking forward, how can we improve our Quaker community? Can we work better together in West Scotland and with other Scottish Meetings? How does our spiritual life guide our activities?

More details will be sent out with the papers for the next Area Meeting.

Clerk West Scotland Area Meeting

Report from Area Meeting 8th March 2021 Mary Alice Mansell

In recent years I have been lax about attending Area Meeting but when I do it's always rewarding. It used to be an occasion to get to know Friends better over chats at lunch or teatime. Friends who'd travelled far in some cases. In times of Covid, we don't need to leave our home and almost 40 of us gathered for our March AM.

29.18 This reading taken from QF&P spoke loudly to me. I found it worthy of rereading many times. We humans lose sight of our place in creation: are we God's crowning glory or infinitesimal specks in a vast universe? Or, the combination of both? The combination of science and spirituality lead us to a proper relationship with “our Mother, the Earth”.

And, as COP26 approaches, and especially as it is to be hosted in Glasgow, we were reminded of many groundworks to that end. Woodbrooke is running spiritual preparations until October; the Loving Earth Project is underway and exhibitions planned; on April 10/11th, QPSW invite us to make a personal or group spiritual preparation in the form of a pilgrimage to a site of spiritual significance for us. This could be a walk to a local hill, wood or a stretch of coastline. A place special to one's self.

On a more pragmatic theme, we considered energy use improvements at Glasgow Meeting House. We realise how difficult it is to make long term plans in the time of Covid but our Meeting House is in urgent need of maintenance and improvement. We are in the fork of a dilemma: should we spend a lot of money on refurbishment of a building we may not be able to remain in beyond 5 years? But as a Religious Society we have committed to Minute 36 of our Yearly Meeting held in Canterbury. We are stewards of the material resources of our Meeting, of our planet.

There was a brief update on our AM Concern on violence against women but altering the name of the working group to Gender Based Violence Group reflecting its being an aspect of all oppression and inequality.

Meeting for Sufferings 6 February 2021 (Zoom)

Report: Barbara Robinson (MfS representative)

The February meeting held on Zoom with over 104 participants was more than ably clerked by Margaret Bryan who's warm welcome gently reminded us that 'nurture is a continuing process for all who come to our meetings whether or not they decide to consider membership'. Membership was the topic BYM's recording clerk Paul Parker presented by way of a graph showing the data of membership since 1860. Remarkably he showed us that current membership of c12,000 is not so different to that of 1860 c13,500. He pointed out that the addition of one member to each meeting could be achieved and is all that is required to bring us back up to 2019 figures. 'Large meetings seem to be worse at growing' he said while some smaller, newer, meetings were growing faster.

The report on the Review of the Arrangements Group was presented by Jane Mace and she reminded us that the Arrangement Group are the 'servants of the servants'. They have a significant role in discerning which concern sent by an Area Meeting is to be included in the agenda of MfS amongst many other considerations. There were several questions raised and the issue of communication from AM's to MfS was reiterated. One of the key recommendations from the review was to increase the membership to four. The resulting minute noted that 'Friends would like the opportunity to know more about the process of planning our business.' It asked Arrangements Group to consider

how this might be brought back to a future agenda. My own feeling was that to have a representative from Scotland on this group would be a useful step towards a more inclusive discussion.

In the Trustees Report we heard from Clerk Caroline Nurse how 'impressive what staff in BYM are delivering' during the pandemic. There have been 35 redundancies mostly from the Quiet Company. But there have been four more Local Development workers employed with another four later in the year alongside two team leaders. At their next meeting the Trustees will be meeting to consider a simple church supported by a simple charity. If you wish to be included in the conversation the address to use is:

clerkoftrustees@quaker.org.uk

A minute by Central Nominations Committee brought a request to review the principle of appointing only members to Central Committee service. Setting up a small review group was agreed as 'We recognise that this request raises wider questions of commitment and the meaning of membership, as well as linking with our moves towards simplification. There are implications for the future of the Society.

We heard Reports from representatives attending other European Yearly Meetings which included: Finland, France, Germany and Switzerland Yearly Meetings and epistles from Belgium and Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden YM's Europe and Middle East Young Friends Special Gathering and the All Poland Gathering.

We spent time reflecting on what we have learned in the past year from the experience of the global pandemic. Questions we asked ourselves included: what has been the effect on worship? on Community? on Outreach? how might our Meetings be in the future? and how can Friends support one another?

The minute concluded: 'We realise that there are different experiences but also much in common. We are still in the process of coming to terms with the changes and we are aware that we have not yet discerned where the Truth may be leading us,'

Knowing the privilege of being white

Issues around racism and white privilege have come to the fore amongst Quakers, at the same time as the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) has taken off, but very much in response to specific instances locally in West Scotland Area Meeting (WSAM) and across Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) (1). Trustees have made strong commitments to tackling the issue (2) and Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) has considered the issues over several meetings and noted stages, from learning through acknowledging to acting (3).

Last year a small group of Glasgow elders reported to WSAM after running well received workshops for about 30 people across WSAM, alongside a presentation that had been developed for Summer Shindig. WSAM asked the group to come back with a proposal for a strategy. The workshops came up with lots of suggestions for action, however the group recognises that a strategy for the first stage, that of learning, may be most useful at present. The group has also met with Paul Parker and Edwina Peart (Inclusion and Diversity Officer for BYM) to consider next steps and the theme of networking is one which emerged.

The workshops were oversubscribed and could be run again. The group has developed a list of resources which could be used for personal or group study and are exploring the possibility of using participative reading of scripts, learning from work done by Quaker Gender and Sexual Diversity Community (QGSDC). This could use writings by Quaker slave owners and abolitionists as well as modern voices.

As a group of elders we found creating safe spaces has supported us as we set out on this challenging journey. We have been made aware of work undertaken by South East Scotland Area Meeting (SESAM) and that other meetings in BYM are active in different ways (eg Oxford and Kingston & Wandsworth). Establishing networks may be of value for mutual support and development.

Feedback from the workshops indicated strong interest across WSAM, and the Glasgow elders involved so far would recommend that future work on this issue should be led by a group which draws on wider representation from across WSAM.

If we are to make a difference, then learning is a first step, and in going forward it will be important to ensure that any local action is aligned to and learns from national work. An annual review meeting would be one way of doing this with formal links to MfS/BYM.

Anyone wishing to know more about the work so far- please contact

elders@glasgowquakers.org.uk

- (1) <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/creating-an-anti-racism-workplace-cultureBYM>)
- (2) BYMT 2020-11-11 Page 18 in <https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/10a39461d59fac3e49862fd94ef8d4f99ee17fcc5a794589b34ad047e118>
- (3) MfS 20/12/13 page 12: <https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/cbfbc336a75199c8cacba7dbf24e0e661e84825c88a44912e933e1c8835>

Finally, the group recommends that it would be important to review what happens and ensure that any local is aligned to national work and that mutual learning takes place. One way of doing this would be to have an annual meeting between a future working group, WSAM clerking team, WSAM elders and MfS representatives.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

West Scotland Area Meeting

(Scottish Charity No: SC011234)

Our Giving to Quaker Work in 2021

For many, 2020 was a difficult year, with loss of income owing to furlough, redundancy and loss of businesses. Others, either on a pension or working from home with reduced expenditure on travel, have managed to make savings. The same inequality is reflected in our Meetings. Some Local Meetings have seen income drastically reduced through loss of lettings – others have saved by not having to pay rent for premises whilst meeting online. Our Area Meeting has seen reduced costs as conferences and training events have gone online, but we still have significant costs (see below). 2020 has been particularly difficult for Britain Yearly Meeting as lettings and hospitality income from Friends House and Swarthmore Hall has plummeted, and BYM has had to dig deep into reserves to maintain our witness and work.

Please think about how much you can contribute to the different areas of our Quaker community. Some figures are mentioned below as guidelines, but everyone's situation is different. Some will be able to give very much less, some a lot more. We are not asking for equal giving - but please give as generously as you can.

Your Local Meeting (LM)

Your Local Meeting Treasurer will be able to advise you about the financial needs of your local Quaker Meeting.

West Scotland Area Meeting (AM)

- helps Friends to access training to strengthen the lives of our meetings and support our role-holders.
- contributes to General Meeting for Scotland, which pays part of the salary costs of our Parliamentary Engagement Officer, who engages with the Scottish Government on our behalf.
- contributes to Northern Friends Peace Board, and to Summer Shindig – the annual event which provides a community for our teenagers and nurtures their spiritual lives.
- covers administrative costs, including insurance on behalf of all our Local Meetings and our two Meeting Houses.
- provides our newsletter which connects us all

Our Area Meeting needs about £100 per member in 2021 to carry out this work.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)

- promotes Quaker concerns and values throughout Britain and in the wider world
- supports our local Quaker communities through: advice on matters such as safeguarding, charity law and finance, resources for children and young people, and the provision of outreach materials
- carries out on our behalf our witness and work for peace and justice throughout Britain and the world, through projects such as Turning the Tide and EAPPI
- brings us together through events such as Yearly Meeting Gathering and Junior Yearly Meeting

West Scotland AM will make a donation to BYM on behalf of its members in 2021, amounting to just over £25 per member – but BYM needs around £225 per member to carry out its work.

How to give:

You can contribute to all these bodies through West Scotland AM, using the Contribution Schedule overleaf. This allows you to specify how your donation should be assigned and we will pass on the money in accordance with your wishes.

If you wish to give directly to Britain Yearly Meeting and to find out more about how your money will be spent, go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/giving/give-money-3>

GIFT AID

If you are a taxpayer, you can increase your donation by allowing us to claim back relevant tax from HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) through the Gift Aid Scheme. This will add 25% to the value of your donation, which will be distributed according to the allocations you have made in the Contribution Schedule.

However you must have paid enough tax to cover your Gift Aid, otherwise you will be liable to pay back HMRC for the amount wrongly claimed. If your circumstances change and you are no longer a taxpayer, or if you have other queries about Gift Aid, please contact: Bronwen Currie, Treasurer: West Scotland Area Meeting. Phone: 01496 850006, 07585 942021 or email: bron.currie@gmail.com

West Scotland Area Meeting
CONTRIBUTION SCHEDULE 2021

Name

Starting from(insert date) my contribution will be £ per month / quarter / year*
(*please delete as appropriate)

I wish my contribution to be allocated in this way:

.....Local Meeting (insert name) £

West Scotland Area Meeting £

Britain Yearly Meeting £

I shall make my payment by:
(Please indicate)

- ☐ Cheque
☐ Standing Order/BACS payment
☐ CAF Voucher

Please indicate:

- If you would like a Standing Order mandate form ☐
- If you would like a Gift Aid declaration form ☐

If paying by BACS or by Standing Order, our bank details are:

Religious Society of Friends West Scotland Area Meeting

Sort Code 80-91-29 Account No. 00724947

Please give your name as reference and return this completed schedule to our Assistant Treasurer, Helen McLean, at the address below so that we can identify your payment and allocate your contribution as you would wish.

To change an existing Standing Order, please make the necessary arrangements with your bank and return this completed schedule to Helen so that we know of your changes and any new allocation.

If paying by cheque or CAF voucher, please make it payable to:

“Religious Society of Friends West Scotland Area Meeting”

and send with this completed schedule to our Assistant Treasurer, Helen McLean, at the address below.

Please return this schedule to the Assistant Treasurer of West Scotland Area Meeting:

Helen McLean, 12A Sheean Drive, Brodick, Isle of Arran, KA27 8DH

email: hm920346@gmail.com

Helen will be able to answer any queries you may have about your donation.

UPDATE ON FOUR QUAKER CONCERNS

Scottish Quaker Criminal Justice Network

Minute 21/3/11 of General Meeting

1/03/11 Scottish Quaker Community Justice Matters

Further to minute 20/10/15 we have received a written report from the advisory group, which was circulated in advance of this meeting.

We accept the report from the group.

We agree that GM should establish a Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group composed of five members, appointed by General Meeting: -

- a convener nominated from the membership of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network (SQCJN)
- and four members, one each from the four Scottish Area Meetings, where possible from members of the SQCJN within their area.

This Working Group will be appointed for one triennium. Towards the end of this period GM will carry out an evaluation of the group's work, and recommendations will then be brought about its future.

We ask GM nominations committee to bring forward the names of Friends to serve on the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group.

The advisory group suggests that the respective roles of the new Working Group and the existing Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network should be defined to make clear their value and relationship with each other and with General Meeting. They propose the following: General Meeting for Scotland, 6th March, 2021

Objectives of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group

- (i) to facilitate the work of the SQCJN as a body linked to GM;
- (ii) to provide initial input and regular (at least annual) feedback to GM on the work of the SQCJN, keeping Scottish Quakers informed on community justice issues;
- (iii) to represent GM in communicating discerned Quaker views on community justice issues to other bodies and to the Scottish public;
- (iv) to work closely with the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group where community justice matters arise in the Scottish Parliament, always ensuring that such advocacy reflects Quaker positions and priorities which have been appropriately discerned by GM. This will require regular communication between the convenors of the 2 groups to inform each other of advocacy

opportunities which arise and agree possible actions which may involve work by the Parliamentary Engagement Officer, depending on priorities and capacity.

We accept these objectives. We understand that the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network is content with the suggested objectives for the Network and we note them as follows:

Objectives of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network

- (i) to provide a meeting place and support for Quakers working in and interested in the community and criminal justice system in Scotland, particularly those working as lone Quakers;
- (ii) to liaise with others who share this involvement and interest and especially those of other faith traditions, bringing a Quaker perspective into the discussions and taking action, working with others where appropriate;
- (iii) to identify issues relating to community justice which may be of concern to Friends and to propose ways of addressing these;
- (iv) to provide learning opportunities for those involved in and those interested in community justice.

We thank Caroline Burch, Phil Lucas and Kate Philbrick for their work in preparing this report.

The SQCJN has shared with us their statement on a Scottish approach to crime and punishment, which was circulated with the papers for this meeting.

Statement from Scottish Quaker Community Justice Network on a Scottish Quaker Approach to Crime and Punishment agreed at their meeting on 16.2.21

Today, Friends are becoming aware that overuse of prisons is a destructive and expensive failure as a response to crime. We include efforts to replace prisons with non-punitive, life-affirming and reconciling responses, alongside efforts to reform or ameliorate them. The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice.

Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been the powerless and the oppressed. We recognise the inherent dangers in the imprisonment of human beings, which like their enslavement, often is as destructive to those involved in their imprisonment and to society as to those imprisoned.

The challenge before us is to use alternatives based on economic and social justice and on the fulfilment of human needs. Some alternatives to prisons have already been

developed and more are needed to bring about reconciliation and healing within the community. Friends need to seek out, develop and support such programmes.

At the same time, we need to foster awareness in ourselves and others of the roots of crime and violence in society to ensure that our lives do not unintentionally reinforce these evils.

There is a great need for Friends to reach out to and to support all those affected: all those within the Criminal and Community Justice systems, including those accused and convicted of crimes, staff, victims and families.

We recognize a need for restraint of those few who are exhibiting dangerous behaviour. The kind of restraint used and the help offered must reflect our concern for that of God in every person.

We hold the testimonies to peace and equality close in this endeavour and recognise the express need to speak truth to power to reduce 'social harm' and bring peace to our communities. Reference Quaker Faith and Practice, 1.02.33, 23.94

Kate Aspinwall, Margaret Boland, Pete Clarke, Ren Clark, Jennifer Copsey, Mary Kennedy, Peter Kennedy, Anneke Kraakman, Bob Mandeville, Martin Mansell, Jenny Meade, Mike Nellis, Kate Philbrick

We endorse this statement and thank the Network for sharing it with us.

Violence against Women, now Gendered Violence Group.

Margaret Roy wrote:

Do women bear the brunt of the pandemic?

Yes and No. But the difference is pertinent to the overall issue of inequality.

Have a look at the government ads for the Stay-at-Home Campaign. What do you see? In five cartoons, one has a woman with a baby, another a woman schooling children, and yet another a woman carer.

Woman's position has changed over the pandemic. They call it "She-cession". The collapse of jobs in hospitality and retail has hit women badly. Hair dressers, beauticians, counsellors, care workers. We are in the horns of a dilemma. In the first lockdown, the 'caring' roles often taken by women were lauded and there is still a move on the cards to have a National Caring Service on a par with the NHS. This is temporarily out of sight as we worry about economic recovery and that Brexit again, and now vaccinations dominate the headlines. Women are invisible. She gives up her job to look after the children with no nursery or school; in the main it is her who home schools. Where is

Daddy? And what about single parents, mostly mothers, when lockdown says only one per household, or no mixing.

Mary Kennedy wrote:

On refugee mothers - In Glasgow, a number of pregnant women and those who have recently given birth, who are seeking asylum in Glasgow, have been put at increased risk of infection with Covid.

They have been moved out of flats scattered across the City to a hostel, re-branded as a 'Mother and Baby Unit'. Within this 'Unit' mothers and babies are allocated cramped single ensuite rooms where there are cooking facilities and barely enough room for a single bed and cot. A folding chair is the only other furniture.

The mothers are instructed to pack a bag for themselves and one for their babies and to bring their cot and pram with them when they are to be moved by the housing provider Mears. Many who had been settled in flats in other parts of the city had to leave cherished possessions behind when they were moved. At least two women were told that their belongings would be delivered the day after they moved in. Weeks later they had not arrived. The mothers were often not able to bring food and other essential supplies with them which left them in a difficult situation since they have very limited financial support.

There are inadequate shared laundry and clothes drying facilities, which increases the risk of infection with Covid, as women and babies queue in confined communal spaces. There are no safe spaces in the rooms for ambulant babies to crawl and play. The rooms were designed for single people so the bathing of babies is problematic too.

Fire alarms have been set off by cooking, resulting in the evacuation of mothers and babies, some newborn, in the cold and snow. Again outside they are not able to physically distance effectively, some have inadequate winter clothing. This can happen around the clock disrupting sleep and does mean that some of the mothers are becoming reluctant to cook. The ventilation in the rooms is poor with windows not opening sufficiently, or out of reach. Some mothers leave their doors open to improve ventilation but this is not possible once the babies are crawling or walking. Some of the locks to the bed-sitting rooms don't work from the inside increasing the sense of insecurity for mothers at night.

Many of the circumstances mothers and their babies encounter in this hostel do not meet mandatory and statutory obligations applying to Home Office housing providers for Asylum Accommodation and Support.

Thoughts on some implications of the pandemic for parents and young children.

Women who happen to be mothers, have always had to negotiate a tightrope with on the one side the demands of baby care and childrearing and on the other a desire to

maintain the status and pay which comes with employment and/ or continuing education. For those mothers who are lone parents the choices have always been limited and stark. Work if you can get affordable childcare or live on benefits until you have a chance to re-enter the workplace or education, if and when your child's life can be fitted around it. Part-time working, flexible working and job sharing options are still mainly the preserve of women who are mothers, not men and women who are concerned to develop their careers. Why shouldn't both parents have both. Perhaps with Covid there will be an opportunity to reassess the value of childcare and indeed of the early years. Many other forgotten people have been highlighted in this pandemic. The carer both paid and unpaid has long been under valued as have the elderly, disabled and people with longstanding health conditions. Let's begin to value people not merely according to their productivity within the income generating workforce.

Careers are put on hold or juggled precariously with childcare and other caring roles. Paid and unpaid alternatives are often a limiting factor. The parental role in caring for their own young children in the home is invisible and not calculated as part of GDP. Childcare has become a luxury with the restrictions of the pandemic closing nurseries and schools and forcing women and men into roles they may not have chosen before. Home schooling, while continuing to work remotely, may be possible for those who are being supported by a willing co-parent who is able to collaborate constructively but can become nightmarish where this is not happening. Children are demanding and their demands cannot be ignored for long. For the first time perhaps, the full value of our universal access to primary and secondary education here in Scotland, is being realised. Lone parents with young children who lack a supportive friend and family network will be likely to experience worry about their own, and their children's economic futures. They deserve the full range of opportunities for work and education that affordable childcare makes possible to other parents. Carers and those they care for deserve no less. Finally let's value and encourage career development for all carers.

Statistics

At last census the UK population was 66million with 33.82 females.

In Scotland that is a population total of 5,193,000 minus 912,340 children up to 15 years and, presuming half of the rest are female and if we believe the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey that 35% of women have fear to walk home alone in the dark (90% men), then over 700,000 women in Scotland do not have the freedom to walk home in the dark without fear. That's a lot of people! What are they afraid of?

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf has stated: We are working to tackle violence against women and girls.

The Peace Testimony

The Nuclear Ban Treaty is here.

On Friday 22 January 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons finally entered into force. More than 110 states have signed it, and will even begin to shape the behaviour of nuclear-armed and nuclear-armed states. This is a significant step towards ending the threat of nuclear war and worth the reputational risk of investing in nuclear programmes any more.



But . . . in Dumfries and Galloway

There are plans for a firing range near Samye Ling Buddhist Monastery.

Castle Douglas Meeting writes to the planning Committee:

Re PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR TWO FIRING RANGES AT CLERKHILL AND OVER CASSOCK IN ESKDALEMUIR

I am writing on behalf of Castle Douglas Quaker Meeting.

We are very concerned to learn of planning applications for two firing ranges at Clerkhill and Over Cassock in Eskdalemuir. Since this is a 'major development' (despite the applicants' dubious claims that it is only "Minor Development") with implications not only for our region but beyond, we would request that this matter be dealt with by the full planning committee rather than designated staff so that every member of the planning committee is involved in making the decision. In the light of this we would request a full environmental impact study and the results be published on the council website before any decisions are made in reference to these planning applications.

We were appalled to learn that US 'Special Forces' have already been using the range at Clerkhill and there are plans for them to do so regularly. In effect a US military training base is being established in Eskdalemuir. Is the Scottish Government aware of this?

We were also shocked to learn that .50 calibre high velocity rifles would be used at these sites, with a range up to 4 miles. Worldwide, these weapons have been restricted almost entirely to military use. In Canada and New Zealand under new legislation introduced following shooting tragedies, such weapons have been banned. Those involved in competitive target shooting in Britain have no need for such weapons, nor have any others classified as 'having good reason' to own firearms, as defined in the Government's Guide to Firearms Licensing Law chapter 13, pp 105ff. (see ref. Below).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518193/ Guidance on Firearms Licensing Law April 2016 v20. Pdf

Community Safety

The owner of these ranges is apparently intending to introduce such high calibre, long range shooting into our country, indeed they already have done as the applications are retrospective. This cavalier attitude to planning regulations raises questions regarding the suitability of the applicant to administer a business with such potential for harm, and likely to impact on the safety and well being of the local community. Being an Austrian company it calls into question the commitment to the welfare of our region.

Community safety is of great concern as there will be large numbers of weapons, ammunition and individuals congregating in that location, and there is evidence of problems with safety and security at shooting ranges.

In the last year www.gun-control-network.org logged at least 3 press reports about gun suicides at shooting ranges. There are other incidents in which desperate men used weapons from gun clubs to kill women. We are also concerned about the attraction of these shooting ranges to terrorists, paramilitaries and crime gangs. Community Safety is paramount.

Noise and Environmental Concerns

Apart from the obvious effect on Samye Ling Monastery as a precious haven of peace and harmony, noise pollution is a serious threat to the health of local residents. The fear caused by sudden loud noise, especially to children and the elderly and vulnerable, not to mention pets, livestock and wildlife, cannot be ignored.

Not only noise pollution but earth and water pollution are also of great concern. We as Quakers love the Earth and are committed to caring for and protecting the environment. Spent cartridges from these rifles possibly containing plastic, lead and other metals, would seep into the ground and contaminate the soil. There has been a recent report, from one of our members, of ducks dying from lead poisoning after eating pellets left lying around after pheasant shooting. Our concern is that even more deadly poison would impact on the insects and creatures living there. This also applies to pollution of the water. The ammunition in these weapons is toxic. Has the Planning Authority asked for a toxicology and water report in regards to this application? Where can this be found?

The council has a responsibility to protect the environment and wildlife as is stated in the 12 point Climate Change Plan. Paragraph 12 of the Plan says that the council is committed to 'protecting our region's biodiversity and natural environment'.

We also question if these new developments will lead to an increase in vehicular traffic to the sites? Is there access by public transport? Will there be access to electric car charging points? If not how could approving these applications be consistent with the very admirable aims in the Climate Change Plan committing to developing more sustainable transport links in the region?

Conclusion

Finally, on the 25th anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, the people of Dumfries and Galloway do not want another such tragedy and so we urge you to reject these applications once and for all.

From Nicholas Jennings

Reflections on 25th Anniversary of Dunblane

Dear Councillor

I am writing to you in a personal capacity, not on behalf of the Eskdalemuir Community Council. On this day the anniversary of the 13 March 1996 I invite you to reflect on the following

As I'm sure you will know planning permission is being sought from Dumfries and Galloway Council for two rifle ranges for the firing of some exceptional weapons.

If the Council permits these ranges, might an unintentional consequence be the proliferation of guns in private hands in our country? Surely the more people who are encouraged to shoot the more guns and ammunition will be sold. Is this what we want?

When looking into the companies linked to the applications I found their obvious intention is to use the ranges to test, promote and encourage the sale of their products. Please take a look at what they sell by clicking on the links below You might want to take a look at their letters of support on the Council Planning website.

Gardner's Guns planned the range operations. Here is an example of what they have on sale <https://www.gardnersguns.co.uk/page/barrett-416/38>

See the guns sold by [Solid Solutions](#). They wrote from Holland in support of the Clerkhill planning application. In their letter of support they said that it would increase their business development.

Another company who have written in support of the Clerkhill range is [Edgar Brothers](#). They are wholesale ammunition weapons and equipment suppliers. They have written in support of the Clerkhill range application also stating their intention to use the range for 'Commercial testing, dealer support, and the promotion of competitive sports shooting.

I am most surprised at the [type of guns](#) that are still legal in our county

Here's an article about it.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/14/buddhists-take-on-us-army-to-keep-peace-in-scottish-sanctuary>

Note, on going to press, one of the applications was rejected at the Council meeting on 18th March.

And on Climate Change

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk, General Meeting for Scotland writes:

Dear Friends,

Back in 2011, BYM issued the life-changing Canterbury Commitment, urging Friends to take up the challenge of responding to the crisis of climate change. It said: '*We encourage local and area meetings to practise speaking truth to power at local level by establishing relationships with all sections of local communities, including politicians, businesses and schools, to encourage positive attitudes to sustainability*'.

With only **nine years** left to meet the **2030 Scottish target to reduce emissions by 75%** it's crucial that the **Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan update** sets out and delivers the **transformational changes** needed to achieve these reductions and put Scotland rapidly on course to a **healthier, fairer, low carbon future**.

But the current Climate Change Plan update **does not have the detail or ambition we need and there is no mention at all of climate justice**, so we and over 50 other organisations that belong to *Stop Climate Chaos Scotland* need to make some noise about this!

The campaign has two elements, that aim to show public support for more ambition:

E-action: This is now live on the SCCS website [here](#). We are aiming to get 1000's of sign ups to a draft letter (which you can edit) to the Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham. SCCS will then present the number of responses and personal messages to her in mid-February before the plan is finalised. Please share as much as you can and sign up yourself.

Social media: As the four Parliamentary Committees hold evidence sessions throughout January, we want to tag them on social media as much as we can. There is a guide to social media posts, newsletter content and the details of the committees remits [here](#). Or please just share the tweets @sccscot.

I urge you to act now.

In Friendship,

The Loving Earth Project (LEP),

<https://lovingearth-project.uk>, aims to help people engage with issues around climate change and environmental breakdown. It is particularly relevant leading up to and during COP26 to be held in Glasgow in November 2021. This community project was conceived by the Quakers Arts Network as a creative way to respond to climate change and species extinction without being overwhelmed using textile craft.

As part of this ongoing work, LEP invites people to explore three questions:

- 1. Is there something, someone or somewhere that you know or love is endangered by environmental breakdown?*
- 2. How might you, yourself be contributing to that threat ?*
- 3. What more could you do to be part of the solution.*

The LEP is asking groups to explore, reflect and raise awareness of environmental issues by a) focusing on specific images as a starting point, and b) by making textile or other panels to illustrate their responses or ideas. Please consult the website for further details.

The panels will hopefully be exhibited in Glasgow at the time of the COP conference.

Gisela, Ruth and Elspeth are wondering if anyone would be interested in joining a group on Zoom for four sessions initially to reflect on the above questions, to discuss climate issues and to help think of ways to go forward to further awareness in Scotland and possibly to start making a panel.

No one is obliged to make a panel however some people might enjoy participating in this activity as well as being involved in our discussions. (<https://lovingearth-project.uk/textile-panels>). You might want to view the finished textile panels on the gallery page of the website and use one as a starting point for discussion.

The group will meet for four times on a fortnightly basis. We hope to have the first meeting on Monday, 8th February at 2.30pm. The meeting will last about one to one and half hours. Ruth Bacon has kindly agreed to do the Zoom.

If you are interested in attending, please get back to Elspeth at email

ecmcue@gmail.com.. We will send a Zoom link nearer the time.

If this time during the day is difficult for anyone who is interested in coming, please let us know and we could consider an evening event at some time.

Gisela Creed, Ruth Bacon , Elspeth McCue

Journeying to COP26

Quaker Peace & Social Witness are co-ordinating a project that involves individuals 'journeying' to COP26.

It's just one month until the Journey to COP26 and people across the country have been getting in touch to share their ideas and plans for the weekend. The Journey to COP26 is an initiative started by a small group of Quakers, supported by Quaker Peace & Social Witness, to raise awareness of the UN climate talks (COP26) being held in Glasgow, UK in November 2021.

We want to create a way for people of all faiths and none to feel a collective sense of purpose in protecting the Earth and all its inhabitants. People in Britain and beyond want radical action to prevent climate breakdown – and we must make sure that the UK government knows that.

Journey to COP26 is open to anyone who wants to show their concern for the climate. We welcome everyone to join us!

On Saturday 10 April and Sunday 11 April 2021 we invite you to participate in a celebration of our environment by making a short journey to any place that is sacred to you.

Events happening

Lots of people have been in touch tell us about 'journeys' they're organising for the Journey to COP26 weekend! We know of events happening in Cornwall, Wales, Gloucestershire, Scotland and other places.

If you're still planning your journey, you can [check out last month's newsletter](#) for tips on organising it. If you'd like to talk through your ideas or plans with us, you can email Oonagh Ryder, Activism Support Coordination at Quaker Peace & Social Witness – oonaghr@quaker.org.uk

If you don't want to organise your own event, there are two online events happening over the weekend, which are open to everyone.

- [Journey to COP26: exploring sacred spaces](#). The Loving Earth Project invites you to join us on a spiritual and creative journey to your sacred spaces. Using visualisation and creative practices we will explore and share our sacred spaces and reflect on how they are being affected by the climate crisis and how we can care for and love them.
- [Online worship sharing](#). West Scotland Area Quaker Meeting invites you to join this Quaker worship sharing event. Worship sharing will take place for about 45 mins in groups of 8 - 10 with an Elder/Facilitator. After this, groups will come together for a general discussion.

We'd love to share your photos, videos and stories on our website and social media! Please send these to oonaghr@quaker.org.uk

Documenting your journey

Now is great time to think about how you might document your journey event. Having lots of photos of people across the country will help us to create a sense of togetherness and commitment to protecting the Earth and its inhabitants.

If you are planning an in-person event, can you arrange a group photo? Or perhaps there are things and places along the way you could take photos of?

If you're planning an online event, you could consider a screenshot of everyone together. Or perhaps ask people attending to share photos of the places that are important to them?

A LOVING ROCK

When we sit down again in his room after lunch, I ask Ram Dass, “What else should we say about being with the dying?”

“Learning to be a loving presence for the dying is a practice. You have to open to a deeper part of yourself. It helps to have training, but even if you don’t, you can be a comforting presence, as I was when I first started doing this work.”

Then he talks for a long time again, giving more suggestions.

“Be natural and relaxed. Learn to feel comfortable with silence. Sit close to the person. They will feel your presence. Just like in meditation, many thoughts and emotions will come up while you are sitting there. The practice is to notice what you are thinking and feeling and, without judging yourself, to bring your attention back to the person who is dying. The intimacy of the connection becomes a soul-to-soul lifeline. The quiet appreciation of the total situation and its possibilities steadily moves things forward. The challenge is to remain in a space of compassion, reverence for life, and acceptance of death—letting the dying person know that you know they are dying, and resting in loving awareness, in communion with the one who is dying.

“As people move closer to dying, they often cope with questions about meaning and purpose. They may experience doubt, uncertainty, regret, and sadness. We can’t answer their questions, but we can listen carefully and give support as they work out answers for themselves. We listen to their beliefs, fears, dreams, and struggles with quiet, loving presence.

“If you are a family member or loved one, it’s important to say good-bye and to reassure the dying person that those left behind will miss them but that they will be all right. ‘It’s okay to let go. You are not alone.’ This loving reassurance, which releases the dying person from concern, is a great gift at this time.”

I say, “People have told me they sometimes feel helpless when they are sitting with the dying. They think, *Why can’t I stop this? Why can’t I help? Am I doing the right thing?* What do you do when that happens?”

Ram Dass says, “It’s about identifying with being rather than doing. The doctors and nurses are doing. You can just *be*. Just be love—a loving rock, loving awareness.”

“The months when my sister Barbara was dying,” I tell Ram Dass, “I kept having to let go of who she had been, or who I thought she had been. Because of her dementia, she didn’t always know who I was, but she knew I was close to her, and she liked being with me. It was actually a great relief.”

Ram Dass says, “It’s interesting to notice, as loved ones change, how much we often hold on to who they used to be. As people approach their death, they are changing very rapidly. You can practice imagining that you are meeting a dying friend or loved one for the first time each time you visit them, giving up your expectations and judgments, not focusing on who they used to be but just being there.”

“Yes, that’s what it was like,” I say.
“Every day was different, new. Toward the end, she was quiet most of the time, and thoughts about death would arise for me: *Will I die soon? Will I be ready? Will I know Dahlia well enough before I die? What happens after death anyhow?*”



The Quality of Silence

This is an edited version of the introduction to a study session held at Dunblane Local Meeting on 6th February 2021. At the end is a summary of thoughts subsequently shared by Friends via Zoom.

Silence is the absence of sounds. Sounds, though, are a subjective experience. Their source can range from the “real” external world – music, traffic, people talking, a radio – to those internalised conversations we all have with ourselves - soliloquies - to recall our memories and learn from them, to rehearse, to fantasise, to protect ourselves from solitude and much more.

We could identify four groups of sounds on this spectrum. External sounds; tinnitus; auditory hallucinations; and sounds we deliberately entertain: soliloquies or music.

External sounds impinge on our eardrums, stimulate our nerve endings and then reach our brains and consciousness. In a Meeting for Worship in our various meeting places, there are inevitably shared external sounds, extraneous, even the almost subliminal whine of neon lights, the faint breathing of other Friends, an occasional sound from beyond the room, and a shared sense of the jointly occupied physical space which is produced by the meeting room’s acoustic resonance. In a physical MfW we are like islands, enclosed by our individual consciousnesses but housed within a shared skull which is the room in which we sit, if that is not too bizarre an image.

Next along the spectrum is tinnitus: I think everyone experiences this but it probably tends to increase as we get older. This is still external to our inner brains, a bio-electronic background noise much like that in a radio or hi-fi: white noise with probably a bias towards a higher register, and possibly with single pure notes, which can be intermittent. These sounds, like those coming from outside our bodies, are not within our conscious control. For most people except those who suffer from it more severely, tinnitus does not impinge on the consciousness during a normal day: there are enough other sounds and stimuli to distract one from it or to drown it out. But in a silent environment it can become dominant and demand attention. In MfW by Zoom, we all mute in solitude, and in my rural location, with double-glazed windows and external noises a rarity, this demand for attention is greater still. When in contrast we gather together in a meeting room, although we do not know each other’s thoughts, we have inklings of mood, shared through a stronger non-verbal communication that is much harder to achieve by sight on a screen while Zooming. Is tinnitus less noticeable I wonder when meeting in person?

The third sound along the spectrum is an auditory hallucination. We are not in immediate control of these sounds, although there are exercises which can reduce them. During a Meeting for Worship, especially by Zoom, I frequently hear a sudden loud report like a car back-firing, or a sound like the horn of a large lorry. These

hallucinogenic sounds can be distinguished from tinnitus, because they are slightly less vivid, just as a soliloquy is less vivid than an external voice. Hearing voices, unbidden and unexpected, is a common experience, especially hearing one's own name called out when no-one is there. Hallucinations in the sane have been recognised since the nineteenth century. [Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations*, Picador 2012, Chapter 4. Sacks also cites John Watkins, *Hearing Voices*, Hill of Content 1998.]

The last sounds we experience are those which we deliberately conjure into our minds, typically soliloquies, but for many people, also music. Soliloquies can be used for self-encouragement, self-admonition, articulation of our reactions to things we sense such as a beautiful scene, a delightful taste and so on, or recollections of the past; and, yes, imaginary conversations, monologues, fantasies, complaints. "Talking to oneself is basic to human beings, for we are a linguistic species; the great Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky thought that 'inner speech' was a prerequisite of all voluntary activity." [Oliver Sacks, Ch4 p60]. These soliloquies are more or less under our control, we deliberately invoke and pursue them, although sometimes they can have an uncontrollable quality, for example when we first wake up; we might need to get up and move about to quieten them. But speech is not the only kind of sound we bring into our conscious minds: we may summon up some music to keep our minds fully occupied. A friend of mine and I have climbed many Scottish mountains together (94 to be exact): Once he asked me what I thought about when we were trudging our way up a hill. I told him I often played music silently to myself to help me along (and if the going is tough, often Tchaikovsky's funeral march springs into my head!). To my astonishment he told me that he never had music playing in his head. So I mustn't assume that other people have the same mental experiences as I do. Nonetheless, music summoned into the mind is a common experience, and many of us can be irritated by earworms. (Earworms are involuntary melodies or phrases of music that keep recurring in one's mind). They can become difficult to banish and even out of control. This suggests that there may not be a clear distinction between an auditory hallucination and a musical soliloquy. [Oliver Sacks writes about this extensively in *Musophilia*, Picador 2002, especially Chapter 5].

What should we be thinking about during meeting for worship? Should we try to hold a complete inner silence? Are all soliloquies distractions? Chapter 2 of QF&P has a lot to say on worship and prayer, with a subsection on "Silent Waiting" [2.12 – 2.17], which can easily be read as a bit daunting: "how to do it properly". But I would say these passages should be taken as food for thought rather than dogma or ideals to be reached. All our experiences can give valuable insights. Do we feel gathered in MfW by Zoom? What do you say, Friends?

The following is a distillation of the subsequent discussion in our local meeting's study group.

We would be lost without MfW by Zoom, but this Friend would much prefer meeting in person: it is more intimate. On the other hand Zoom enables distant Friends to take part. Tinnitus can be distracting but another Friend found the more complete silence of a meeting by Zoom helped her. Silence in a Quaker meeting is active and physical. A Quaker meeting provides an opportunity to sit with others in silence. The experience is better when the quality of the silence embodies trust, Friendship and affection. As a child, two of one Friend's adult relations used to phone each other to share the 2 minutes' silence on Remembrance Day: at the time she was puzzled as to why they made the telephone call to do this. But inner silence which is also a shared silence can bring a more global sense of people together. Silence is not the same as stillness: outside sounds may not impinge on the sense of quiet. Yet several Friends found themselves more easily distracted in a Zoom meeting. Receptive and open stillness is what we aim for, but absolute silence is not possible and may not even be desirable.



Experiment with Light

Or learning to listen to the inner voice of the Authentic real self.

In these trying dark times so many are driven inwards but alas find an emptiness that disturbs rather than consoles. That inner stillness is not always peaceful. George Fox tells us there are 'temptations, confusions and distractions'. One of my Buddhist teachers used to go on about the jar of marbles, that it was the space in between that we had to readjust to look at. Fox tells us the Light 'opens and works in our conscience (*modern word would be consciousness*) . . . 'to let you see invisible things' . . . 'that will let you see your heart'. What you see might be disturbing or challenging but facing this reality is where and when you can grow. 'Living in the truth you will find you live in love and in unity. In the light walk and you will shine'. This is the Quaker experience that has drawn so many over four centuries.

You can learn more about Experiment with Light on their website. Two groups meet regularly: For details contact Sheila Semple sheila.semple@btinternet.com, or Margaret Roy margaret.roy@btinternet.com

Riders on The Storm

This new book by Alastair McIntosh has created a lot of activity. We have had two groups meeting to discuss the book. Another group in Castle Douglas is going through their discussion chapter by chapter. Alastair met Quakers readers to discuss the book, and you will find further discussion in three seminars on You Tube. Following are two responses to the book, and an extract on internalised capitalism.

Mike Nellis writes

Some books are bigger than their actual subjects. Reading and listening to Alastair I asked myself this - what is the equivalent of “net zero” for penal reformers like me? Alongside addressing “the climate crisis”, what do we have to eradicate, change or start seeing differently to build a safer and more just society, freer of crime and less reliant on punishment? We Quakers have the wind of a mostly fine tradition at our back when we ponder penal questions, but we have not always got it right, repented or done enough and we may still be missing what is urgently needed right now, when so much of what we pushed for before has been pushed back.

There is a body of evidence on this – easily disputed, often ignored, of course, but not without substance. “Imprisonment is all too often an expensive way of making bad people worse” a government white paper warned in 1988, but it has not stopped us building and filling them. Expansionist prison building programmes were called “a sin against the future” in 1998 - no less than opening coal mines! - committing the next generation of policymakers (that’s us, now) to continued investment in a strategy that has never delivered enough justice or care to the mostly poor and damaged people who are warehoused in prisons, and often made them worse off. Expenditures currently committed to imprisonment would have been better dispersed elsewhere then – to education, affordable housing and healthcare, to the reduction of inequalities the general prevention of violence, and to the tenable restoration of harm.

Where is “being” (a properly grounded spirituality) in this understanding? To insist that offenders are *always* people, that no-one is ever a murderer and nothing else, that we are all more simply human than otherwise, always more than the worst we have done - these are affirmations of inviolable dignity and cosmic optimism. They are not mere ethical niceties to be brushed aside in the name of cost-efficiency, of ever more control and punishment, and least of all not in the face of the moral indifference that our breed of deniers (“it’s just a question of “what works”, not “what’s right”) and alarmists (“crime is rampant, no-one’s safe”) deem vital to protect us from manifestly wicked criminals.

What is “rainmaking” (resonant symbolic, spiritual non-violent actions and gestures) in this strategy? Saying the unsayable, perhaps, that imprisonment is a more a way of

containing and hiding the casualties of deepening inequality than it is a means of punishing (or reforming) the dangerous? That it doesn't touch the real causes of gendered, racial and communal violence - and the "crimes of the powerful" even less? That it ruptures good community ties as well as bad ones, way in excess of what is mostly needed to censure and redress harmful behaviour, and support personal change.

"Some people look at the way things are and ask 'why?' ", I once heard a prison governor say, disillusioned at what the system around him had sunk to: "I dream of things that have never been, and ask 'why not' ". Me too. There are coalitions for constructive penal change who need the informed heart of Quakers now. Needful gestures of kindness towards vulnerable people in dire situations, "teachable moments" to be seized or lost, occasions of empowerment in adversity *may simply never occur* unless we also aim directly to influence the laws, policies and places that enable or impede them.

Riders on The Storm is as much a people-book as an ideas-book, full of stories and encounters, more so than I have conveyed here, but it is enriching which ever way you take it. All the parts pull you in, and the whole gives you something back. It taught me a lot about routes out of "the climate crisis", about what is important to Alastair, and why, but it also clarified a lot about what is important to me. Such books are very special.

Chris Ballance writes:

Gurus like alliteration - and for Alastair it is the C-word: clearance and consumption being the problems; community and compassion the solution. We've been cleared from our life on the land - gathering mussels from the sea-shore gives a different understanding of our relationship with the land than does grabbing them from Tesco's. Clearance from the land leads to clearance of the mind, a disconnection where we don't know who, where or why we are, and fill the gap with the insatiable need for more unnecessary consumption and a worship of consumerism rather than the spiritual. The answer for Alastair is to build Communities, where people feel compassion with others and have common cause. For this, he posits, we need social justice and we need individuals anchored in God - described by him as Tao, dharma and satya, or the way, the life and the truth - to provide visionary motivation.

Dry science forms the first half of this book and Alastair's remarkable writing skills make even that interesting. But we do know we are three-quarters of the way up a very nasty creek with no paddle; what we need is that paddle. The importance of this book is the plea for a spiritual understanding within political movements for change, and this will, I hope, be the crux of his next book. Alastair is one of the foremost theological environmentalists in the UK. He is, I think, right to be a Friend, and we are very lucky to have him.

Margaret - OH he'll hate being called a guru - that's like calling a cat by its secret name - feel free to cut the first 5 words if you think that would be more tactful!

An extract on Internalised capitalism (p.152 -153) Alastair McIntosh

What might be the true scale? I notice that the list of attributes above are all profoundly materialistic. There is no hint of deeper values, no altruistic spirit or love of life. Perhaps part of what we have to do is to look into our own internalised capitalism, those two Persian devils, the one we know we have got and the one whose properties are emergent. There is also something here about the psychology, or if we may say, the spirituality of grace. A graceless spirit of utility and exploitation may put cheap products in the shops. It may give us lots of stuff with which to mask the boredom of a shallow life and to feed consumerist addiction. But if not offset by gratitude, it will block the greater cycles of life's grace, the flows of providence or 'provide-ence'. This causes haemorrhage of empathy. Our consciousness begins to close down. Soul is replaced by soullessness, *satya* by *asatya*. What's left turns to toxin and, not least, greenhouse gases. We are left with an underlying loneliness and low-level depression. We've come adrift from what the poet Adrienne Rich speaks of as ' . . . the true nature of poetry. The drive to connect. The dream of a common language.'

To pay a proper price for something is to ensure that right relationships, both with producers and with nature, have been followed through the value chain. When we say, 'that's too expensive', we must be on guard lest what we might really be saying is that the cost of social justice and environmental sustainability is too high. Unless we are poor and genuinely can't afford it, mean-spiritedness or lack of care and attention is another way of saying that we would rather be stuck with – capitalism! Then, perhaps, we try to compensate through what Paulo Freire calls the 'false generosity' of charity. False, because it substitutes for justice. However, if the whole system flipped state, if most of us became sufficiently awake to for things like living wages, high animal welfare, low emissions and strong environmental protections, then economies of scale would make the doing of the right thing so much easier. We move in part together with the society around us. If we all start moving, right alternatives will become the new norm, accessive and inclusive. The poor would have the most to gain because material poverty is a lack of choice, a vulnerability to exploitation.

How will the world be better off if, in developing your spiritual life, you make the material life of others that much more burdensome, and if, like the movement of scales, as you rise yourself towards the eternal, you make other people descend by the same degree, away from him, beyond him? You have only introduced or confirmed an inequality and an injustice, without increasing the total of the Spirit. Pierre Ceresole, 1937

BOOK REVIEW The Rare Metals War, Guillaume Pitron,

Scribe 2020 English translation. First published in France 2018

Margaret Roy

This book, translated by Bianca Jacobsohn, is subtitled “the dark side of clean energy and digital technologies. English is just one of eight languages the book is translated into. The foreword is by Hubert Vedrine, French minister of foreign affairs under President Jacques Chirac. Guillaume Pitron and secretary general and diplomatic advisor to President Francois Mitterand.

The contents of the book are shocking. As the review in the Green European Journal states:

At a time when many claim to be “citizens of the world” or retreat into naive or hypocritical protectionism, Pitron’s book is an attempt to open people’s eyes to the consequences of their social choices and lifestyles.

The basic premise of the book is that our attempts in the West to foster an economy that is sustainable and consumer kind re the earth’s resources is false and even hypocritical as we shift the dirt and exploitation elsewhere. It is the workers of the Congo, China, South Africa, Brazil, India, for example, that suffer the pollution of toxic metal mining and processing, and the subsequent horrendous health issues. Not a voyeur, I will spare you these gruesome details. Like me, you may be unaware of how much our digital world is reliant on rare metals to create the magnetism that allows them to work, mobile phones, computers, et al. One fact struck me: to send an e mail with an attachment uses as much energy as a new economic light bulb burns in one hour. Another fact: wind turbines may look like clean energy but . . . behind the scenes to create them and run them needs rare metals. A question: where does the electricity come from to run electric cars? And what about the rare metal components?

Professor Pitron shows it is all an illusion to believe it is clean. He does not mention how much energy computers use but we know their servers are housed in huge warehouses that consume enormous amounts of electricity to keep them cool! Do we want to know?

Although it concentrates on exposing the role of rare metals, the book raises the fundamental issues of the dependency of the green revolution on digital technology.

He does not evade the political issues of how governments hide the dirty truth and export the social issues to less democratic countries, even poor countries that need the money. Towards the end he talks of the changing political scene, especially China, as the

need for rare metals to support our clean mirage effects the stock market and military power.

And what about the blue economy, 'the exploitation of the ocean (floors) has only just began.

An essential read for good Quakers wanting to be up to date on nuclear warfare, or the reality of sustainability.

The 14 appendices are full of informative tables. The 30 pages of notes give all the references for you to follow up any point he makes.

A passing thought

Take the case of wind turbines: by 2050, keeping up with market growth will take '3,200 million tonnes of steel, 310 million tonnes of aluminium, and 40 million tonnes of copper'. Indeed, wind turbines guzzle more raw materials than previous technologies: 'For an equivalent installed capacity, solar and wind facilities require up to 15 times more concrete, 990 times more aluminium, and 50 times more iron, copper, and glass than fossil fuels or nuclear energy'. According to the World Bank, which carried out its own study in 2017, the same applied to solar and hydrogen electricity systems, which 'are in fact significantly more material intensive in their composition than current traditional fossil-fuel-based energy supply systems. P.174

Redeemable- a Memoir of Darkness and Hope: by Erwin James

Penny Lilley

People who work in criminal justice will be well aware of the pattern of an abusive and traumatised childhood, that sometimes leads to crime and incarceration as an adult.

Although intellectually aware of this pattern, 'Redeemable', by Erwin James brought home to me the full painful reality of a life scarred by childhood trauma.

Erwin came from an impoverished, chaotic background. His family were itinerant Scots living mostly in England, particularly in West Yorkshire, an area I know well. I wonder if being Scots living in England added to the difficulties that Erwin's family endured?

The death of Erwin's mother in a horrific car accident, precipitated an impoverished, barely functional family into violence and abuse. Erwin's school attendance was minimal and while truanting, he started committing minor offences and eventually landed up in a children's home. His life spiralled down into abusive, violent behaviour, further crime, self-hatred and eventually a long prison sentence.

As well as the memoir recording the life of a man from a chaotic background, it also records the careful, patient work of Joan Branton, a psychologist, working in Wakefield

prison. To me, her work was a testimony to 'seeing that of God in everyone'. Joan may not have been a Quaker or even a Christian, but she must have had some instinctive belief in the basic goodness within Erwin and other prisoners.

Although Erwin's early life is full of trauma and hurt, the memoir is lightened by the fact that it is beautifully written and that Erwin emerged from the bleakness of a long sentence and terrible memories to write journalism, later this memoir, and is now the editor of 'Inside Time', the national newspaper for people in prison. Although this book sounds bleak I found it life-affirming and heart warming.

The Gospels, Sarah Ruden, 2021 Modern Library Alastair Reid

I was recently surprised to read a letter in The Herald by a retired minister who was enthusiastically praising a new translation of the Gospels which questioned many biblical conventions and tired phraseology. He noted that Sarah Ruden, the translator, had an unrivalled grasp of the common Greek of the Gospels and had a great skill in discovering genuine English equivalents. He remarked that she had no time for the "words that cannot be changed" because they supported a particular theology. This refreshing approach is what I have found in her other writings and I shall look forward to reading her latest book

Sarah is an American Quaker, who lives in Connecticut and is a member of Middletown (Connecticut.) Meeting. In addition to being a translator of ancient literature she is a journalist with special interests in literature, religion, and human rights.

I have read a previous book she wrote called *The Face of Water: A Translator on Beauty and Meaning in the Bible* and found it fascinating. In it she singled out the most famous passages in the Bible, such as the Genesis creation story, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Beatitudes. She brought a fresh perspective to the ever changing and crucial world of translating, including ensuring revised texts reflect their role in accountability in public life at the time they were written and how they can be used as a reflection of society's current concerns.

If Friends want to hear more about her: she features on the QuakerSpeak video series talking about the importance of nuance and humour:

<https://quakerspeak.com/video/faithfully-translating-the-bible/>

and also in an interview in Friends Journal where she discusses the importance of her translations being her "What canst thou say?".

<https://www.friendsjournal.org/books-about-life-translating-ancient-texts-in-2020/>.

News from Local Meetings

Westerly Friends met for its annual gathering last weekend, virtually, on Zoom. For the past 10 years or so we have booked a physical space i.e. a hostel (Inverary to begin with and Crianlarich latterly). This of course was not possible this year.

We recalled how our snowy gathering in March last year was literally a week before lockdown! We had no idea then what was about to unfold.

Because this year we neither needed to travel nor book a limited physical space, we had Friends attending from Castle Douglas and Iona as well as the usual suspects from Ayrshire, Kintyre, Cowal, Islay, Mull, Lismore, Oban and Glasgow (apologies if I have missed anyone out - it gives you an idea of the massive geographical area we cover!) Our theme this year was the Revision of the Book of Discipline and we had no less than four members of the committee to share the story so far, garner our ideas and direct us to how we can contribute further.

When do we look at the Book? Many used it to find out right-ordering, especially if they are role holders. It is useful in a crisis, whether personal or conflict in the meeting. It speaks to each in a time of need. The historical pieces were welcome. The testimonies showed how Quakers past solved issues and were strengthened in their commitment. There is much to ponder over, and to guide spiritually.

However, many found the language a barrier and there was concern that it was written for and by middle class types who were well-educated. Doubt was cast on its usefulness to the new comer.

What was needed was a guide to Quaker culture, hopefully presented with new technology to encourage younger people to use it. If simplified others of no faith might find it useful. We noted that the older version was very prescriptive but later editions were more based on experience. **Ed Tyler** (in the main).

Westerly Friends dates

28 March 1.15 for 1.30-2 Worship (Argyll)

4 April 1.15 for 1.30-2 Worship (Islay & Jura)

10 April West Scotland Area Meeting (morning and afternoon)

Argyll Quaker 11 April 10.00-10.45 Worship (Mull & Iona)

18 April 10.00-10.45 Worship (Mull & Iona)

25 April 1.15 for 1.30-2 Worship (Argyll)

The Sunday meetings have opportunities for social chat on arrival and / or afterwards. Details of how to join can be obtained from Ed Tyler (Argyll), Rob Claxton-Ingham (Mull & Iona), Bronwen Currie (Islay & Jura), Helen McLean (Arran).

Judith Baines in Arran.

*What those moggies get up to
when not Zooming.*

*Judith with Zebedee and Oozie
or should that be Zebedee and Oozie with Judith?*



Glasgow Meeting

The Meeting House is re-opening for Meeting for Worship on Sunday 28th March at 11am

Numbers in the Meeting Room are limited to 12 and we will be operating a booking system in the first instance- please contact glasgowquakers@yahoo.com by 12 midday on the Friday beforehand. As we have a Book of Members with all our contact details, we are keeping a simple list of those who attend. If you are new to the meeting, you will be asked for your contact details. Last year there were only a small number of Friends attending, you are welcome to just turn up, but if there are already 12 people present- you will not be able to stay at the Meeting House.

Everyone who expresses the wish to attend will be sent key information, such as how social distancing and hygiene will be maintained. If you require more detailed information on how the Meeting House has been prepared a full risk assessment has been carried out and will be available to local Friends or on request from the meeting clerks.

If you have a smartphone please consider downloading the Scottish app which works by alerting you if you have been near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and also using the app as it is expected to help reduce infections overall

<https://protect.scot/>

Meeting House Opening Group (MOG)
March 2021

Also at Glasgow

Young Friends' Wednesday Night Epilogue: Food, Coffee & Chat - Wednesday 24th March 7:30pm

Regular fortnightly Epilogue (evening worship) aimed at teens to 35ish. Visitors and newcomers of this age group very welcome!

7:30 - 8:15PM WORSHIP

Simon John is planning to cycle from Lands End to John O'Groats in a homage to the 18/19th century abolitionist Thomas Clarkson -one of the founders of Anti-Slavery International- in order to raise awareness on Modern Slavery.

He will be giving a talk on this to Glasgow Friends by Zoom on Thursday 10 June at 7.30 and we would welcome Friends from other Meetings to join us for this. He will speak about the prevalence and distribution of modern slavery including the enslavement of children at home and abroad, compare transatlantic slavery to modern slavery and address the vital role of the citizen and consumer in helping to bring an end to this scourge.

He is also raising money for Anti-Slavery International

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/freedomride2021>

Anyone know where this is?

Clue: you will need to take a boat to the Netherlands to see it.

Milngavie Meeting might help.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

10th April	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm at Castle Douglas
7th June	Area Meeting	by video/telephone (7-9 pm).
31 July - 6 August,	Yearly Meeting	Gathering, Bath. But possibly on line.
21st August	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm at Lochgilphead, Argyll. 9th
October	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm in Ayrshire.
6th December	Area Meeting	by video/telephone (7-9 pm).
15th January 2022	Area Meeting	11:30 am – 4 pm at Glasgow.

We confirm the dates and venues for the holding of Area Meeting in 2021 and January 2022, subject to the necessity of holding the meetings by Zoom rather than at these venues. Further to minute 66/10, an incorrect date was given for the August meeting, which is corrected here.



Hold in the Light

Is this prayer? One Friend speaks of holding in the Light as being more intimate with another, holding them in the Heart.

Heather Baldry of Wigtown Meeting

Sheila Semple of Glasgow following the death of her husband Rex.

Derek Read has been through a bit so could do with your thoughts, in the Light.

So many amongst us who cannot get to meeting on Zoom and/or are at home alone.

West Scotland Quaker News is published by West Scotland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), 38 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow G2 4PS. Telephone 0141 248 84 93

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals, They do not necessarily present the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The deadline for contributions or the next issue of WSQN is 15th August 2021. Copy should be send in Word format only to the editor Margaret Roy.