

West Scotland Quaker News

June 2014

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The opinions and contributions expressed in this Newsletter are those of individuals. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

A sudden concentration of attention on a rainy August morning. Clusters of bright red berries, some wrinkled, some blemished, others perfect, hanging among green leaves. the experience could not have lasted more than a few seconds, but that was a moment out of time. I was caught up in what I saw: I became part of it: the berries, the leaves, the raindrops and I, we were all of a piece. A moment of beauty and harmony and meaning. A moment of understanding.

Ralph Hetherington (1975). *QFP*,21.27

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If a paper copy suits you best then send your name and address to Mary Latham at Flat 3/1, 6 Kingsborough Gate, Glasgow G12 9JZ, or to m.latham@ntlworld.com

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Mary Latham

The deadline for the next issue of West of Scotland Quaker News is July 18th.

***Copy should be sent to the editor Bryan Bowes preferably in word or plain text email to: botany64@waitrose.com or by post on paper or disc to:
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Clerk's Letter & Reflections on Woodbrooke on Road

"If outside sound distracts you, then the silence isn't loud enough". This quotation came from a leaflet on worship and ministry from one of the Woodbrooke on the Road days we've had recently in West Scotland. I've been thinking on it since. Meeting for worship is for many of us the experience that brings us back, again and again, to where we first felt 'at home'.

I sometimes think of it as a deep pool that starts opaque and ruffled. We become 'gathered' when the water is still and clear and we become one space – sometimes with an almost physical intensity. And then we can see great depths. If we do things right we all contribute to this stilling of the water; to this clearing of the water - towards that bright clarity where the spirit holds us. Enough of us can even clear the water when some, perhaps you yourself, need carrying from some dark personal place before you can become aware of the stillness. And we all have care of the pool, helping to make it the place where we take care of ourselves and the others present so the communal and living experience is there.

Practice helps. We can learn how to sit best; how to come to meeting so we are not distracted by the mundane 'did I turn the gas off?'; how to avoid repetitious noises and movements that might distract others; how to let go of what nags us. I'm fond of Luke Cock, a very individual eighteenth century Friend. Once, in a Meeting House with an upstairs gallery and finding his thoughts in Meeting wandering to his horse tethered outside, he rose and said 'Friends, if I don't turn my horse out of this gallery, my Master will turn me out'. I hope those present knew him well enough to translate this remark.

And yet sometimes it just doesn't work. Not enough of us are fully there; we're unsettled and the clarity, the gatheredness just doesn't come. The silence isn't loud enough.

Michael Hutchinson (*Glasgow Meeting*)

Woodbrooke comes to West Scotland

Someone was seeking hard to be properly spiritual, to 'know God'. Again and again they prayed for the water of life: 'Holy Spirit fill me! Holy Spirit fill me!'

In the end, exasperated, God replied: 'I do, but you keep leaking!'

Most of us could identify with that, even if we might use different language to describe the experience. We've been fortunate indeed to be able to use some of Barbara Organ's legacy to us to bring very experienced tutors up from the Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham to help fill us through 'Woodbrooke on the Road'. Whether we'll all leak again we'll have to see.

This year we're building on what some local meetings had already started, and next year elders and overseers expect to increase the number of days in different venues. The purpose is to give us shared experience of learning about aspects of Quakerism – so far we've had Authentic Spirituality on 26th April with Alex Wildwood in Glasgow, and Worship and Ministry on 10th May with Helen Rowlands in Dunblane.



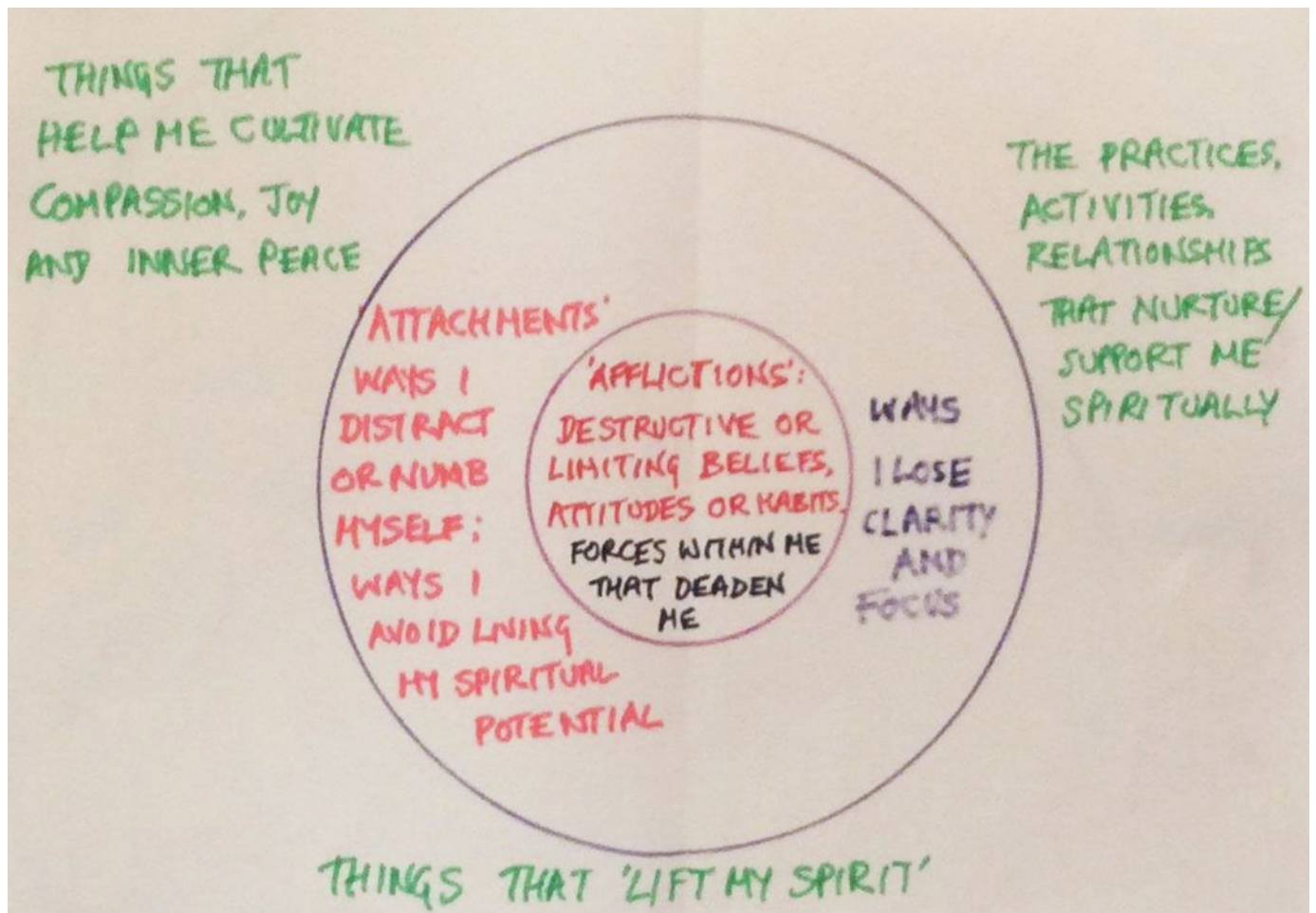
A wider purpose is to strengthen our community of Friends in West Scotland by getting us to know each other in greater depth. A strong community feeds us all and allows us to continue to help meet the needs of all of us. To patch the leaks.

These study days were sociable and fun as well as deep. Both Alex and Helen used various techniques to help us share our experience and learn together. And I must say I have never before had a meeting for worship for play doh as Helen gave us. We each had a piece of this malleable play doh as a mechanism for centring down in worship. It worked too.

Alex Wildwood led us on 'authentic spirituality' to explore what was meant by 'spirituality' and how we could work towards becoming more spiritual. During the day we put words we associated with being spiritual on a flip chart, and by the end this read as follows:

Universal Fullness of life Depths Compassion
 Humility Love Compassionate actions Truth
 Nature Interconnectedness Emptiness Creativity
 Mystery Gratitude Appreciation

Spirituality comes from the depths of human experience (eg grief, joys) and is universal. It is all that moves towards meaning and purpose, and towards accessing that wider power we can experience – the Light perhaps - a presence that some call God. Often we have had 'peak experiences' where there is a sudden deep connectedness to a wideness of feeling. Many describe experiences of the natural world or human love as sparking these. They are both humbling and affirming, where we become more than a self-enclosed individual. Alex got us to think about our personal life journeys and share things from these (in a confidential and non-threatening manner). He also constructed a diagram of two circles as follows:



We used this to think through what limits us – our ‘afflictions’ and attachments’ and what helps us to move forward from acceptance of these. You can use the diagram to do this yourself. Alex used this technique as part of us being able to have an accurate assessment of ourselves – knowing ourselves warts and all so we can aspire to be what we need to be.

We used the famous quotation from the Lady Julian of Norwich: "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well" to illustrate the product of a spiritual life. It reflects where she got to, rather than being a prediction. It is about how we can be filled despite everything that life throws at us.

Helen Rowlands helped us look at the meeting for worship and how we act in it, including in ministry. What words can we use to describe what meeting or worship is? She quoted Howard Brinton: "Our task as a religious society is to demonstrate a kind of worship and conduct by which we may first realize the kingdom within our own souls and then work out from that to its realization in the world". She also used Howard’s ‘4 doors to meeting for worship’. First came the ‘door before’ and we discussed personal practices that we used for and towards worship. It was helpful to hear other’s practices as it gave us permission to be individual about them – it is what works in preparing and centering that is important, not what it is. One Friend described how she can use doing jigsaws as a way of centering down, another used knitting (though not in meeting itself!). The second door was the ‘door inward’ and we shared how we entered into worship together. The third door was ‘the door within’, about the grace of being in a gathered meeting, and the final door was ‘the door beyond’ – how we lived with the consequences of worship – ie how we acted

afterwards. Helen then went on to explore with us what was ministry in worship – vocal and non-vocal – and how and when we gave it. Vocal ministry we all agreed, came from an inward compulsion, but describing that was not easy. I realised how little opportunity we have to actually talk through all these things with each other, and that was the real value of the day.

In Glasgow we had some 30 Friends coming from Argyll, Ayrshire, Castle Douglas, Dunblane, Glasgow, Lanark, Milngavie, Mull & Iona and Wigtown. At Dunblane we were less, and primarily from the home meeting but bolstered by some from Glasgow and Wigtown. The last Woodbrooke on the Road this year is in Dunblane again on 18th October for Deepening the Spiritual Life of the Meeting. Make sure it is in your diary or that at least someone from your Meeting can come: further details will be sent to Meetings nearer the time. The experience is well worth it. We need to have times when we can be deep together.

Michael Hutchinson (*Glasgow Meeting*).

Roots that Shatter and Bind

by Emil Rado

It must be almost twenty years ago that I first noticed that birch, growing straight out of a boulder on Rannoch Moor, on the way to Glencoe. The rock was a massive piece of granite, the size of a small house; the birch a mere sapling, a foot or two, no more. There must have been a small pocket of soil where the seed had landed, I thought; but it won't get far.

Since then, I have often driven past that rock. Against all the odds, the birch has survived; not just living but thriving. When I last saw it a short while ago, it was over ten feet tall; in the late afternoon sun it was like a green flame issuing from a silver torch.

How could it have grown so tall, with so little to sustain it, I wondered. The answer lay in the roots: the slow, surging force of their growth had split the rock, allowing the wind to blow earth into the fissures, while other roots grew over the rock, binding the riven boulder together.

The striking image of that birch, growing out of the boulder, shattering it yet holding it together, has kept returning to me ever since. I knew it had a meaning, but the meaning kept eluding me. Then, last Sunday, in the silence of Quaker Meeting, it came. God has a purpose for each one of us. That purpose takes root in us, like the birch in the rock, whether we will it or no. If we permit it grow, it takes over our life; breaking it up, yet binding it together. It consumes us, till there is no telling which is the birch and which is the rock.

Reproduced, with permission by Anne Rado, from an original sent to Diane & Bryan Bowes by Emil Rado in August 1990. The prose poem was subsequently published by Emil in "Painting Shadows on the Tilting Horizon", Taranis Books, 1992. Copies of this publication are still available from his widow, Anne.

Report on Area Meeting, Dumfries 12th April 2014

Saturday 12th April saw a bright Spring day as Friends gathered at Cumberland Street, Day Centre in the University Town of Dumfries for our Area Meeting.

Attendance was rather low and several Local Meetings were not represented. It was felt that a nice day on school holiday time may have contributed to a smaller gathering than usual.

Our Clerk Michael Hutchison and Assistant Tim Denvir bade us a warm welcome and worship/business soon got underway.

I was in positive mood which resulted in me volunteering within SECONDS to write this report for WSQN when Michael sought a volunteer. Usually he has to prise us from under our seats to do this task. A feature of our Area Meetings that has almost become a tradition!

My mood for the day continued to be positive as we embraced the matters of a forthcoming Quaker Marriage, several new members and preparations for some important Meetings later this year. As Assistant Registering Officer, I was so pleased to see a request for a Quaker Marriage Meeting as we have not had a wedding for some time.

After lunch the first item on the agenda was an application from Wigtown LM for financial help to renovate the yard at the rear of the Meeting House. Wigtown Friends requested permission to withdraw their presence during discussion on the item and were most appreciative of Area Meeting finding resources to offer a substantial grant for this work.

Serious and heartfelt concern was expressed by Friends during discussion on Prison Chaplaincy and commemoration of the Great War of 1914-18. There was also much discussion regarding our financial support for a Quaker Advocate post being organised by General Meeting for Scotland.

Although numbers in attendance was less than usual, I had a good feeling about this Area Meeting. Friends never fail to amaze me with their honest and considerate approach to Quaker life and how we might uphold each other as well as helping the greater community in so many different ways.

May I, on your behalf, thank Dumfries Friends for their hospitality and provision of a most comfortable venue for worship? Thanks to all Friends at this Meeting who spoke to my own condition in so many ways.

Do have a beautiful Summer and join us again on our Telephone Conference on 16th June if you are able.

Ian Macdonald (*Wigtown LM*)

Report on Meeting for Sufferings April 2014

The meeting began with readings from Quaker Faith and Practice 16.01 and 16.03, reminding us that the basis of marriage remains the same as in the early days of the Society. As George Fox said in 1669, marriage is not made by priests or magistrates but in the joining together of two people with the blessing of God. For same-sex couples, marriage is now a legal possibility in England and Wales and will soon be in Scotland. In the course of the day, we recalled the part that Quakers have played in moving this issue forward in the public sphere.

Our Quaker witness to equality is also being tested by the growing financial disparity in Britain, and by pressures to reduce welfare spending. A Statement on Economic Inequality was brought to the meeting by a sub-committee of Quaker Peace and Social Witness. Friends are encouraged to use this statement in their Meetings as a basis for discussion, action and speaking out. This issue is of great concern to many Friends and in the ensuing lively discussion, the following points impressed me: economic equality is a matter of justice that requires us individually and collectively to make choices; and financial inequality is damaging spiritually to the rich as well as the poor.

Another draft report, which in a more detailed form will come before Yearly Meeting Gathering in August, concerns our commitment to becoming a sustainable low carbon community (The Canterbury Commitment). The Strategy for Action will set out a number of key areas for progress: strengthening our community; lifestyle changes; Quaker property; Quaker activities; and political action and systemic change.

The World Council of Churches “Statement on the Way of Just Peace” was presented to us by the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations. We were heartened by the recommendations expressed in this paper: the lowering of greenhouse gas emissions; the elimination of nuclear weapons; the destruction of chemical weapons and cluster munitions; ban on drones and other robotic weapons; ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty; and the reallocation of national military budgets to humanitarian and developmental needs, conflict prevention and civilian peace-making initiatives. All are causes dear to the Society of Friends: and, although Quakers are not in membership of the WCC, this document will be of use to Friends engaged in ecumenical issues.

Our Quaker position on same sex marriage and on the boycott of settlement goods has challenged some of the relationships between Quakers and other denominations and faiths. There are other instances also where the Spirit leads us to take a different position to others. It was felt that, although language sometimes separates us, a mutual experience of spirituality can be a common bond. QCCIR was encouraged to have confidence in its work, articulating our position joyfully to other communities of faith.

In February Meeting for Sufferings recommended the revision of the Book of Discipline (currently known as Quaker Faith and Practice), subject to the approval of Britain Yearly Meeting in August. The process is likely to take many years. The

Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, was asked to draw up terms of reference for a Review Preparation Group to begin work in the autumn of 2014. Trustees have already made provision in the 2014 budget for resources to be allocated as necessary. From what I have heard, there will ample opportunities for Friends to engage with this process.

I have attempted to highlight a number of matters which might be of interest to Friends in West Scotland. Among other items was a letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting, the amalgamation of West and North Cumbria Area Meetings, a proposed memorial to innocent victims of war at the National Arboretum, the trustees' review of financial activities for 2013 and the continued participation of young people in MfS. To find out more, please go to www.quaker.org.uk/meeting-sufferings.

Margaret Morton (Glasgow Meeting)

Let's by Bill Bingham (Cumbernauld)

*Let's tell all our jokes about Jesus, stuff him and his useless plan,
Let's tell him that he spouted garbage, and was only a crazy man.
Let's cheat and let's steal from our brothers, and laugh all the way to the bank,
Let's drink till our brains become addled, and think this a wonderful prank.*

*Let's not stoop by the roadside for neighbour, whose life it is sorely in need,
Let's then raise our glass to the robbers, consumed by their own wanton greed.
Let's carry on messing the planet, after all She is only our home.
Let's war till machine-gun falls silent, and only the wind's left to moan.*

*Let's murder and torture our children, and pleasure ourselves in their pain,
Let's throw out the message of Jesus, quite clearly the man was insane.
Let's laugh at the antics of others, who saw 'witches' and 'goblins' at work,
Let's think that we are so clever, not blinded by own senseless smirk.*

*Let's block off our minds to Compassion, leaving others to sit in the rain,
Let's tell those of a different colour, that they can become slaves once again.
Let's carefully look in our wardrobe, and consider the clothes that we wear,
Let's think of our spiritual teachers, whose closets were tellingly bare.*

*Let's think on our destitute brother, and give that spare shirt we desire,
Let's think of the pathway to heaven, not open to wealthy young squire.
Let's think of that rich young ruler, whose treasure would turn into dust,
Let's think of the darkness within us, provoked by an ill-tempered lust.*

*Let's think of the pain set before us, and ask then the question 'Why? '
Let's carefully ponder that 'Reason', is what might just simply apply.
Let's honestly answer each questions, is God then so far, far, away?
Let's think we might find Him within us, to strengthen and brighten our day.*

March Quaker Peace and Social Witness Conference

Over the last weekend in March, I explored the work of QPSW, about which I had previously known very little. By Sunday afternoon the Conference was all but over and we gathered in our base groups, outdoors in the sunshine, to reflect on our experiences. And I realised I would miss this place very deeply. As we discussed our thoughts and reflections on the weekend, it became apparent to me that my own perceptions were divided into two distinct blocks: the detail, wherein I was more critically aware, and more likely to find fault; and the overview. How had the Conference left me feeling overall? It left me with a feeling of very deep and profound sense of contentment, as though I had fulfilled some need which had been in me without my knowledge for a very long time.

If there was one thing upon which I and everyone I spoke to were agreed, it was that Jenny Brierley's Saturday morning talk on housing was truly excellent. She was engaging and passionate, and encouraged the consideration of aspects of housing which were new to us. She introduced herself, near the start, as a "housing geek". Now, identifying yourself as any sort of a geek is likely to endear you to me, but I had never met a housing geek before! And as she spoke, she proved herself to be exactly that, with a highly infectious enthusiasm for all aspects of housing, from the politics to the architecture.

She drew our attention to the universality of the subject's relevance by encouraging us to take a moment to reflect on our own "housing journey". Of course, everyone's housing journey is different, but all of us have one. The situation into which we were, by chance, born, often feeds directly into where we are now. This was the part of the talk which I found most engaging, as my own housing journey has been a little bit bumpy. I have moved many times in my life, and each flit has been in some way traumatic. I have been technically homeless, and now live in a flat in an area of Glasgow's south side which is widely held to be undesirable... but which I absolutely love!

On the other side of the city from where I live, stand the iconic Red Road Flats which have dominated Glasgow's skyline for fifty years. The demolition of this group of high rise flats is already underway, and five remain. This tells Glasgow's sad story, in which I have had a part, of unsustainable housing, relocations of entire communities and demolitions. Sadly, this pattern repeats. I once lived in a scheme which had been built for slum-clearances, then I had to leave because social problems had built to the point that the Council decided demolishing the whole scheme was the only answer. Bizarrely, the Council until recently planned to make the demolition of the Red Road Flats, which thousands of people have called home over the years, and which has housed some of our most vulnerable people, including asylum seekers, a spectacle to celebrate the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games.

Thankfully, the plans were dropped after a public outcry, but that such a thing was even considered demonstrates the extent to which decision makers are out of touch with the housing journeys of ordinary people. So I found Jenny's talk to be particularly relevant not just to myself, but to my City. People of strong social conscience must take an interest in the issues surrounding housing.

<http://www.qht.org.uk/>

Over the weekend, I attended 2 full-length workshops and 3 taster sessions. When I met with my base group, there seemed to be a consensus that most of us would have preferred a smaller number of full-length workshops. My full workshops were on Asylum Seekers and Refugees; and The Rising Tide of Militarism. My taster sessions were on Economic Justice, African Quaker Peacebuilders and Peace Workers. The workshop about the work of Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (<http://www.qarn.org.uk/homepage/>) began with a philosophical conversation on the saying “There but for the Grace of God go I”, with which the workshop leader introduced the issue, asking us what we thought.

Unsurprisingly, a broad variety of views were held, with some of the group feeling that it was wrong to suggest that anyone is without “the Grace of God”, or that anyone has inherent access to the privilege. Nonetheless, the spirit of the adage, that compassion is called for by the assumption that anyone’s fortune or misfortune might just as easily belong to any of us, was accepted. We learned about the many difficulties faced by asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum refusal leads to destitution; deporting failed asylum seekers is often impossible, leaving people in limbo; and the system itself is fundamentally unjust, being very strongly weighted towards refusing rather than granting asylum claims, and forcing people to repeat and therefore relive, the very traumatic experiences they have been through. I have campaigned on behalf of asylum seekers in Glasgow in the past, and seen some very troubling things. The inhumanity of the Government, and by extension, society, towards asylum seekers no longer surprises me, but it never fails to shock me.

The taster session on Quaker Peace Workers was interesting but too short to be detailed. We were, however, encouraged to do further reading, and given some websites to peruse, including this one: <https://www.stethelburgas.org/>. The taster session on African Quaker Peacebuilders spoke to me as a storyteller, as we heard the stories of individuals who have achieved extraordinary things for peace and reconciliation in some of Africa’s most violently troubled places. There is something powerful and uplifting about the story-sharing process, and all of us can take some inspiration from these stories home with us for spiritual nourishment and new perspectives for dealing with conflicts from the mundane to the global. I was particularly moved by this quote from a woman working towards reconciliation in Rwanda: “Someone can’t forgive with a broken heart. We need first to heal.”

The session on Economic Justice spoke to me because it tied in very much with what I am trying to achieve through HBOB – Human Beings On Benefits, a support and advocacy network for anyone stuck in the benefits system. The need for this was made clear to me by my own experience of being bullied at the jobcentre. This session was more concerned with economic than social realities, however, and I learned a great deal. The workshop leader was wearing a t-shirt displaying a pie chart of welfare spending, illustrating that a tiny amount is spent on the unemployed, compared to pensions and in-work benefits. So the “skivers vs strivers” narrative pedalled by the Government and media is a long way removed from reality. The hardest-working poor are very often the worst hit by the cuts. We heard about ethical investments, building a new economy, and a lot of stuff I’m a bit too thick for, so have a look at the website to learn more: <http://www.yourfaithyourfinance.org/>

Our final workshop, on the Rising Tide of Militarism, was terrifying. Like most participants, I was aware of the increasing visibility of the military, but not of the full extent to which this is part of a deliberate strategy. Armed forces are recruiting in schools and promoting themselves in every corner of society. The National Recognition of Our Armed Forces Strategy is a report with 40 recommendations, which has been accepted by the Government – a major PR drive including increased visibility of military uniforms, content on the National Curriculum, and youth programmes. Our challenge is to find a way to challenge this in a loving Quakerly way, without appearing disrespectful.

Too soon, it was time to leave. It had been an enormously satisfying weekend for me, and I left feeling happy-sad. Parting was, as the man once wrote, such sweet sorrow. I miss the friends I made at the conference, and the beautiful part of England where I stayed. I take with me a new perspective on the call to peace and social justice, a sense of inspiration to be better and do better, and feel changed for the better by my experience.

Alastair McIver (*Glasgow Meeting*)

Quaker Life Representative Council, April at Woodbrooke

BUILDING QUAKER COMMUNITY

My impression of the weekend is of a tartan rug, made of many interesting threads, some dark and others bright and vibrant, to form a dynamic pattern and providing a comforting and supportive community. It is the binding together that gives its character. We have an amazing message and experience to share in our Quaker communities. And we have an extraordinary gift to share with our local communities and with the world.

The aim was to look at “What we do well in our Local and Area Meetings?” and then to explore two aspects in depth to enable our communities to grow, and become bolder and more confident as Quakers – and for our Society.

Some of the questions we engaged with were:

How do we nurture our meetings, pastorally and spiritually?

Do we have a vision for the future? How can things be different?

How can we be more equal and inclusive?

In what ways do Quakers link to and challenge the wider community?

The two keynote speakers challenged us to look at Local and Area Meetings with fresh eyes. Alistair Fuller presented the booklet “Sharing our Meetings’ Stories” which describes visits to Meetings throughout the country in which conversations were generated by three questions:

What has been the story or journey of this meeting that has brought you to the place where you are now?

What nourishes the life of the meeting?

How does the meeting connect with the wider world?

From these questions, nine main practices emerged that represented *The Life of the Meeting*.

These are: The centrality of worship; Opportunities to share; A shared endeavour; Food and fellowship; Being an all-age community; Welcome, encouragement and care; Equality of voice; Talking about conflict; Flexibility and openness.

For me Alistair's most challenging statement was: "George Fox did not give us Meeting for Worship at half past 10 on a Sunday morning - he gave us an extraordinary rich Spirit-led experience - truly a way of living."

This led me to reflect on being connected to *The Divine* - the Ultimate Source of Life and Light, and on the name "The Religious Society of Friends": that belief is something one believes in, but religion is its expression - the Dalai Lama says kindness is his religion!

Zélie Gross, our second keynote speaker, introduced her reappraisal of "The Role of Eldership and Oversight", which will be published at the end of 2014 to supplement and expand on the guidance in Quaker Faith and Practice 12.12 & 12.13.

She gave us the image of 29 "corks" of responsibilities floating above 6 "boulders" that are the heart of our meeting community. The boulders being: Worship; Communications; Pastoral Structure; Community; Care and Nurture; Leadership.

The two, of the eight, workshops I attended during the weekend were to explore ways we could make our meetings even better:

Caring for one another. Topics covered included: Who does this? How do we discover needs? Value of anticipating needs. Responsibility for, and acceptance of, our own needs. Needs of absent Friends. Needs of vulnerable Friends. Care of dying and bereavement. Preparing for, and welcoming, young families. The challenges in large city Meetings with multiple separate Meetings, and in isolated remote areas (and islands), of knowing each other and caring for one another. The value of eating together (and washing-up), and of group walks and residential experiences.

Prayer and spiritual practice. The workshop explored what spiritual practices we found useful and what we meant by prayer; what part it plays in our own lives and our witness as Friends and our corporate life as a Meeting. Following a reading on gratitude in the book "Deepening the Life of the Spirit" by Ginny Wall, an interesting thought developed on "42 being the ultimate answer to Life, the Universe and Everything" in the "The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy". Grateful 4 and Grateful 2!

Other workshops included: Good Communication; Worship and Ministry; Leadership among Friends; Valuing (theological) diversity; Family friendly Meeting; New ways of being in community.

The plenary sessions wove all these workshop threads together. And with well over 100 participants representing Area Meetings from all over the country, it is a wonderful opportunity to share stories of our own journeys of faith and experiences. Another function of the weekend was to educate us regarding all aspects of Quaker Life, working with Quakers in their meetings and providing a wealth of resources and support.

The planning and organisation for the weekend was very impressive, as was the Clerking by Jane Harries and Jude Whitby.

Many of the questions and topics covered during this weekend could be used by Local and Area Meetings for workshops and discussions, and for preparation of the Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath.

Mike Shilson (*Mull and Iona Meeting*)

Local Meetings Annual Reports

Argyll and Islay Local Meeting, 2013.

We held two notable “cluster” events: Meeting for Worship with Arran Friends at Skipness plus the second annual Inveraray Weekend Gathering which included Friends from other Area Meetings. The rest of the report consists of notes from the three different places where Meetings for Worship are regularly held.

Islay. Friends met regularly on the last Sunday afternoon (in Kilmeny church) each month, and also on a weekday during the month in one of two Friends' homes. We have about five regular attenders (of whom two are in membership), plus two children, and also two or three others who often join us, particularly on the Mondays, as they are also members of other churches or else work on a Sunday. In fact we are very ecumenical, one of our regular attenders also being a Church of Scotland reader. Two of us attend Islay's ecumenical Fraternals group from time to time, and also a fellowship group with other church attenders.

Two of us have been to Woodbrooke in the past few months, one for the conference on welfare cuts and inequality, and the other for training as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine and Israel. One other is working through the Becoming Friends material. We have difficulty attending Area Meeting in person, but do our best to participate in the telephone AMs, which we value enormously. We did not manage to meet up with our Friends in Jura in 2013, but we keep in touch and will hope to do so in 2014.

Campbeltown. We continue to meet on the fourth Sunday of each month, January to November, in the Lorne & Lowland Church Hall at 14.30. During 2013, our Friend Heather Smithson left the area, and is very much missed at our meetings. Friends from other area meetings visit from time to time, and we always enjoy their company. We lost faithful Attender Judith Falconer. Judith had requested a Quaker funeral and interment and conducting this was a new experience for us. A howling gale added to the challenge of a graveside ceremony, but our effort was well received by the 15-20 relatives present.

Tarbert. Friends made supportive visits to the Peace Camp; holding regular Worship and Witness Meetings at Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base. They also took part in many ecumenical activities, participating in the making of panels for the quilt in remembrance of the innocent victims killed by drones (the quilt being displayed at the Peace and Justice Centre in Edinburgh from 8th to 26th August); joining in worship with others on the Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice March from Iona to London; also at Faslane, joining in worship and witness of SCANA (Scottish Clergy

Against Nuclear Arms); participating in the Ecumenical Service in the Episcopalian Church. Friends also joined in the World Day of Prayer, raised funds for various charities, delivered Meals-on-Wheels, did voluntary driving of Red Cross patients and sat on the Board of the Lomond & Argyll Advocacy Service.

We lost ex-Argyll Friend Billy Johnstone. Also, after a long sojourn in a Care Home, we lost Barbara Organ on Christmas Eve 2012 and, although the next-of-kin kept her funeral private, we arranged a public commemorative Celebration of her life in February 2013, held in Tarbert, much to the appreciation of townsfolk who had known her.

Despite bad weather – gales, snow and floods - preventing some of us from gathering as often as we had planned, on the whole it was quite a busy year, with numbers attending Meetings for Worship varying from about five to ten.

Arran Local Meeting, 2013

In the spring of 2013 after much consideration, Arran Friends decided that we would like to become an independent meeting. The main reason for this decision was geographical. Living on an island with a limited ferry service we found that although technically part of Ayrshire and Arran Local Meeting it was physically impossible for us to get to Meeting for Worship in Ayr and whilst taking opportunities to liaise and meet with Friends in Ayrshire we found it impossible to play as full a part in meetings and discussions as we would have liked. In addition to this Arran Friends had been joined regularly by a number of attenders who strengthened the group and made us feel that we were ready to take this step.

Although small in numbers we decided to meet weekly and arranged to meet on the second and fourth Sundays in the library and in friends homes on the other Sundays. Meeting in the library in Brodick we thought would give local people the chance to join us if they wished rather than be possibly put off by going to people's homes.

We have been able to welcome a number of Quaker and non Quaker visitors to Arran and are some times joined by a retired minister and his wife. During Quaker week in October we held a "Come and meet a Quaker" session to which 12 people came, which started with questions and discussion and was followed by a very positive half hour Meeting for Worship.

While our main energy has been directed towards developing our local Quaker Meeting we have taken every opportunity to have contact with other Quakers and Meetings. In March three of us attended the Westerly Friends Gathering at Inverary, and in May we met up with Argyll Friends for meeting for Worship and shared lunch. We have attended Area Meeting in Glasgow and Tarbet. We have also appreciated the chance to take part in a number of Area Meeting telephone conferences. Judith and Tessa went to Glasgow for an Elders and Overseers day at Glasgow Friends Meeting House and Tessa was fortunate enough to be sent (with Muriel Robertson from Milngavie) by Area Meeting to Woodbrook for an Elders and Overseers week-end study group.

We look forward to developing all aspects of our Quaker activities in 2014.

Glasgow Local Meeting Report, 2013

In 2013 Glasgow Local Meeting supported three Meetings for Worship. There are weekly meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays in Glasgow with an attendance of 50-70 on Sundays. A monthly meeting is held at St Serf's in Shettleston. Members and attenders come from a wide geographical area, and there are often visitors. Three new members have joined this year, there has been one resignation and we note with sadness the death of our Friends Billy Johnstone, Mary Donald and Peter Pond.

Elders have continued the practice of reading from Advices and Queries once a month as well as our monthly '5 minutes discussion' after Meeting for Worship which seems to be quite popular. In November there was a joint meeting with Overseers from other Local Meetings within West Scotland Area Meeting to strengthen the support we can give the Elders and Overseers from smaller meetings. An 'Exploration Day' was organised in conjunction with Quaker Life and Overseers which allowed us to focus on the strengths of our meeting and how we might use them to develop and deepen our Meeting.

Overseers have had a difficult year with the terminal illnesses and deaths of longstanding members who also happened to be overseers. In spite of this and having three clerks during the year they have continued to care for the Meeting and arranged the annual picnic at Mugdock Park and a Meeting House party.

Children's Committee has been fortunate to have two paid children's workers, Jen Hodson and Robin Cannon who organise the children's activities providing a familiar face for the children. Committee members take it in turns to organise a monthly rota of additional adult helpers. The group may range in number from 2-10 and from toddlers to teenagers. A moving presentation was given by the older children and organised by Helen Minnis to mark Holocaust Memorial Day in January. The 'pancake breakfast' for the children on third Sunday mornings which has proved popular and an all age worship session was held as part of Quaker Life's 'Spring in to all age worship'. The teenagers' discussion group meets each month at pizza and then a talk, discussion or activity of their choice. The children's workers and all but one of the committee members have either got or applied for PVG registration and those members who have enhanced disclosure for their professional work will also be applying to be PVG checked ahead of the 2015 deadline.

Our annual income from Glasgow Friends and attenders is around £30,000 and from lettings was £27,000. Expenditure on Quaker and charitable activities amounts annually to around £13,000. This includes a large contribution to Britain Yearly Meeting of £5,500, smaller donations to Quaker appeals and running Quaker activities. Other expenditure, such as employment costs (£25,000), property maintenance (£9,000), utilities + services (£7,000) and supplies (£1,500), totals £40,000 and covers both Quaker and our customers' needs. As a Meeting which is responsible for employees and substantial property we aim to hold enough reserves for one year's expenditure. These funds amount to £39,403. Included in Glasgow Local Meeting accounts are two special funds, where the use has been restricted to a specific purpose to meet the requests of the donors.

- The Vera Long Fund (now called the Spiritual Renewal Fund), administered by Elders (Purpose: to support the spiritual life of the Meeting) now stands at £2,065.

- The Social Fund is administered by a small group including an overseer (Purpose: to support social activity of the Meeting), it was used this year to support a summer outing and also enabled a large group of children and parents to visit a splendid performance of the pantomime at the Royal Conservatoire in December. The fund now stands at: £3,172.

The property committee has had a busy year with several changes of members. Regular inspections of the property have been carried out to complete and maintain an accurate record of the condition of the property. All annual servicing and inspections have been carried out. With the resident warden leaving in July 2013 and the decision to let the flat the opportunity was taken to substantially renovate it and make it more attractive to prospective tenants. The renovation of the benches was completed and new collapsible tables purchased for the Elizabeth Fry room, and a new urn for the servery. The redecoration of the basement was completed in line with the plan to redecorate one level each year. Wi-Fi has now been installed, but this work is ongoing to ensure there is adequate coverage to the whole building.

The Hospitality Committee is a small team which only meets as a whole group twice a year, but which provides a vital service within our Quaker community and helps us to build our awareness of the presence of the spirit of God within the ordinary activities of daily life as we prepare and serve food together. Providing shared meals gives us the opportunity to nurture the members of our Quaker community, getting to know each other better as we fulfill our work joyfully together. The Committee is supported by a further group of six volunteer soup makers and works closely with the warden. The Committee organises catering for the monthly Bring and Share lunch, for our Local Meetings for Business and for the Area and General Meetings that take place in Glasgow. Catering has also been provided for the Exploration Day for the successful Doors Open Day and for the Visioning Day. Basic Food Hygiene training is completed by all Committee members. Arrangements are currently being made for newer members to take an initial training course and for existing members to refresh their training.

With the help of discernment the Nominations committee have brought forward to the appointing meeting the names of those who were willing to serve. In this last year nine replacements have been nominated for several committees. The tasks and roles have been explained to those whose names we wish to bring forward, with the help of the committee remits. The scope and duration of service has been explained and individual's consent obtained should the meeting wish to make the appointment. The consideration of the possibility of serving by all approached whether they were able to serve, or not is greatly appreciated. The committee meets four times a year and confers regularly by email. There is close communication between the committee and the Glasgow Meeting representative on Area Meeting Nominations committee.

There have been major changes to the wardenship team this year when Barbara Potter decided to leave after 10 years as Resident Warden. Following an advertisement, Lorraine Beaman was appointed as Warden and Catherine Mackie as Assistant Warden and Carlos Blackburn as Cleaner. We also have a team of Depute Wardens. The Wardenship and Lettings Committee aims to support and manage the Warden and through the Warden, the other wardenship staff in the difficult job of encouraging use of the Meeting House and ensuring it is welcoming and in a suitable condition to

meet the requirements of Quakers and other user groups. The Meeting House is used by over 50 different groups most of whom would otherwise find difficulty in obtaining accommodation. In any month there can be 80-90 bookings by outside groups and 30-50 bookings by Quaker groups. In general, the number of bookings has been maintained at about the same level as the previous year despite our biannual increase in charges. Although many groups pay a commercial rate, we continue to be flexible in our charges and respect the financial difficulties of some user groups.

Outreach committee has had a busy year focusing on improving communication and raising the profile of Quakers in Glasgow and is working with Heather Burns on a new Glasgow Quaker website which should go live early in 2014. In September we had a very successful Doors Open day when we had 175 visitors. People were interested to find out more about Quakerism, asked questions, took leaflets and a few joined us for a short meeting for worship. In November we had a stall at the interfaith family fair. We had lots of enquirers who contributed to our peace tree and enjoyed Tottenham cake

During the year the Climate change (Green Ginger) group has organised a showing of a DVD about 'The Economics of Happiness' and a meeting to consider 'The Climate Crisis and Spiritual Community'. Currently the group is joining the on line seminar series on 'Busting Economic Myths'.

The Explorations day, together with the work of a small group looking at how other large meetings managed their responsibilities led to a Visioning process. This has been a major undertaking for the meeting over the autumn and winter. Facilitated by Verene Nicolas a visioning day was held in November which identified six priorities for the Meeting:

1. Enjoying a sense of fellowship and spiritual growth
2. Finding opportunities for learning Quaker processes and increased participation in the life of the meeting.
3. Supporting us as individuals and as a meeting to fully live our values, testimonies and processes.
4. Building a strong collective social witness and relationship with our local community in Glasgow including the interfaith community.
5. Creating a space which works for us and embodies and enables our ministry and witness (peace, beauty, openness, conviviality, accessibility, environmental sustainability etc).
6. Rebalancing our roles and responsibilities so we meet the spiritual and practical needs of our community.

These priorities and how they are taken forward will be considered at a special Local Meeting early in 2014.

This report gives an overview of the year's activities within Glasgow Local Meeting, it would not be complete without recognising the work done by its members and attenders in the wider Quaker world and within their own communities, drawing on the strength and nourishment of our Meeting for Worship

Lanark Local Meeting Report, 2013

Further to Minute 2/13 of Meeting for Worship for Business of Lanark Quaker Meeting the following is offered as the Report on Activities for 2013.

The regular holding of public Meetings for Worship took place on the first and third Sundays of each month at Wiston Lodge. We have welcomed attenders and enquirers who have joined us. We have ceased holding a third Meeting for Worship in Biggar on the fourth Sunday as we could not sustain the cost and it did not attract any additional visitors as initially hoped.

We have started to meet to explore the Experiment with Light on the second Sunday of the month, with regular attendance by 4-5 people. Different texts have been tried and we are feeling our way gently as to the best way of taking this forward. Our Friend Margaret Roy has attended a course at Woodbrooke looking further at this.

We have held Business Meetings in 2013 to fit with the dates of Area Meeting. These have been attended by members of our Meeting, although not always formally appointed, and we have taken part in most of the telephone conference Meetings.

Our Friends Meg Beresford and Malcolm Crosby continue to fulfil the roles of Elder/Overseer and Clerk respectively.

The accounts for the Meeting have been kept in the proper manner and examined by an independent person. The opportunity for giving has been discussed within the Meeting.

We have supported the activity of other local Meetings by attendance at some of their Meetings for Worship. Friends from other West of Scotland Meetings have joined us periodically and the presence of South and Central Edinburgh Meetings at Wiston Lodge in September allowed us to hold All-age Worship.

We have sought opportunities to share in activities organised by other Meetings and several of us attended a film showing organised by Tweeddale Peace Group in Peebles looking at ways of bringing together Palestinians and Israelis to generate more understanding between them.

We enjoyed a Christmas lunch and Carol singing at Wiston Lodge as a shared activity with South Edinburgh and Penicuik Meetings.

Our Friend Elizabeth Allen finally succeeded in selling her house near Lanark and has bought a house in North Berwick. She now attends Edinburgh Meetings, but remains in our thoughts and prayers.

Malcolm Crosby (*Clerk Lanark QM*)

Reminder: Area Meeting Telephone Conference

The next AM will be on June 16th at 7.0 for 7.30pm. The format will be as for previous conferences, but please contact Michael Hutchinson (Tel. 0141 770 7865) for any further information.

Scotland 2050 vision: Quakers, referendum and beyond.

What kind of a Scotland do we want to see in 2020? And in 2050? And beyond? To see ourselves, and leave for our children and grandchildren? And then:- What is there to celebrate about Scotland in 2014? And what are the things we would change? What injustices need we continue, or begin to overcome? And trying to see the future: Scotland 2050. What are our hopes? What are our fears? What are the important issues for Quakers? Will the referendum vote be an emotional decision, or one based on cold hard reasoning? What information do we crave? What is already in the public domain, which we should share? Are there any questions we would put to both "Yes" and "No" camps, other political leaders, or indeed ourselves? Do we wish to work towards making some kind of public statement?

There is a discussion group in Glasgow, to explore these issues, hosted by Susan Brush and Ruth Wilkinson. Both firmly believe that we Friends share much in our aspirations for Scotland, and that we can have Quakerly discussions which transcend the political divisions. (We are "on different sides" re the referendum, and we are looking forward to cooperating on this!) We are both dismayed that much of the media coverage and public discussion omit really important issues, concentrate on matters largely irrelevant, and are often very adversarial in tone. We also believe it would be useful for Quakers to start considering now what we would wish to see in a written constitution, however the vote in September goes. We warmly welcome all who are interested: however you may vote, and whether you are decided, considering your options, feeling plain confused, or haven't really engaged with the debate so far. We believe everyone can contribute! We have an opportunity to be part of a Scotland-sized visioning process!

The first discussion was on 10th April but we plan to hold ongoing discussions roughly monthly for as long as there is enthusiasm. For more details, contact Susan or Ruth. For those of you who cannot come in to Glasgow, do get in touch. We'd be really interested to hear of interest in other parts of the country. Should we consider a "discussion group roadshow"? Or look into options such as discussion groups by phone or skype? If you'd like to set up a group local to yourself, we'll be happy to talk about what's worked (or not?) here.

Susan Brush Tel 0141 550 8593(/07980 929 763; Ruth Wilkinson Tel 0141 632 3714

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