

West of Scotland Quaker News

June 2015

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Clerk's Letter

Yearly Meeting is the annual assembly and ultimate decision making body of Quakers in Britain. This year over 1000 of us gathered in London in early May. Several West Scotland Friends were there, including Mary Alice Mansell on the group that wrote the epistle to 'all Friends everywhere' which was read out all over Britain the following Sunday (and is found elsewhere in these pages).

We were evident in other ways – of the three extracts of testimonies to the grace of God in the lives of deceased Friends that were read out during the long weekend, two were West Scotland Friends. The Arrangements Committee chooses these to illustrate a theme of the business. We reflected therefore that 'Billy Johnstone came into contact with the Society of Friends when he was considering how he might bring the whole of his life into unity with his strong Christian belief.' This year Agenda Committee gave us a lot of time for the main theme: 'Living out our faith in the world'. They'd received our Area Meeting minute on this beforehand. The theme will run for three years, to give us all time to work things through. Elizabeth Allen, well known to many of us, introduced the subject well, reminding Friends that 'we are one people, who hope to be led by the Spirit. We are all activists and we are all worshippers'. We cannot avoid our spiritual loving concerns from being political. She explained that Friends in session would test their leadings and witness to them in discernment. It was this faithful testing, she said, that 'distinguishes authentic Quaker work from that done by the many organisations which seek to alleviate the pain and suffering in our world today.'

I was also impressed by her assertion that we require transformational change rather than a revolutionary one. This was illustrated in a Friends' ministry in the open session. Anger can be justified, but we must use it carefully. She spoke of how Samson used his self-righteous anger to bring down the pillars in the temple and destroying all, including himself. The clue was also in the testimony read at the start of the session. 'Gwen had chosen Billy's favourite Beatles' song to be played as we left [the memorial meeting]. The song was "All you Need is Love". No one moved, and it became part of the meeting, encapsulating as it did the gift that Billy personified for those who knew him.'
We must do everything we do in love.

Michael Hutchinson, Glasgow Meeting

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

Held at Friends House, London on 1-4 May 2015

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere,

We have come together with joy, seeing one another's faces and hearing one another more clearly in our new light-filled Meeting House. We have begun a three-year exploration on how we live out our faith in the world. At this particular time with its pressing challenges, we are called to work to identify and understand the root causes of social and economic injustice on our threatened planet. In the face of so much that is wrong in society locally, nationally and globally we need to see beyond despair and find a way 'to turn the world the right way up again'. We are complicit.

What do we do about it?

We need to rethink what needs to grow in the world and what does not. Are we as individuals prepared to make uncomfortable changes to our own lifestyles and work towards a new economic system which may be at greater expense to ourselves?

As Meetings are we giving proper consideration to how we use our resources?

Today in our minutes we have said 'As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live. We are also called to be a community of Friends as a yearly meeting, pushed towards the important things we can only do together. We have a body of experience we can draw on and maintain. We are in this for the long haul.' This is what love requires of us.

In the Children and Young People's programme the response this weekend when faced with the problem of inequality has been far from despair. Instead the response is 'here's how I know I can help and what else can I do?' We are reminded that willingness to act on what we are individually passionate about is foremost to any movement forward. We must ask the awkward questions and object strongly and intuitively when things are unfair and unjust.

Quaker meetings grounded in worship and loving tenderness can work together to transform our own lives and respond to injustice, poverty and the need for sustainability locally, nationally and internationally.

We are not alone. Others in churches, faith groups, and in wider society, share our vision that the world needs to change. Quaker organisations are already doing much on our behalf: with better financial support more could be achieved. This is a challenge that Friends in Britain need to address.

The Swarthmore Lecturer, speaking on faith, power and peace, reminded us that deep faith is our source of courage and that our power lies in our willingness to be vulnerable in the face of violence and injustice. We also need to recognise power as an obligation of service, not a right to dominate. The light which pushes us to act is the same light that pushes our Friends in other parts of the world. In ministry, we have been reminded of our Friends in Africa, who in recent years have transformed suffering into a force for social change and our Nepalese Friends who are showing such resilience in their current struggle to support their stricken society.

‘Compassion means suffering with.’ If we believe in the light within everyone, doing nothing is not an option. As Quakers we know from experience that we can and do influence social and political change. We should not be complacent. Faithful attention to our leadings, worship and discernment will lead us to find the right way. We can’t do everything, but we can all do something.

‘Live up to the light thou hast and more will be granted thee.’ (Quaker Faith and Practice 26.04)

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting
Chris Skidmore
Clerk



How do we live in the world as a faithful people?

Elizabeth Allen

That is the question we began to explore at Yearly Meeting. We reminded ourselves that our testimony is the living out of our faith, and not a form of words and that we have developed processes of discernment for testing our leadings so that when we are clear about what we are being led to do, we can act together as one people.

In our gathered Meetings and in our active lives what is the Spirit revealing to us about our society and our world? At Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath, introducing the session on ‘What would the world be like if we lived our testimonies?’ Yan Arriens said, *“Ours is a world – especially in the West – in which our spiritual foundation is often lost, to be*

supplanted instead by individualism and materialism. What is needed is a deep spiritual connectedness not just with our fellow human beings, but also with the world around us. Once, traditional communities had an intimate sense of connection with their physical surroundings. Now, we all too often approach the world around us instrumentally, as something to gratify our needs and wants. We may in the process destroy the world as we know it.”

During worship sessions at Yearly Meeting this year, we listened to one another prayerfully. We are distressed by the inequalities and the suffering in society. Much of what is good and beautiful and true in the world is being trashed by those who know no better but who hold the power. This domination is wrong and needs to be challenged. It is damaging, to people, to the riches of the world we often call resources, and to the planet itself. It damages those who dominate as well as those who are dominated.

How are we led to live our testimony and hold firm to its source in faith in a world where our current political and economic systems recognise and encourage the selfish, competitive, greedy part of the human condition and where we see systemic injustice and increasing inequality? There is much living witness to alleviate the pain in the world: campaigning against inequality; working in food banks; protesting against degradation of the environment; global and local peacebuilding. The work on individual issues is important and needs to continue but are our concerns inextricably linked? By asking the question ‘What brings about these ills?’ might we unearth the same root causes? We explored whether we were being led, indeed pushed to go further, dig deeper and look at the root causes of many of the ills in our society.

To help us move forward on this, Yearly Meeting suggested several measures, which could be taken by Friends and meetings to help them engage with the evil of social and economic injustice. Meeting for Sufferings was asked to take the work on social and economic justice forward and to co-ordinate the work of local and area meetings, who want to become involved.

We will also have the opportunity to continue this exploration at Yearly Meeting 2016 and Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017. Since 2012 Yearly Meeting non-required business has been organised in three-year themed arcs. 2014 was the final year of Yearly Meeting’s exploration of ‘What it means to be a Quaker today’. From 2015 to 2017, Yearly Meeting is exploring ‘Living out our faith in the world’. Of course, not all the work can be done during Yearly Meetings. Between times we can all try to become involved, in whatever way we can.

Attending Yearly Meeting - Some Impressions

David Rees

In my 24 years of membership (23 odd in South London and nearly a year in West Scotland) I had never attended Yearly Meeting in London before 2015. Having attended residential gatherings in Aberystwyth, York and Stirling, I had become acutely conscious of the opportunities I had let slip when Yearly Meeting was little more than an hour's journey away. The theme which had been chosen for the coming three YMs: *Living out our faith in the world*, was one which drew me specially. Having decided to go this year, I asked Rhiannon, Clerk of Croydon Meeting, to find out if anyone was prepared to put me up. A Friend whom I had not seen for some time modestly told me that I should likely be offered more comfortable accommodation elsewhere, but that I was more than welcome to stay with her and her partner if I chose. I did choose and am still trying to think of ways to repay them as they have firmly declined any recompense I have offered.

My experience of attending meetings for worship for business confers a dimension to membership which is otherwise missing. The first of the documents in advance of Yearly Meeting to be received concerns spiritual preparation. Coming to meeting with heart and mind prepared is one of the most valuable of all Quaker disciplines. This becomes almost palpable as silence descends on a crowded Large Meeting House when the Clerks enter at the start of a session.

I was impressed by the sensitivity and discernment of the Clerks, by the quality of all the presentations and most of the spoken ministry. One of the most difficult sessions, as might have been expected, was that dealing with proposed amendments to *Quaker faith & practice*. Agreement could not be reached on proposed changes to 3.27 concerning authority for public statements, and these had to be referred back to the Church Government Advisory Group of Meeting for Sufferings. Changes to Chapter 16 concerning Quaker marriage procedure gave rise to a certain amount of hair-splitting. It is ironical that notwithstanding our acknowledgement that words are inadequate as we try to discern the way forward in silence, we still allow words to create divisions amongst us.

I was partly drawn to YM by the "add-ons", the Salter Lecture, the Swarthmoor Lecture and the special interest group presentations which occur in the lunch and afternoon tea breaks. I suspect that other Friends are also drawn by these. I commend both Jude Kirton-Darling's and Diana Francis' lectures as worth studying. Two shorter presentations which I thought outstanding were on Trident, given by members of QPSW and Young Friends General Meeting, and on the treatment of British citizens of Austrian and German origin during the First World War, given by the Quaker Historical Society.

Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting 2015

held at Lee Valley Youth Hostel, Cheshunt and Friends House, London 1-4

To all Friends everywhere,

From 1st – 4th May 2015, 51 young Quakers gathered at Lee Valley youth hostel to discuss the theme ‘How do we as Quakers respond to injustice?’ We valued the presence of two ecumenical representatives and two representatives from Sweden Yearly Meeting. We left behind the stresses and pressures of everyday life and created a welcoming atmosphere and a community with a warm heart. Social activities such as a ceilidh helped us to bond through fun and laughter, and worship sessions gave us an opportunity to share our spiritual journeys in a deep and creative way. We were able to support and uphold one another in learning, sharing, friendship and discovery.

This year’s JYM (Junior Yearly Meeting) happened alongside BYM (Britain Yearly Meeting), held at Friends’ House in London. Our theme was closely integrated with the BYM theme, ‘Living out our faith in the world’, and we joined BYM on Saturday and Monday afternoon to integrate with the wider gathering of Friends.

Whilst at Friends House, we had a creative challenge which simulated injustice faced on a global scale and opened our eyes to the nature and scale of injustice, illustrating how some countries have many privileges and others have very few. This provided us with inspiration for the following session run by QPSW (Quaker Peace & Social Witness), in which we learned about pillars of power and discussed ways in which we can approach challenging injustice.

We enjoyed the Swarthmore Lecture, given by Diana Francis, which was presented in a human and relatable way and spoke to many of our participants. Diana encouraged us to remember the importance of our faith, which is a source of motivation and power that we can draw upon to help us as we respond to injustice. As a group of Friends, the precedence of the spirit above all is important. A lively and interesting talk from Sam Walton from QPSW taught us more about the global involvement of Quakers. We connected with the stories he shared and were encouraged by examples of positive change. We feel inspired to act in any way we are able, rather than ignoring injustice we see around us.

We are left with more questions than answers, and this inspires us to continue our journey of learning and discovery as we go back to our homes. We hope to draw strength from the experiences we have had and things we have learned at JYM.

Many of the sessions and discussions gave us a sense of empowerment, and the knowledge that it is possible for us to make a difference. We leave with a deeper understanding of the theme and the ways in which we can change the things that are important to us. We discussed the importance of identifying our own perceptions of injustice and starting with small changes. By addressing the things we have the power to change on a personal and local level, we are making an important step towards a more just community.

We found the event eye-opening, and it increased our understanding of injustice, affirming our determinations to make positive changes. Throughout the event we were reminded that every person is “Unique, precious, a child of God”.

Signed on behalf of JYM 2015,

**Isaac Peat Oliver Morley
Clerks**

Attending Junior Yearly Meeting 2015

Eliza Lyn Topliff

As a self-proclaimed “cultivated Quaker”, I headed to this year’s Junior Yearly Meeting at Lee Valley Youth Hostel with admittedly lower than usual expectations. Used to the week long events, I had a gut feeling that a Friday night till Monday afternoon event was simply not going to be enough time to make real friends or get very far exploring the theme. ‘How Can Quakers Respond to Injustice?’ seemed so wide and ambiguous a topic that we couldn’t even scratch the surface in the amount of time we had been given. However, not one to reject the offer of Quaker company, I made the journey and arrived Friday night to the warm welcome I have become accustomed to.

What I had been forgetting in the time between last year’s JYM and this year’s is that it is near impossible to kill the feeling of absolute community between Quakers, young and old. Arriving at the reception I was greeted with hugs and hellos from Quakers I have known for years and Quakers I had never before set eyes upon. ‘Do you want food?’ ‘How was your journey?’ ‘Would you like me to show you to your room?’ Before I had even sat down to eat I had spoken to friends and strangers alike (although I have long since accepted that there are no ‘strangers’ amongst Quakers), and it was almost as if we had never been apart.

One of the unforeseen bonuses of it being a smaller than usual JYM was that it made it easier to interact with almost everybody there. I was in a bedroom with three people I had never met before, one of whom had come all the way from Sweden, and I got to know them well as we chatted before bed or while getting ready in the morning. Base Groups

gave us an opportunity to form strong bonds with a small group of Friends, with team-building exercises and conversations following the sessions which gave a more intimate space to share thoughts and feelings about the theme. Meeting new people felt natural and easy as there was so much to talk about; everybody had something to contribute to both the structured discussions and the casual conversations.

We travelled to Friends House in central London on Saturday for an interactive session on global injustice and to listen to the Swarthmore Lecture. This year's lecture given by Diana Francis was incredible in its flexibility, able to feel relevant to every person listening. She spoke about the "power of the powerless", which echoed the feeling that we at JYM largely shared; that as young people we had to stand up even though we felt our voices were too quiet to be heard. I personally took from it a sense of collective responsibility and acknowledgement that all voices are soft - nobody can speak loud enough alone to make a change and it will take all the voices we have to make the protests that we want to be known. There was something very human and personal about the way she spoke, 'with us' as opposed to 'to us', and I do think I speak for most when I say that we left the lecture feeling lighter and more important than when we entered.

My previous prediction that we weren't going to be able to properly explore the theme in our short time together was in part fulfilled. In the words of our epistle, we were left with "more questions than answers", but actually this turned out to be a good thing. As it often is with JYM, the thinking and thematic exploration continues long after the event is over. Instead of going to the event to find clarity, I found that it disrupted my clarity and planted doubt in my mind about how I went about facing injustice - how can I do more? How can I make individual improvements in my life that will benefit others? The only thing I came away sure of is that I was wrong when I expected a short JYM to be a poor JYM - Quakers proved once again that they are an indestructible community force who create love and friendship no matter how much time they have together.

Meeting for Sufferings Reflections of a Rep

Peter Christy

'Would you like to be a Meeting for Suffering Rep?' Or was it 'We would like you to be MfS Rep!' Two subtly different ways of asking would you like to spend 6 Saturdays a year in Friend's House representing West Scotland Area Meeting. Even the word 'represent' is a little odd in the conventional sense of the word. However, all that accepted, for some strange reason that I've never quite understood, I said OK and now I look back on 6+ years of an incredible journey that has been exciting, boring, challenging and fulfilling.

Quaker Faith and Practice 7.02 tells us that Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, the making of decisions and the issuing of statements in the name of Britain Yearly Meeting. Within our church government it exercises discernment on priorities and receives regular interim reports for information and consultation on the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees' work. It has a part to play in developing a visionary and prophetic role for the whole yearly meeting and in fostering communication throughout the yearly meeting. So what did I find?

I arrived in the days when well over 200 worthy Quakers were packed into the Small Meeting House at Friend's House. Sardines would probably have been more comfortable in their tin. It was after the split of responsibility between MfS's work of overseeing the spiritual aspects of the Society and BYM Trustees picking up the role of managing the day to day business of the Society. However, MfS was still new to its role and I can remember the occasion when the Meeting decided to pass a particular matter to one of the central committees, when the then Clerk to BYM Trustees stood and said "you can't do that, what you can do is to ask Trustees to see if the matter could be passed to the said committee". There was a shockwave round the room as Friends realised that things were going to be different.

These were also the days of the 'Home Groups'. I was lucky; my home group was well managed and a real pleasure to be part of. Other groups apparently didn't gel in the same way and were therefore far less rewarding. As a result, after the next change, Home Groups were dropped. This change was the halving in size of Meeting for Sufferings with only one rep from each Area Meeting with an Alternate. This system appears to be of mixed benefit with pros and cons which are still working themselves out after a whole triennium. The situation in WSAM was never tested, as I was nominated to serve on MfS Agenda Group and therefore would have to be at all MfS's so the Alternate would simply be on standby.

The work on the agenda group was fascinating giving me an insight into the workings of a major Quaker meeting. It did have its 'Winnie the Pooh' moments; I was listening to a long discussion on some Inter Church business when I suddenly declared that I was having a "Winnie the Pooh moment". The discussion stopped and I explained that "I was a bear of very little brain" and had no idea what they were talking about! It turned out that none of the others knew either so the document was sent back to be rewritten in plain English.

Over the last year I've been on the Long Term Framework group trying to paint a picture of what we all (Quakers in their local meeting) want the Society to look like in five year's

time so that groups such as Trustees and Central Committees can direct their work toward this vision. It has been a challenge to cut through Friends general tendency to be long winded and verbose to enable us to produce a document that is simple and direct enough to be read and understood by Pooh Bear.

I'll not miss the six hours each way on the train to attend but will miss the challenge, friendship and warmth of this rather strangely named Meeting for Sufferings.

A Spirit-led Approach to Conflict in Quaker Meetings

Quaker Life Representative Council - Woodbrooke 17-19 April 2015 Phillida Ball

As the new Area Clerk of WS Overseers I was invited to attend this conference on conflict - thanks to Area Meeting for supporting me with this. Besides the opportunity to get to know some of the other Quaker representatives throughout GB, I ask myself what I have gained, been stimulated and challenged by attending this conference.

Conflict as we know is very much part of life, as people are different and see things differently and Quakers, I guess are no exceptions.

The question was put to us: Quakers have a long tradition of supporting people in conflict situations (involvement with the abolition of the slave trade, development of AVP- Alternatives to Violence Project etc.) Are we good at resolving conflict among ourselves or do we have a tendency to 'brush things under the carpet'? Tom Leimdorfer in the Quaker pamphlet 'Once Upon a Conflict'(2014) which has just been republished with additional material writes 'Conflict is not always a bad thing. It can release creative energy, lead to the creation of new ideas. It can bring people together in a joint enterprise to find a solution, even if they were on opposing sides. It can also be very destructive and violent'.

Izzy Cartwright from Quaker Peace & Social Witness gave a very engaging introductory talk on conflict. She pointed out that when conflict arises we can become afraid because we can have a lot to lose. However a passive-aggressive stance can be dangerous and unhealthy. She talked about her experiences working with 15 year old boys from Hackney who had been excluded from school as well as work with children from conflict areas around the world. She described creative projects involving nurturing of the self to help them like themselves as a requisite for engaging with others in their shared vulnerability. For example, she invited some elderly people to meet the boys from Hackney. The boys were invited to make tea for their visitors and both groups talked to

each other about situations where they felt vulnerable, through which there arose a shared understanding about their similarities.

Izzy showed us the Chinese symbol for conflict or crises, which consists of two symbols, one meaning danger, the other opportunity. She also showed us a beautiful metaphor of fragility made more beautiful and strong, which was that of a Chinese bowl that looked as though it had been broken but repaired with gold, 'the bowl with the golden thread'.

She talked about the importance of truly listening with our hearts, willing to be vulnerable, knowing our own 'conflict styles' and whether we can learn to be better at dealing with conflicts. Whether we can also become 'Upstanders rather than Bystanders'. A good example of this was a showing of a clip from the Tottenham riots in 2011, when Tariq Jahan, the father of one of the three young men who were knocked down and killed by a car during the Tottenham riots in 2011, spoke to the rioters. The riots you will remember was triggered by the fatal shooting of 29 year old Mark Duggan by the police. Mr Jahan stood up and addressed the crowd saying that violence is not the solution, "Two wrongs never make a right..." and appealed to the crowd of youth to go home. As a result, the violence subsided.

During the conference weekend we were divided into small groups where we were given the opportunity to discuss the positive and negative aspects of conflict and to share some of the causes of conflict in our meetings. In my group some causes expressed included sometimes a lack of appreciation for work carried out by members, poor support in roles undertaken and a need for more sharing of responsibilities. We also discussed the need for better ways of communicating with each other, importance of using 'I' statements and listening skills and knowing our own 'conflict styles' as highlighted by Izzy Cartwright. These conflict styles have been represented by 5 different animals in Leimdorfer's book. He writes "the turtles seek to avoid conflict, they prefer to ignore it or withdraw from it rather than offer a viewpoint or try to work through it." (Whereas) "The owl tries to find a mutually agreed solution, willing to spend as much time as needed working through the conflict, highly valuing resolving the issue and the relationship". Doesn't the style of the owl sound the same approach Quakers use when carrying out their Business Meetings where everyone has their say before a consensus is agreed?

To end this account, I'd like to quote from George Fox from QF&P 20.67 *'And all Friends take heed of jars and strife, for that is it, which will eat out the Seed in you; therefore let not that harbour in our bosoms, lest it eat out the good in you, and ye come to suffer in your own particulars. Therefore dwell in love and life, and the Power and Seed of God, which is the honourable, royal state.'* George Fox, 1656

A Quaker Storyteller

Alastair McIver

Storytelling has transcended the bounds of a simple hobby for me, and is now a fundamental part of my identity. That is where my Quaker faith and my storytelling intersect, for both have risen to the ranks of Who I Am, not merely what I do. Both trigger that amazing feeling of starting a sentence “I am a...” and being immensely proud of its end.

I ministered once, in my earlier days as an Attender, on the connection between the two. Confidence doesn't come naturally to me. What confidence I have is a consequence of storytelling – it subsidises the rest of my life, including the part that enables me to stand and speak into the silence. Ministry differs enormously from storytelling. One is a performance, the other is not. For one, ego is a barrier; for the other it is a prerequisite. One is a simple, humble statement of personal truth; the other is a flamboyant, extravagant and occasionally rude statement of personal truth. Both require courage and confidence, and a certain kick from an inner-something.

To be a Quaker, for me, is to know that God expects me to use my gifts for the benefit of others. My gift is storytelling, which is a wonderful sharing experience. I have run workshops on the themes of Storytelling as a Force For Good, Storytelling and Conflict Resolution, and encouraging people to tell stories to the children in their lives. I also tell stories at storytelling clubs and in classrooms, and for the last four years have been running one-to-one storytelling sessions with an adult with learning disabilities.

Storytelling is the oldest art-form in the world, a great uniter of cultures, and something all human beings have in common. It is a profound (yet often silly) way that all of us can find a special voice to spread peace and equality wherever we go.

On Being An Elder

Jim Alderton

Before becoming an Elder I had come to accept what I saw as inappropriate behaviour and ministry in MfW, (sadly even my own). But as an Elder I felt a responsibility to do something about it. This became an obstacle to my own centring-down in Meeting, although this only really became clear to me after I had laid down Eldership.

Earlier pinnacle experiences of “Gathered”, or what American Friends call “Covered” Meetings left me with a yearning for more such Meetings. But ministry that does not deepen Meeting or is at odds with an emerging shared discernment. can so easily burst the bubble, I treasure the memory of a time at Glasgow when the

Meeting was so deeply gathered that a Friend stood just before noon to implore the Elders not to bring it to an end!

After much discussion in Elders following a succession of of shallow and wordy meetings, Sheila Semple and Ruth Wilkinson produced excellent papers on Meeting and Ministry, which had a noticeable effect. We all need to bear in mind that Meeting is at core about silent waiting on the spirit and leave our hobby-horses in the rack at the door. I sit easily in Meeting now, thankful for my twenty-five years among you and hoping for many more.

A Local Meeting - Ayr

Peter Christy

Ayr, Ayrshire, Ayrshire and Arran and now again Ayrshire Meeting, has metamorphosed significantly over the nearly 30 years that I have known it. We have lodged in five different locations, not forgetting that we currently meet in three locations. The main one of these is in the Citadel Sports Centre, Ayr, where we meet on the 1st and 3rd Sunday, in Ardrossan on the 2nd Sunday and Girvan on the 3rd.

We have been blessed over the years with several families with a range of musical abilities; one occasion standing out for me was the Christmas party held after meeting with 12 or 15 Friends packed into a small meeting room with French Horn, keyboard and Bob Hay leading the lusty singing of Carols. Who said Quakers worship in silence.

There have also been lean times when there has only been 1 Friend at Sunday worship, but those times come and go. Currently there is an average of 10 to 12 Friends attending the Ayr meeting, 5 to 8 the Ardrossan meeting and 2 to 4 in Girvan. But this is about as good as it gets in the time I have known the meeting.

We have an interesting Geography with many Friends travelling up to 25miles each way to get to meeting. This creates issues when we wish to organise discussion groups and similar activities and Friends in the South rarely meet and folks in the North. But then this is a common challenge faced by many meetings across Scotland. It is a strange fact that it is probably as quick for everybody to get to Glasgow.

However, being small hasn't stopped us from getting involved at area and national levels. One member was a very active member of the Northern Friends Peace Board, albeit with slightly unconventional views. We have also provided our Monthly/Area Meeting with Clerks, Treasurers, Assistant Treasurers Registering Officers, Nominations Reps and AM Trustees. At the national level we have supplied MfS Reps, Stewardship Committee

Clerks, BYM Trustees and QWCC members. Having this external connection strengthens our Meeting Worship as we are aware of a bigger picture of the Society with its strengths, weaknesses and challenges.

A Book that has influenced me as a Quaker

Neil McKechnie

I began attending Glasgow Quaker meeting sometime in the early 1970s as I began my spiritual journey in search of a truer meaning to life. I usually went to the mid-week meeting for worship then at 16 Newton Terrace. Part of my searching was to read about Quaker history and testimonies. I had just graduated with a history degree, so was drawn to those books that showed how Friends testimonies had grown and influenced work and wider engagement in the world, reinforcing my sense of the interconnectedness of the world we live in.

It was in Newton Terrace that I first came across Arthur Raistrick's book *Quakers in science and industry* which I've recently rediscovered in the library of the current meeting house, ironically, as the neighbouring building was being noisily demolished - an application of science and technology that has some link to the origins of the industrial revolution in the 17th and 18th centuries that Raistrick writes about in such detail.

What's clear is how early Friends loved one another, and how out of a small group of persecuted people grew a working democracy of real equality of person. A farm servant had as much respect and support in their ministry as a person of wealth and position. This sense of being bound together in a loving family led to the search for "innocent" trades, as Raistrick says "a new world waiting for conquest, the world of the domestic market for humble every day articles" and out of this grew the successes of the Quaker ironmasters such as Darby with such a significant contribution to the industrial revolution. These successes in trade and commerce, the application of science, the linking to transport through railways and canals led to the rise of the banking houses through extended Quaker families. It was necessary to develop a credit system of loans for ordinary folk, based on integrity and honesty and an outlook on society based on goodwill to all. Recent crises in the banking industry show how far financial services have moved away from their distinctive Quaker origins.

The book takes us on to the 18th century with many Friends moving out of a narrower view of the Society of Friends, particularly those in banking. One of Raistrick's concluding statements is that "in some degree we might say that Quakerism tried conclusions with the world, won itself a place of honour and respectability in the world, and lost part of its dynamic message in its success".

In Glasgow Meeting through our visioning process, and perhaps in the Society as a whole, we are searching for that connectedness back to our beginnings, both in the power of the spirit and in the experimenter and explorer so well analysed by Raistrick.

Two Good Women – a Puzzle in Nomenclature Mary Latham

This year we have had to say good-bye to two friends – both much loved and both well known in their own way. Phyllis Goodheir died in January and Margaret Harrison in April. Phyllis was a member of Glasgow Meeting and perhaps best known for her promotion of the Living Will and her keen interest in Esperanto. Margaret, along with her husband Bobby, was a stalwart worker for peace. The Faslane peace camp and the protest against nuclear weapons were their particular concerns.

I loved and respected them both, but my logical mind has also been thinking of them in quite a different way. I have been mulling over the official term (if there is one) to describe their relationship. For Phyllis' second husband, Albert, was the father by his first marriage of Carel, who is the husband of Ruth, and Ruth's mother was Margaret. Or to put it another way, Margaret's daughter's husband's father's second wife was Phyllis.

Is there any more succinct a way to describe this? Well, it really does not matter. We will remember them as individuals in their own right. But it is intriguing!

**Next Area Meeting is by telephone on 15th June 7.00 for 7.30pm,
then at Tarbert on 22nd August.**

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

The deadline for the next issue of West of Scotland Quaker News is **August 15th**.

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