

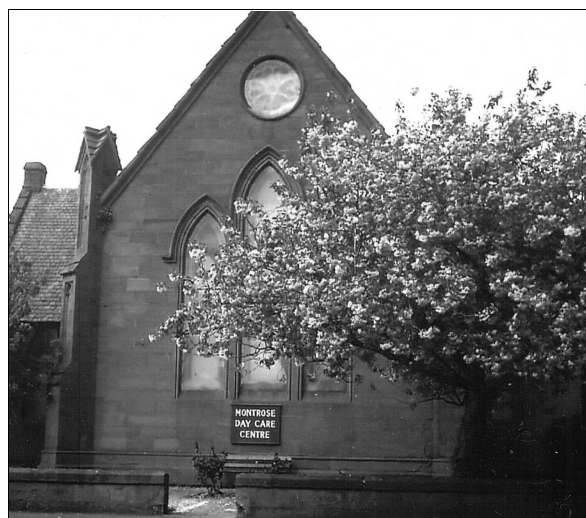
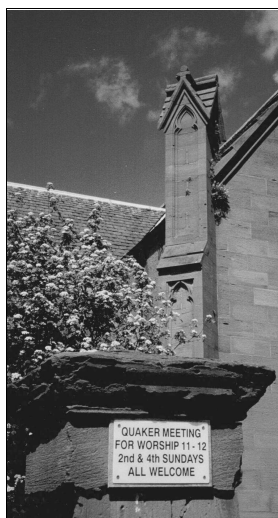


August
2006

Scottish Friend

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Montrose Day Care Centre, one of the Meeting-places of Angus Friends, where General Meeting for Scotland was held in June.

I am indebted to Pamala McDougall for the cover photograph. Next General Meeting is on 9 September, so the next *Scottish Friend* will be constructed in the first week in October, as soon as the agenda for November GM is known. Please send material to me, Margaret Peacock, at 16 Drumlin Drive, Milngavie, G62 6LN, or nmjpeacock@yahoo.co.uk. Many thanks to all who have made suggestions. Please go on sending me news, reports, thoughts and pictures.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the Society of Friends in Scotland, Britain Yearly Meeting or elsewhere.

Published by Quakers in Scotland, 01667 451 451
Printed on recycled paper by
Print Force, Milngavie, 0141 956 1052



SUPPORTING CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

John Phillips

Legislation introducing the concept of civil partnerships for gay couples was a daring and significant step brought in last year by the Holyrood and Westminster parliaments. Elders in South East Scotland Monthly Meeting strongly welcomed this innovation - but they wondered: "Why can't members and attenders at our meetings solemnise a civil partnership within a religious meeting for worship?"

The answer, of course, is that this would look too much like "gay marriage" - a step too far in the view of the two legislatures, and it is not allowed: civil partnerships can only be registered in a registrar's office. But within the Quaker tradition we celebrate and value committed relationships and, for many of us, making a commitment to a lifelong loving relationship is something that our meetings should support and uphold. Whether this involves a straight or a gay couple seems to be a secondary issue.

George Fox's words are of course familiar to us: "The right joining in marriage is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests' or magistrates'; for it is God's ordinance and not man's." The idea behind holding a meeting for worship for solemnising a lifelong commitment is that those involved make their promises in front of their friends, in the presence of their worshipping community and, above all, before God, asking His help in their spiritual journey. How and where this is registered is of course secondary. But a Quaker marriage can be solemnised within a meeting for worship, so why not a civil partnership?

Should we do anything about this? Meeting for Sufferings took the view earlier this year (on a minute from Pontefract MM) that the government was not interested in further change in this area, having brought in such significant legislation already. They therefore suggested that Quaker Life should monitor the position, and should perhaps consider more widely whether Friends need to do more work on the whole subject of committed relationships at a time when, as we know, half of all marriages end in divorce.

But would it be valuable for Scottish Friends to pursue this subject, perhaps through making representations at Holyrood? Our Monthly Meeting elders thought that it was important to keep this subject alive.

(John was asked by GM to provide a background to the minute from South East Scotland elders which will be discussed at September's meeting.)

PRISON THROUGH-CARE CENTRES for EX-OFFENDERS

David Turner

Feasibility Study - September 2005 until January 2006

AIM. The aim of the Feasibility Study was to identify the ways in which churches/ faith communities serving in the economically poorest communities in Scotland could more effectively address the needs of ex-offenders and their families, particular attention being given to the possibility of developing (up to six) Through-care Centres. The study included an action plan and budget for the agreed strategy.

Scottish Quakers were invited by the Church of Scotland Priority Areas Strategy Group Support Worker to take part in the meetings of the Study Group, which included representatives of the churches, the Scottish Prison Service, interested voluntary bodies, and of Strathclyde University. A consultant was employed to lead the investigations and to prepare a report.

A central activity of the Group was to identify the significant gaps which exist in the current provision of through-care. In reality there is no such thing as through-care in terms of coordinated support from the point of arrest to resettlement in the community. Hence the lack of a strategic approach to the process of prisoner care and aftercare.

Important gaps include:

Friendship gaps

Partnership gaps

Support to families

Community/offender gaps

Services Gap

In addition to the general gaps identified there are weaknesses in the capacity of faith communities to undertake the kind of support that they can see is needed.

THROUGH-CARE PROPOSAL

This has been developed through a series of meetings with various individuals and groups.

It builds on the existing provision of services by providing the 'glue' to help people to link up with services, as well as providing more intensive and tailored support than is possible in single-focused services.

The core of the proposal is a support team that will "spin-off" initiatives of varying sizes. The initial one will be based in the Royston area of Glasgow. There is already widespread support, and a number of meetings have been resulting in the "YOU MATTER" part of the report. This is a multi-agency approach to tackling a large problem in a number of local communities. The Edinburgh proposal is less advanced but no less exciting.

Lessons from the initial pilots will then be incorporated into new initiatives which will be developed in line with local energies and groupings.

The next step is to appoint staff, particularly a Development Manager to oversee the initiatives in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and to recruit and train volunteers on whom the daily work of the Centres will largely depend. A Steering group made up of key stakeholders will provide guidance to the Development Manager, and there will also be locally such groups where a further project is getting under way. Close links will be made with the new, relevant Criminal Justice Authorities to ensure that the Throughcare initiatives tie in, and are part of local plans for the areas concerned. It is expected that a substantial amount of the funding will come from mainstream sources as the success of the approach is demonstrated.

Have Quakers a part to play in this? Our contribution in the Study Group meetings, in respect of experience in befriending prisoners and ex-prisoners, and in restorative justice, has been appreciated. Both of these aspects will be components of the Throughcare approach.

Volunteers for the first two pilots in the major cities will likely be drawn from congregations in the specific areas chosen. However, initiatives are likely to emerge later in other parts of Scotland and take other forms, eg family support, friendship circles, addiction and arts projects. I feel sure Friends will wish to stay well informed of how Throughcare takes shape now and in the future.

Surviving Hiroshima

Marianne Ferguson Rice

Preparing to take part in the demonstration at Faslane on July 4th prompted me, at last to write this.

Walking in the Botanic Garden in Edinburgh in August 3 years ago, I met a Japanese woman & in a short conversation learnt that she was a survivor. She now travels the world telling anyone she meets of this fact & giving them a copy of her small booklet (in translation) recounting her experiences. I'll quote from some of it:

" ' Fellow Humans let us foster Love & Wisdom' from Hiroshima by Hashizume Bun translated by Susan Bouterey

'I am a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

On the sixth of August, 1945, I had gone as usual to Hiroshima Post Office Savings Bank where I worked under the student mobilized labour scheme. I was fourteen years old.

'I arrived at work just after eight o'clock and was standing by the window on the second floor of our concrete building when there was a sudden flash of light so bright I thought the sun had fallen at my feet. A thousand rainbows all at once seemed to explode in my eyes. I must have lost consciousness immediately. When I came to I found myself sitting in the middle of the room next to the central pillar. In the event of a bomb attack, we'd been taught to lie down on our stomachs to prevent injuries to the abdomen and intestines, and to protect our eyes and eardrums by pressing our middle and forefingers over our eyes and covering our ears with our thumbs. I tried to do as we'd been taught but it was pitch black and there seemed to be no room to stretch out. There was an eerie silence. I felt something warm and moist running down the right side of my head and assumed that it was oil dripping down from a firebomb which must have hit our building: toward the end of the war all of Japan's major cities were hit by firebombs.....

'As I sat huddled up with my hands over my eyes and ears, I worried about the students on the third floor who must be desperately trying to escape the sea of fire. When my vision began to clear, I gently removed my hands from my head; they were covered in blood. Remembering the First Aid Bag in my desk, I got to my feet. To my

astonishment, desks, chairs and bookshelves had been thrown all over the room and lay in a heap on the floor. I eventually found my desk among the rubble, and had just bandaged my head when someone yelled, "Get out, everyone, quick!" One by one my co-workers got to their feet and made their way in the smoky darkness to the exit. Part of the high-voltage power line which ran past our window on the second floor had been blasted into the room and lay in a coil on the floor. One of my fellow workers was caught in the wire. Always referred to by his nickname, he had been liked by everyone. He was dead. His ashen-white face turned me cold with fear. But this was only the beginning; what I was to experience later could only be described as a living hell.

'I had been showered with glass and was bleeding particularly heavily from the gash to the head. In no time, I was surrounded by a pool of blood. Ms. Tomoyanagi, one of my co-workers there, let out a cry at the sight of me, and practically carried me to the Red Cross Hospital nearby. On the way, I saw flames licking the earth. The hospital was thronging with people covered in burns, their faces oozingpeople burnt so black and raw it was impossible to identify their age or sex. It was just as if I'd stepped into hell.

'Gone was the tranquil city which had been there in the morning: now nothing but rubble. "What on earth has happened? This has to be a bad dream", I thought in bewilderment before losing consciousness again. I'm not sure how long I floated in and out of consciousness. I vaguely remember hearing the heavy pelting of rain and enemy planes flying overhead.

'All that day and night Hiroshima City burned. At the hospital the fire raged out of control; huge tongues of fire leaped from the windows. Those who could walk had escaped long ago, while those who could crawl, crawled to safety. Only the dead and dying remained. We lay on the ground outside in the dazzling, golden light of the fire while hot ash rained down on us like gold dust. My hair burned and crackled.

'August the fifteenth: heat scorched the desolate city of death. In my area there were ten or so survivors. We built shelters from unburned scraps of wood and corrugated iron to keep us dry at night. We were all starving and badly wounded but so extreme was our condition we

were oblivious to hunger or pain. No help in the form of food, clothing or medicine came. Later I found out that the devastation caused by the atomic bombings was so great that the American and Japanese governments hid the truth from the outside world, out of fear of international criticism on the part of America and of public shock and disillusionment on the part of the Japanese government.

'.....Every year, when August the sixth came round, I felt a heavy weight on my shoulders and would spend the day in deep depression. Thirty, then forty years passed. "I am alive but the two people who saved me are not," I would think. I felt that I should be doing something but I couldn't get over the trauma of my experience. So painful was the memory, it would fill me with nausea. A decade or so ago, an American submarine suspected of carrying nuclear arms planned to visit Yokosuka Port which is not far from Kamakura City where I now live. One of my sons informed me that he was going to take part in the sit-in which was planned in opposition to the submarine entering a Japanese port. He was sixteenHe made me wonder once again, what I could do as an atomic bomb survivor. I was a poet. I began to write poems about the bombing of Hiroshima. Strangely enough, the weight which I'd suffered under for some forty years was lifted off my shoulders. Little by little, I came to talk and write about my experience.....

'When I talk of my experience, people say, "Ah, so you're an atomic bomb victim." But what I have to say has nothing to do with victims or assailants. That day, I was confronted with the meaning of life.

War - the twentieth century has been a century of war

War turns humans into madmen

War - an inexcusable crime

'..... in order to monopolize all research on the after effects of the atomic bombings, America prevented anyone from entering Hiroshima or Nagasaki, and banned all news coverage on the two cities. Thus we were left without any aid whatsoever.....' "

Hashizume took up writing poetry as a keepsake for her three young children, after she'd been diagnosed with collagen disease, with a prognosis of less than one month to live. As you'll have read above, it was many years before she could write of her experiences. She's a member of Japan P.E.N. Club, Japan Poets' Society, Japan Society of Poem and Music.

Friends can obtain copies of the booklet by writing to:

Bun HASHIZUME, 1-10-1-201 Tsurukawa Machida City, Tokyo JAPAN
195-0061.

Her first collection of poems with the central theme of the atomic bombing was published in 1985 under the title, 'The Youth who turned into an Insect.' The following poem is one of many that has been set to music and performed widely.

'Living Together

Stars twinkled at the bottom of the tub of
Rainwater we collected to cook
Our tiny morsels of food

Starlight reflecting off the water
Sting our eyes
As we bathed
Beneath the starry sky

Raising my arms high above my head toward the heavens
I heard the stars whispering
"I'm alive!"
The stars twinkled down at me
"Yes, you're alive!"

Beneath the heavens
At the bottom of the water tub
Lived a worm
The worm and I
Together, alive'

SCOTTISH CHURCHES PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE

David Turner

The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, with which Scottish Quakers have been associated in various ways since its inception in 1999, has recently moved from St Columba's by the Castle (seen originally as a very temporary home) to the Scottish Story-telling Centre at 42/45 High St. Edinburgh (formerly the Netherbow). In addition to being nearer the Scottish Parliament building, the Centre is a spacious and beautiful venue after major renovations, including a new theatre/ lecture forum and many fascinating features. No place could be more appropriate to house an office which seeks to represent the cooperation, and the challenge involved in today's relationship between church and state, building creatively on a very old story of struggles for power and influence.

On 14th June this year the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) was officially re-launched, before a gathering in the Centre of representatives of most Scottish denominations, of church agencies, some invited guests (including Quakers), and a strong contingent of MSPs. Rev Graham Blount, who has been SCPO officer since setting up, opened the proceedings with a brief outline of the various forms the relationship of churches and Parliament has taken over the past seven years, and some reflections, in his typically humorous way, on the mutual benefits arising. Susan Deacon MSP paid warm tribute, on behalf of herself and fellow parliamentarians, to the work of Graham and the SCPO staff, the mutual respect which has developed, and the extent to which the well-considered views of the churches on many important issues, channelled largely through SCPO, have informed and enlivened individual MSPs and Committees.

To follow the main event, SCPO had invited the editor of a new publication from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) 'ASYLUM PRINCIPLES' to explain the background to this and the process through which the churches, including Scottish representatives, have formulated a collective view of basic principles on asylum - principles against which the ever more draconian UK legislation and practice, including that relating to detention and that which has consequences in destitution, in deportation to countries known to torture opponents, must be judged and challenged.

Two asylum seekers who are involved in appeals against removal told their stories in a deeply moving way.

A copy of the CTBI publication was made available to all present who requested this, without charge. Additional copies, at £3 each, may be had from the CTBI office. Friends may feel that copies of the publication should be obtained for Meeting House libraries.

Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2006

Marion Morton

It was particularly interesting for me to attend the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May, as the representative from Quakers in Scotland. I already had years of experience of this event from two different perspectives. I accompanied my husband to many of the associated social events during the twelve years when he was the Kirk's Ecumenical Secretary. And as Deputy Provost of Edinburgh for four years it fell to me to lead the procession of Provosts from all of Scotland's 32 local authorities into the opening session, and host lunch for them afterwards in the City Chambers - the Provost always lunching with the High Commissioner on that day.

But being at the heart of the deliberations this time, with the right to speak though not to vote, was a new experience altogether. Some of the issues were quite alien to a Quaker - such as the proposal to pay all local ministers the same salary whatever the size or status of their congregation (agreed) or to grant recognition as 'approved academic provider' to the University of the Highlands and Islands (also agreed). Others were very familiar. The replacement of Trident was described as 'morally repugnant' and the denial of basic support to unsuccessful

asylum seekers by the deliberate action of the state as 'an affront to the values of the civilisation that we like to believe we live in'. We were reminded that 'priority for the poorest and most marginalised is an imperative facing the whole church' and heard news of various ways in which central funds were being used to help local congregations care for their own communities - a furniture recycling scheme here, a community café there, a support project for people affected by divorce and separation, befriending asylum seekers in Dungavel Detention Centre. On a much bigger scale, the Kirk has been supporting projects in Africa which offer practical care to people living with and dying from Aids and campaigning against the stigma and discrimination directed at sufferers, in Scotland as well as worldwide.

There was one potentially quite divisive proposal. Till now, there has been no guidance to ministers who were asked to bless a same-sex relationship, the response being left to the individual's conscience, within a pastoral relationship. Since Civil Partnerships are now fully recognised in law, but no religious element is allowed for in the ceremony, more requests of this kind are anticipated. The Assembly was invited to formalise the current position so that nobody would face blame either for conducting a ceremony of blessing or for declining to do so. I was distressed to find that the vote in favour of this very reasonable proposal was very close - so that it was sent back to presbyteries (Monthly Meetings to you!) for further consideration before a decision in May 2007. This put me in mind of the agreement at Yearly Meeting in York 2005 to take further soundings on RECAST's proposal for a smaller Trustee body, before a decision at Yearly Meeting this year. I so much hope that the result will be the same in this case. Many folk probably wished the status quo had quietly been left undisturbed!

The many social events were very happy occasions and the delegates like myself, from different denominations all over the UK and Reformed churches all over the world, learned a lot from each other during them. I will never forget these words of a young African minister whose third son (to be named 'Praise') was born while we were together - 'I never knew I was poor until I was taken to visit a prisoner in a cell in Glasgow's Barlinnie Prison, and realised that his living conditions were better than those of my own family.'

Scottish Friends' Spring Conference at Kindrogan

Oliver Robertson

While the rest of the Society turned its gaze on London, Scottish Friends met for their annual Spring Gathering at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre near Pitlochry, on the last weekend in May.

Over the weekend, Friends explored the theme of "Gardens and the Healing Spirit" by looking at the practical and spiritual effects gardens have on us. They were joined by speakers from the Findhorn Foundation (long-running spiritual community in Scotland) and the Christian Fellowship of Healing (CFH), as well as enthusiastic and knowledgeable Friends who ran workshops and events.

The sessions ranged from the joys and frustrations of growing your own vegetables to the many ways gardens can inspire and strengthen us. In her workshop "Healing gardens", Jean Myers from CFH talked about creating a garden in the Fellowship's central Edinburgh Offices, "Somewhere to stop and smell the roses". She eventually settled on a garden in the shape of a



which, as well as looking attractive, also serves a spiritual purpose: the idea of focusing your attention inwards and outwards. As one of the participants explained: in walking in you are looking in upon yourself in an ever-tightening circle, and as you walk out you tend to look up and outwards into the world."

Kathleen Burke, a gardener at Findhorn Foundation (famed, among other things, for its giant vegetables), showed Friends the "tuning-in" process the Foundation undertakes before and after its activities and described some of the healing properties of particular plants. "We then had a healing meditation "Feeling the energy of the plant and seeing if you could feel anything, if your consciousness was drawn anywhere. Mine certainly was!"

The children's programme also concentrated on gardens, with younger children making their own gardens from moss, stones and

glitter and the teenagers working together to create a Zen garden. These were shown to - and much admired by - the rest of the gathering on Sunday morning, before Meeting for Worship.

Ministry that morning echoed the theme of the weekend, with reflections on the meaning and importance of gardens in people's lives. "We have talked a lot about doing and creating," said Juli Salt of Nairn PM, "but for me the most important thing is to just be and touch in to the energy of God and nature".

SEEDS OF HOPE - 2006 Scottish Ecumenical Gathering in Perth

Constance Tonge

Didn't know what to expect, never having been to one of these things before - church people, obviously (whatever that means); bit of hymn singing maybe, the swish of the scarlet silk. The cardinal was there, and an orthodox priest passing through, but so were a lot of people I knew - and not all of them were Quakers. Small world after all.

Odd, I thought, that our Quiet Room billed as that but signposted as "Prayer Room" hardly attracted anyone but Quakers, I'd have thought that Christians in the raw would have flocked but they didn't. Maybe, though, they were in the same position as I, yearning for a quiet space but unable to squeeze out more than fifteen minutes because of other responsibilities. Sad that there was electrical tree-felling going on in the garden just outside.

General Meeting had a "Market Stall" and we sold a reasonable number of books from a Friends' Bookshop box. Most were bought by Friends and it was good to have an opportunity to look at what was available without much effort.

We gave away quite a lot of leaflets and had a number of interesting conversations. These may bear fruit in the future - one never knows what it is which starts an interest germinating. It was a book with me - all those years ago.

Our stall was complimented on its brightness, with books and leaflets, and posters on a screen in the back; the only more interesting one I saw was the church furnishings and requisites, showing vestments, chalices and other inexplicable (to me) items.

I managed to get to one of the discussions, introduced by our Friend Pam McDougall, featuring Annabel Goldie MSP, Alan Macdonald, Moderator of the Church of Scotland and Norman Shanks, ex-leader of the Iona Community. It was about church and politics and there was consideration of the developing role of the Holyrood Parliament in Scottish life. All three participants spoke well and the only point of dissatisfaction was that there was no time for questions.

Something which Friends might ponder further is the phrase "not real consensus but contrived agreement" as a criticism of some groups in the government trying to make decisions. We have our own business method which should also not depend on "contrived agreement" and should certainly be beyond consensus. We are seeking to find and follow the will of God. We need to maintain our faithfulness in this.

Back to the main hall, and a quick run around before the end. Said "Hi" to friends working Traidcraft, had a wee chat with the man from the Music and Worship Group (not much we could do there!), exchanged addresses with the representative of Independent Age - and so to pack up.

A good day, on the whole; with good attendance by Friends, nice chats with friends and others. Some said there was a Sense of a Common Spirit. I think there was.

QUAKER HOUSING ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND

AGM - SATURDAY, 26 AUGUST 2006, 10.30 A.M.

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE,

ELMBANK CRESCENT, GLASGOW

ALL WELCOME

Quaker Housing Association Scotland is a very small group from 2 monthly meetings in Scotland. Set up about 10 years ago, it was re-established about 4 years ago to take forward the task of developing a Quaker housing community in Scotland. There are several Quaker housing communities in England and also several housing projects supported by Friends. We remain hopeful of being able to develop the first Quaker housing community in Scotland.

Unfortunately, as is common with small Housing Associations, the task has not proved to be as problem-free as we would have liked. We have registered an interest in several sites but, for one reason or another, we have not been able to move forward. QHAS is now at the point of engaging with another established Housing Association and we would value Friends' thoughts on this.

Following much hard work by a small Working Party, and with feedback from interested Friends, we have now agreed that the accommodation in the first QHAS project should enable a mutually supportive community to be created. There will be shared residential space as well as individual flats or houses.

We believe "there is a consensus within Friends that a significant number of older members would welcome the opportunity of living in a spiritually supportive atmosphere as the inevitable frailties of ageing emerge. They would also welcome the opportunity of making a garden together, and creating a convivial, intellectually and creatively stimulating daily life. Living independently but finding ways of alleviating the physical and financial burdens of domesticity that can be considerably lightened through cooperation, they would manage their accommodation, and group affairs, themselves."

(QHAS: Detailed Project Brief - Housing for Older Quakers in Scotland (2006)

This description fits with increasing good health in the over 55s and also the policies of the Scottish Executive and thinking from other organisations within Scotland.

We would wish our first site to be within Central Scotland, and to be for older Quakers.

We have registered our interest in a site in a small town with a railway station, with a Quaker Meeting already established. However, we need time and support from more Friends to bring our vision to reality.

Please join us, either as a member and/or at our AGM on 26th August. More information and membership forms from Kate Arnot, 33 Alma Street, Falkirk FK2 7HD
k.arnot@btinternet.com

“That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God. Who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. That we should not wonder if in the beginning we often failed in our endeavours, but that at last we should gain a habit which will naturally produce its acts in us without our care and to our exceeding great delight.”

Brother Lawrence - The Practice of the Presence of God.

CLERK'S CORNER

Pamala McDougall

'You in your small corner and me in mine'. Words from a hymn which I sang with gusto as a child, and which have come to mind when I write 'clerk's corner'. I often feel that I beaver away attending meetings, conferences, ecumenical events, outreach and networking and social events on behalf of Friends and you rarely get to hear about them! Being a sociable creature I thoroughly enjoy this side of my clerky duties and get to meet some interesting people who contribute to the quality of my life and therefore to GM for Scotland. Here are some events at which I have been privileged to represent Friends.

1. ACTS Forum Meetings.

Since ACTS secretariat moved to Alloa we have continued to meet at Scottish Churches House in Dunblane - not the easiest place to visit from Inverkeillor!

2. ACTS Church 'Leaders' Meetings

Yes, I know I am not a 'church leader' which is why the word is in quotation marks, but your GM clerk is counted as one for this purpose. Actually, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland says he is not a leader either but we continue to meet annually. At present we are preparing for our regular yearly meeting with the First Minister, Jack McConnell, in August. Prior to this we meet to discuss topics for discussion and who of the nine member churches represented will present which of the 3 or 4 items decided upon. I have presented a topic for the past two years which means extra homework.

3. ACTS Member Church Meetings.

The art of delegation is sometimes practised here and I try to involve others whenever possible.

4. Ecumenical Conference.

'Seeds of Hope' was held on 17th June in Perth. Having represented Friends at the inaugural meeting I was asked to introduce a session on the day. This turned out to be quite a challenge but an enjoyable one. The session was billed as a

'conversation' entitled 'Hope in Holyrood?' between Alan McDonald, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; Annabel Goldie MSP and leader of the Scottish Conservative Party; and Norman Shanks, ex-leader of the Iona Community and Chair of the Planning Group for the 9th World Council of Churches held recently in Brazil. Three very diverse, knowledgeable and fascinating individuals and the session was very well attended. Trying to make introductions without leaving anything out was quite an exercise! Annabel was in fine form as she shared some of the difficulties of being of being an easily recognized politician in an open and accessible parliament, for example, shopping in M and S for lingerie and being peered at through the rails! There was some serious and informed conversation and an agreement that the church has an important role to play in the political life of Scotland.

5. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

I attended a session of CTBI which met in Glasgow on 22nd June. Some of us were invited to contribute to the discussion of the work being done on our behalf and to hear from the new Secretary General of plans for the future. This was a stimulating and deeply sharing meeting of CTBI members and ecumenical representatives.

6. Methodist Conference

On June 21st I attended the first Methodist Conference to be held in Scotland and was warmly welcomed by the Chair of the Methodist Church in Scotland, Jim Jones (also convenor of ACTS Forum, so no stranger) and the newly installed President. There were delegates from around the world who were attending for the whole week at Heriot Watt Conference Centre. We were entertained to a splendidly hosted dinner in the evening but it seems I regularly make a dash for the last train leaving Edinburgh for the north and so miss a lovely-sounding dessert!

6. And Finally - Scottish Parliamentary Office Annual Lecture.

This was given on June 27th by Eilish Angioloni, Solicitor General, in the Scottish Parliament. As Graham Blount, Scottish Churches Parliamentary Liaison Officer, who presided said, 'It was pure dead brilliant!' This lecture was promoted by Jamie Stone MSP

and also incorporated the annual Methodist Lecture. This meant I met up with friends and colleagues from SCH, church 'leaders', and many others whom I have met during my time as GM clerk. These ecumenical and interfaith relationships have grown and developed in my term as clerk, and to me are a vital part of my work for GM for Scotland.

the Friend

Could you be a Trustee of The Friend Publications Ltd?

Providing independent Quaker journalism since 1843, **The Friend** and **Friends Quarterly** hold a special place in BYM and the world community of Friends. We seek new Trustees from December 2006. Appointment is initially for three years and it is quite usual for a Trustee to serve a further three-year term.

The Friend has moved into a new and exciting phase of development. It is facing the challenge of an increasingly e-literate society but at the same time still serving those readers who prefer a printed weekly journal.

Friends Quarterly has a growing readership.

We would especially welcome interest from those with experience of journalism and an understanding of modern communications. We would also like to hear from those living in Scotland or Wales; and those with expertise in finance, business and marketing.

If you would like to know more or be considered now or in the future, please contact Kath Worrall or Nicholas McGeorge c/o The Friend, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Email: trustees@thefriend.org

Registered charity no. 211649

Report of General Meeting for Scotland, 10 June in Montrose

Alyson Buchan



The park opposite Montrose Day Care Centre
Photograph: Lorna Warren

The Testimony to Simplicity

We were treated to a stimulating presentation on "Simplicity" given by three Friends: Angela Arnold; Peter McCaffery and Ruth Quigley.

Angela said that the testimony to simplicity is difficult because it is not as cerebral as the other testimonies, but requires a lifestyle choice. She lived for 12/13 years in a croft without electricity or water. She spoke about giving things up, not just physical things, but control over your own life. She loves music, but does not own her own CDs and tapes. Instead she listens to the radio and is delighted if one of her favourite tunes is played. Thus she maintains the capacity for gratitude and can accept disappointment. She compared this lifestyle to looking at a painting. A painter might paint a hint or suggestion of a tree, thus leaving a 'space' so that the viewer can contribute to the work of art

and it continues to change and evolve. If we leave spaces in our lives, we can change and evolve too through our interaction with others. Many F/friends have diaries crammed full and are involved in a clutter of activity. If we simplify our lives, we can allow others to fill the empty spaces. We can let go and just be. If everyone lived as we do, there would not be enough resources in the world, so living simply is also an expression of solidarity with nature and with the poor.

Peter quoted Luke 11 v. 34 "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness". In Greek the word translated as single, can also mean simple. If your eye is simple, you can see what is important, see your way and see the light. There is a connection to the monastic tradition of going into the desert or living in a community. Quakers do not take vows or abjure possessions or marriage and do not offer obedience, but they seek to sit loosely to those things that can be a limitation to the pursuit of Christian ideals. They try to implement these ideals without living in a community. The value of simplicity is that it frees you to focus on what matters in life; to be single-minded; to be open to the needs of other people. (Quaker Faith and Practice 20:35). Simplicity is the opposite of extravagance and display, acquisitiveness. It means not being hung up, fussy and liking things a certain way but losing control and laying yourself open to risk. Margaret Fell lost the King's protection and forfeited her freedom and all of her material belongings, but still felt that she was under the protection of God. We force ourselves to be desperately busy, but we need to find sanctuary by learning to live a life that contains elements of silence, prayer and meditation.

Ruth talked about a simple lifestyle freely chosen. She spoke about the importance of small things in her life. She likes small ornaments and values keeping them in their place on her shelves, just as she values keeping the small things in her own life in their place. She tries not to buy what she does not need and cannot afford; to consider the impact she has on the world around her; to care for the earth and guard it with joy and love. She was ill in hospital for seven and a half months and had to learn to walk and talk again. It made her see what is important in life because everything had been taken away from her. She remembers the tremendous pleasure she felt when she was able to drink her first cup of tea. She reminded us of the advice "Live simply that others may simply live".

People who attend General Meeting are often the "busy" Friends, who do not have enough space in their lives just to be. I think that we all felt these three Friends had something particular to say to us and we responded to their contributions with our own thoughts: we must learn to sit and do nothing and become aware of the important things; we can get to know people by having a short meaningful discussion with them, far better than we can over months indulging only in small talk; we have to reconcile the idea of not being busy with needing people to do jobs so that GM actually happens; creating simple things with our hands can give us mental space; simplicity is part of a greater whole to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. . Helen Steven was quoted as one of the busiest people we know, but she has a clear-sighted simplicity and clarity of purpose that enables her to set aside other things and go forward to do what is required of her.

We also heard a report of the Kindrogan weekend, which struggled for helpers yet again. There was a suggestion that there be no Spring gathering next year because of the BYM Summer Gathering in Stirling, but we decided to keep the booking at Kindrogan and meet for an informal weekend of talk and walks.

A special interest group has been set up to consider "Disability Equality". If anyone is interested in knowing more about this, or contributing to it, they should contact Margaret Boland. The Scottish Quaker Tapestry Panel is to be displayed at Scottish Churches House in Dunblane. Quaker Life are undertaking wide soundings on the subject of same-sex marriage in the context of a religious ceremony and a committee has been set up to look into the theology. All Monthly Meetings have been asked to discuss this.

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND
Glasgow 9th September 2006

'Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for church affairs? Are you familiar enough with our church government to contribute to its disciplined processes?'

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Dear Friends and Attenders in Scotland,

As summer mellows into autumn we set our sights on Glasgow for the September General Meeting and a variety of topics as usual. I am reminded that as the daylight hours grow shorter it seems to me that time for our important business items grows ever shorter!

One and a half hours four times a year does not seem long enough, so dealing with agenda items and keeping to time without compromising our Quaker business method means discipline - or discipleship.

Meeting for Worship starts at 11am followed by those business items. These include news from Simon Best, under 19 co-ordinator for the Summer gathering in 2007; hearing plans for the celebrations to mark the passing of the Act to abolishing the Slave Trade; and a discussion on our responses to Consultations from the Scottish Executive. For the afternoon session we have invited Michael Hutchinson, General Secretary of Quaker Life and Assistant Recording Clerk to speak to us on the developing relationships between GM for Scotland and BYM.

I look forward to this item in particular as the experience of GM clerkship has deepened my awareness that the light breeze of change wafting over us is strengthening into a stronger wind!

Please let the Assistant Clerk, John Melling, know of any attenders who intend to be present.

Your Friend,

Pamala McDougall, Clerk