

# SESAME

Number 267: October 2026

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Area M<sup>ts</sup> at Polmont on 3 October/World Quaker Day, 4 October/BYM July session/Reports: Trustees; MHMC; Doors Open Day/Ecocide/Living Our Peace Testimony/NFPB in Glasgow/'The Svartbäcken Summons'/Outreach/BYM November session/Christian Aid/Woodbrooke courses/QTIG Award 2026/Films: *Life of Moses*; *Becoming Benjamin Lay*; *The People's Emergency Briefing*/Poems, Old & New/AM minutes, July/2025 Accounts Summary/... & c.

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The Children of Israel and the Golden Calf from *The Life of Moses* (1909) – see page 34

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## SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Saturday 3 October, at Polmont Community Hub, Greenpark Drive, Polmont, FK2 0PZ, and online. [*The Community Hub used to be called the Greenpark Centre, and was where Polmont Local Meeting met up to July 2024.*] All associated with Quakers in South East Scotland are welcome. Tea and coffee will be available from 10.30; the Meeting will begin at 11.00 and it is hoped the substantive business will be concluded by the time we break for lunch at 1.00 pm.

Sara Davies  
Clerk

### DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions  
*Elders – to be appointed*
2. Minutes of the meeting of 11 July 2026.
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
  1. *Attendance at AM (2026/07/11 refers)*
  2. *Quakers in Scotland (2026/04/03.2(b))*  
*SESAM hosting QiS at Edinburgh and online, Saturday, 7 November, 10:30-16:30. Volunteers will be needed to provide cakes and assist with catering.*
4. Between Meetings Minute: Marriage.
5. Matters from Trustees
  1. *Examiner for 2026 accounts*
  2. *Confirmation of donation to Britain Yearly Meeting, as per budget*
  3. *Trustees' report: Projects; Buildings; MoUs; QiS & SESAM* [see page 7]
6. Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House Management Committee
  1. *Trial of sale of alcohol by C Venues during their hire of the Meeting House for their Edinburgh Festival Fringe programme* [see page 10]
  2. *Staffing*
  3. *Artworks*
  4. *Request from a hiring group to consume alcohol in EQMH; future policy* [see page 11]
7. Membership matters
  1. *Book of Members & Attenders*
  2. *Transfer*
  3. *Application for Membership*
8. *Our Quaker Way* [Draft new Book of Discipline]
9. Appointments
  1. *Nominations*
  2. *Released from service*
  3. *Young Adult Representative*

10. Ecocide and Climate and Environmental Emergency
  1. *Ecocide (Scotland) Bill* (see minutes 2024/11/4.4 and 2025/01/03.1) [see also page 13]
  2. People's Emergency *film and activities* [see page 36]
11. Quaker Truth & Integrity Award (2026/04/11 refers) [see also page 32]
12. Matters from local meetings
  1. *Central Edinburgh Spiritual Review* [see Sesame 266, pages 37-46]
13. Reports
  1. *Yearly Meeting 2026, sessions 8 & 9, 18 July* – Dan Dickson [see page 5]
  2. *Doors Open Day, 26 September* – John Phillips [see page 14]
  3. *'Peace building in Palestine' event, 29 September*
14. Events
  1. *Screening of film Becoming Benjamin Lay* [see page 35]
  2. *Second Outreach Workshop, 17 October* [see page 22]
  3. *Peace and Consciousness Workshop* – **cancelled**
  4. *Story Telling Workshop* – **postponed** [see page 43 (2026/07/08.2.3)]
  5. *Concert: Black: The Colour of Velvet, Saturday 31 October* [see page 22]
  6. *Robert Barclay 2028*
15. Young people's feedback from their morning's activities  
*Afternoon sessions* (see below)
16. Closing minute

## PROGRAMME FOR THE AFTERNOON

- |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13:00-14:00   | Lunch<br><i>Please bring your own lunch. There are no local cafes, but there is an Aldi supermarket very close by, as well as a corner shop.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 14:00-15:20   | Afternoon sessions led by Falkirk & Polmont Local Meeting<br><i>There are three options:</i><br><b>Muna Ausat</b> of Falkirk for All will lead a talk and discussion on the rise of the right and of racism in Falkirk, and the efforts of local Friends to counter this, to welcome refugees and campaign against racism in a positive and peaceful way. It's been a tough year with really virulent protests but also a great strength of solidarity.<br>3 October is <b>Apple Day</b> at the Community Hub; Friends are invited to participate (and bring apples for tasting and juicing if they wish), to take part and celebrate the community.<br><b>Life Writing for Transformation:</b> simple, gentle exercises to explore using the written word as a spiritual practice and a tool for discovering 'What canst Thou say'. Led by <b>Anna Levin</b> . |
| 15:20 – 15:30 | Closing session                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 15:30 – 16:00 | Tea and cakes and departures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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**Next Area Meeting:** Tuesday, 12 January 2027 at 7.00 pm,  
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and online.

## World Quaker Day 2026: *Let Peace Be Among Us*

World Quaker Day is on 4 October 2026, and this year's theme is *Let Peace Be Among Us* with the supporting Bible passage, Hebrews 12:14, "*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy.*"

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is planning an extended Global Online Worship on the day, bringing together Friends across borders, languages and Quaker traditions with a shared focus on peace.

The worship will last for 8+ hours, reaching across many time zones from the Americas to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Each hour of worship will be dedicated to a part of the world where prayers for peace are particularly needed – you're welcome to join for as little or as long as you'd like.

There will be three sessions running throughout the day.

Friends in Asia West Pacific will be introducing the theme and holding an hour-long webinar at 8.00 am BST. Find out more and register at

<https://fwcc.world/event/let-peace-be-amongst-friends-in-asia-west-pacific-beyond/>

We will then have an extended period of worship, starting at 12 noon BST and lasting six hours. Register at <https://newsletter.fwcc.world/f/36>

Each hour of the six will be hosted by a different person/group who will be giving ministry, and there will be time for waiting worship.

|       |                                                    |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 12.00 | Prayers for the Environment                        |
| 1.00  | Cuba                                               |
| 2.00  | Great Lakes of Africa                              |
| 3.00  | Eastern Europe                                     |
| 4.00  | Middle East                                        |
| 5.00  | Quaker United Nations Offices, New York and Geneva |

Finally, Friends in New Zealand will end the day at 11.00 pm BST with a final hour's reflection on peace and justice. Find out more and register at

<https://fwcc.world/event/all-new-zealand-special-meeting-for-worship-with-northern-mm/>

## The Work that Reconnects

responds to the existential spiritual and material crisis we face in these turbulent times, and builds our capacity for loving resilience. **Chris Booth, Jane Lewis** and **Lesley Morrison** are offering a weekend residential workshop on the theme, using silent worship, time spent in the natural world, mindfulness, ritual, poetry and song for Scottish Quakers at **Wiston Lodge**, near Biggar, 13-15 November 2026. Due to the event being generously supported by SESAM, for which they are grateful, cost should not be a barrier to anyone attending. They welcome all Friends, teens and children, with childcare available.

Please contact Lesley Morrison with any queries. [*Details in the Book of Members*]

# BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING

## Manchester and online, Saturday 18 July

### *Sessions 8 and 9 of Yearly Meeting 2026*

**T**HIS YEARLY MEETING was the first of the single-day gatherings in the new structure of Yearly Meeting in which there are four gatherings throughout the year – one multi-day and three single days. [*The Yearly Meeting of which reports were included in Sesame 266 was both the last 'old style' YM and the first 'multi-day' gathering – sessions 1-7 – in the new style.*] July was also the first time the Yearly Meeting had been in Manchester since 1926. The event and agenda ran smoothly, with only a few disruptions owing to Friends' poor business discipline! I will provide you with the headlines of this Yearly Meeting, cover two items of the agenda in some depth, and list what else you can find in the full minutes.

#### **Key Take Aways:**

- **Agenda Planning Committee** is the new committee which will work with Yearly Meeting clerks to set the Yearly Meeting agenda. Instead of sending minutes to Meeting for Sufferings, Area Meetings (and other Quaker groups with clerks) will now send minutes that require broader discernment to Agenda Planning Committee. (See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/guidance-document-sending-minutes-to-yearly-meeting>)
- Yearly Meeting supports **new ways into membership** for Friends not attached to an Area Meeting, and asks for details to be brought to a future Yearly Meeting session for further discernment – including for the establishment of a new 'Anchor Meeting'. (See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/yearly-meeting-july-2026-preparation-ways-into-membership-proposal>)
- Friends are asked by the **Reparation Working Group** to engage with its historical and theological findings, hold the group in the Light as it continues its work, and are invited to the conference on Friday 23 October, at Friends House and online. (See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/yearly-meeting-2026-july-reparation-working-group-report> for the working group's report; conference details are at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/truth-and-repair/> [and on page 26])

#### ***New Ways into Membership – Minute 60***

The most substantive discernment was on the new ways into membership proposal. A working group of the Quaker Life Central Committee has been tasked with exploring options on how to welcome into membership Friends who have found their spiritual home in Quaker worship but not in a geographical Area Meeting. Such Friends would include those attached to Woodbrooke online worshipping community, Quaker Rainbow, and Young Friends in Britain – amongst others.

Two new kinds of Quaker community would be recognised in our formal structures: (1) *home meetings* – equivalent to a local meeting, but meeting online and/or in varying locations nationally; and (2) *anchor meetings* – equivalent to an area meeting, responsible for a group of home meetings and for considering applications for membership to the Religious Society of Friends.

The sense of the Yearly Meeting was favourable but trepidatious.

Accordingly, this matter will return to Yearly Meeting at a future time along with further guidance on what would be required of home meetings and anchor meetings, such as expectations of eldership, pastoral care, the holding of meetings for worship for business, and governance arrangements. The matter will otherwise need to return to Yearly Meeting to establish an anchor meeting in line with the requirements of establishment (or laying down) of an area meeting.

### ***Progress Report from the Reparation Working Group – Minute 63***

The Yearly Meeting heard a progress report from the Quakers in Britain Trustees' Reparation Working Group. This was an introduction to the group's work ahead of its being brought to Yearly Meeting in November in greater depth. We also heard prepared ministry from the co-clerks of the working group.

The working group was established in autumn 2023, in response to minutes 27 & 33 of Yearly Meeting 2022, to examine British Quakers' historical involvement in enslavement and colonialism, and to consider what reparation is required of us today. The group has four workstreams:

1. Historical Research – covering Quaker complicity in enslavement and colonialism, the economic exploitation that continued after abolition, and ongoing legacies within supply chains;
2. Networking and Listening – the key to the working group's work is listening to those experiencing the legacies of enslavement and colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, and Britain;
3. Theological Research – the working group commissioned Woodbrooke to conduct postdoctoral research covering: theology used to justify and support systems of enslavement and oppression, theology of abolition, and theology of reparation and liberation.
4. Finance – considering how best to involve those experiencing the legacies of enslavement, Quaker colonisation or exploitation in the process of recommending to BYM Trustees how to calculate a reparation amount and destination.

The working group requests that Friends engage with its historical and theological findings. The report arising from Woodbrooke's research will be made available in the Reparation section of the Quakers in Britain website in due course. Friends are also invited to the working group's conference entitled 'Truth and Repair: Our Quaker Journey Towards Justice'

which can be attended at Friends House and online. [See page 26. Woodbrooke is offering various courses on slavery, abolitionism and reparation.] I urge Friends to read their progress report in full.

### ***Other business***

The Yearly Meeting also considered:

- Reports from BYM Trustees; from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, and from Friends Trusts Limited.
- The transfer of Evesham local meeting from Banbury & Evesham AM to Worcestershire & Shropshire AM.
- Between meetings procedure for nominations, appointments and releases.

The full minutes from July can be found at

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/yearly-meeting-minutes-2026-may-july>

from page 25 onwards.

Britain Yearly Meeting will next meet at Friends House and online on Saturday 21 November 2026.

**Dan Dickson**

## **Trustees' Report to Area Meeting on 3 October 2026**

### ***Update on Projects***

#### **i) Children & Young People Development Worker, £82,000**

We continue to work with BYM Quaker Life Team responsible for Children & Youth Development Work on the proposed post for South East Scotland. After discussions with QiS representatives we have agreed that we should go ahead on a part-time, SESAM-only basis. leaving the door open for QiS to support activities for young people from the rest of Scotland and join in fully with the project when they are ready. For management of the project we are negotiating an MoU with BYM. A working group will develop a role profile for members of a support group for the children & young people development worker, and this will then be communicated to Nominations Committee.

#### **ii) 'Quakers in Scotland and Slavery' research project, £5000 (+ £5000 from SM bequest)**

A proposal was presented to the QiS meeting in August which agreed to contribute the remaining £10,000 to enable this project to proceed on a Scotland-wide basis. A call has gone out for up to six Friends or attenders to serve on the research advisory group (RAG): deadline 28 September.

#### **iii) 'Holidays For Hope and Healing', £4698**

It was not possible to find volunteers to take part in the proposed holidays, and unless volunteers come forward this project will be deferred for the time being.

**iv) 'Work that Reconnects' – workshop at Wiston, £4600**

Five evening workshops were run in June/July for the 'Work that Reconnects', as part of the Art & Ecology programme at St Mary's Episcopalian Cathedral. There was a full cohort of participants and positive feedback was received. The residential 'Work That Reconnects' weekend at Wiston Lodge is scheduled for 13-15 November 2026. There are still places available. [See page 4.] A full report will be provided in due course.

**v) 'Life Writing for Transformation'; workshops and anthology, £2700**

Anna Levin is offering a taster session at Area Meeting, which will be an opportunity to gauge interest in the project.

**vi) Increasing visibility and outreach £370 - £3740**

Trustees have supported this as ongoing work funded from other budget lines, rather than as a project. A second workshop will take place on Saturday, 17 October 2026, 10:00-13:00, facilitated by Elizabeth Allen and Rosemary Hartill. There is no charge. Friends are encouraged to register as soon as possible, closing date 9 October. Ideally all LMs in SESAM would be represented there.

***Update on building work***

We are in the process of engaging builders (Scott & Brown) with the help of our architect to carry out an overdue programme of repair and renovation on windows, walls and rainwater goods facing the courtyard at 7 Victoria Terrace. An allocation of costs has been agreed with co-proprietors and the estimated bill for SESAM will be about £41,000 + VAT. This represents just over half the figure of £80k agreed by Area Meeting in November 2025 for investment in our building during 2026. Erection of scaffolding is scheduled to start on 2 October. Removal of asbestos from the Bow Room has been completed at a cost of £6,461 and attention can now turn to improving the insulation of that room.

Following an analysis of options by Luths services we have been investigating the possibility of installing two internal air to air heat pumps at Edinburgh, one outside the meeting room and one outside the hall, to provide background heating and ventilation, which could be supplemented when necessary by electric wall heaters. An invitation was issued for a visit to a similar installation in Dunfermline in August. Four Friends took part and reported that noise was similar to that from a domestic fridge. We will continue to pursue this option for improving heating and ventilation at Edinburgh Meeting House.

Kelso Friends are rearranging kitchen facilities and investigating the possibility of installing solar PV.

***Quaker use of Edinburgh Meeting House***

Trustees and Meeting House Management Committee (MMHC) are considering how to ensure Quaker use of the building is appropriately valued in monitoring financial results. Trustees have been consulted by MHMC on

changes to staffing and reducing the regular opening hours to 10:00-16:00.

### ***Memoranda of Understanding***

We have on file a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SESAM and each of our constituent meetings. These are all several years old. We recommend that work begin on reviewing these and if necessary updating them so everyone is clear about which responsibilities are delegated to their local meeting and which rest with Area Meeting. We recognise that the balance will vary according to the capacity and wishes of each Local Meeting.

### ***Update on Relationship with QiS***

SESAM Trustees are not expressing a collective view on whether SESAM should continue to exist. We are aware of work currently carried out by SESAM and by SESAM appointees, including trustees, which will still be needed under any future arrangements. We welcome the paper prepared for Portobello & Musselburgh LM by Alastair Cameron and Mark Ballard which sets out future options. This may help Friends make informed decisions on any changes. We trust that decisions on the future of SESAM will be reached in right ordering by the Area Meeting as a whole.

Meanwhile Area Meeting in January expressed a wish to develop a working relationship with QiS. It asked trustees to “...explore risks and provide a review of options in due course and explore a written agreement”. Trustees therefore prepared for the next Area Meeting a list, agreed with QiS trustees, of actions to align and integrate policies and processes. Area Meeting minuted its encouragement of this initiative. This evolutionary progress could lead to SESAM dissolving into QiS or, if SESAM continues to exist in some form, to a new agreement as to which body is best placed to carry out which tasks.

QiS trustees and clerks (including Friends from SESAM) are busy integrating five charities into one, and three Area Meetings into one. The resulting workload leaves limited capacity for interaction with SESAM. SESAM Trustees are keen to collaborate further as soon as QiS resources allow. For example, we plan to move forward with funding a part-time development worker for our children and young people, as agreed at Area Meeting, but will remain open to extending that opportunity to the whole of Scotland if and when QiS so decides. Trustees will continue to report regularly to SESAM about progress on collaboration and alignment with QiS, in parallel with any complementary discussions about whether SESAM should lay itself down.

**Martin Ward**

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EDINBURGH YOUNG FRIENDS, for those aged 18-35(ish) meet fortnightly on Fridays in the Meeting House at 7.30. This involves relaxed chat, refreshments, and Epilogue (evening worship) ! Please contact Isla at [islawhateley@proton.me](mailto:islawhateley@proton.me) for more information on specific dates, or to be added to our Whatsapp group.

## *Report on the Trial of allowing the Sale of Alcohol during the Fringe 2026*

**F**IRST OF ALL, the Meeting House Management Committee and Management Team would like to thank Area Meeting for agreeing to the trial going ahead.

One thing that has been pointed out since Area Meeting on 11 July is that there weren't any agreed metrics for judging how it went – and that's something we've been thinking about a lot since then.

From our point of view there are four things to consider:

1. Did it cause any problems for us?
2. Did it cause any problems for local Friends?
3. Did it allow us to promote some Quaker messaging?
4. Did it help C venues (our current Fringe partner)?

We'll go through each of these in turn.

### *1. Did it cause any problems for us?*

Operationally, our concerns about alcohol in the Meeting House were focused around whether people would be getting drunk here and behaving irresponsibly, which could potentially lead to damage. We're happy to say that we didn't see or hear any evidence of this during the trial, and it's not something that we would be worried about if this was allowed again in the future.

Even with the bar, the Meeting House was not somewhere people were visiting to drink heavily. From what we saw it was still fairly quiet as Fringe venues go.

### *2. Did it cause any problems for local Friends?*

Not as far as we're aware. We held a two-week consultation period with Central Edinburgh Friends *via* the notices (electronic and in person) asking for feedback on their experiences during the Fringe, with particular reference to the bar and serving of alcohol. We received very few comments and no one has raised any issues or concerns with us relating to the bar.

There was feedback about the use of the Meeting House during the Fringe more generally, but that is a separate issue and the serving of alcohol seems to have had little to no impact on the local worshipping community from the communications we've received.

### *3. Did it allow us to promote some Quaker messaging?*

It did! We were a little pushed for time this year as things were arranged quite late, and the Managers and JP were all very busy in the run-up, but we were able to write a message explaining the Quaker stance on moderation and why we had decided to allow the bar. It was printed on a big poster and put up behind the bar, and we also had more detailed leaflets available for anyone interested. C venues were totally happy to have this messaging up, and to work with us on displaying it.

If we continue to allow the bar during future Fringes this is definitely something we'd like to develop a bit more – we could probably work with some people to come up with less wordy and more eye-catching materials.

4. *Did it help C venues (our current Fringe partner)?*

We sought feedback from Hartley Kemp, the Artistic Director of C Arts:

*"Our experience was that the trial year of a bar at C alto went well.*

*"We were pleased to incorporate messaging from the Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House suggesting that users of the bar at C alto consider consuming alcohol in moderation and this is what our audiences and artists did. To our knowledge, there were no instances of anyone at C alto having had too much to drink, and alcohol was available alongside non-alcoholic options.*

*"The café bar was appreciated by audiences and by performing companies and artists and the foyer was busier in 2026 than in 2024 and 2025 when we had a cafe only. The sales (before costs) from the café-bar in 2026 were £3,562, compared with £1,208 for the café only in 2025.*

*"There is also good advance interest from companies considering performing at the venue in 2027. This is at least in part, we think, based on companies' expectation that the café-bar at the venue will continue. The permission to run a bar in 2026 came too late for us to advertise the venue as having a bar to prospective performing companies, but interest in the venue among performing companies for 2027 is already higher than anticipated, with positive feedback received from companies about the presence of a bar in 2026."*

### **Summary and Request to SESAM**

In conclusion, the Management Team with the support of MHMC are seeking permission from SESAM to make the sale of alcohol a permanent feature of all future Fringe lets when the building is let in its entirety – if requested by a Fringe company. This would include the next two years of C Venues' contract with us and any future contracts issued. This would ensure the financial viability of the Meeting House as a Fringe venue and open up options for entering into partnership with other Fringe production companies in the future.

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### ***Request from a hiring group to consume alcohol in Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House***

**M**EETING HOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE and the Management Team are keenly aware that a second *ad hoc* request regarding alcohol consumption in the Meeting House is far from ideal, following on so quickly from our request for the sale of alcohol during the Fringe.

We would like to make clear that it is not our intention to bring every request like this to AM for a decision and that we fully intend to develop a considered policy to bring to AM in January for full discernment.

However, our Management Team has received an enquiry from a hiring

group that has pre-empted our thinking and the time constraints are such that we felt compelled to bring this as a separate issue. Discussion and discernment at the October Area Meeting may also inform our thinking on a wider policy on the consumption of alcohol in the Meeting House.

We have had an enquiry from the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, [see <https://eljic.org/>] who are looking for a new home for their regular services – Friday evenings, occasional Saturday mornings and potential children’s classes running alongside. From a lettings perspective, it is ideal – the requested timings and room requirements (probably the Hall and Library) suit the Meeting House operationally and regular hiring income is essential for the financial sustainability of our Meeting House.

However, alcohol is always a part of their religious services in small amounts and some of their events where alcohol is served in larger quantities straddle a line between religious and social uses of alcohol. For example, they usually serve alcoholic drinks (both wine and spirits) alongside communal Shabbat dinners, and for holidays such as Passover, the meal (including alcohol consumption) is the service.

At our most recent committee meeting, MHMC minuted:

*MHMC supports the request of this group to have alcohol as part of their services, and occasionally, moderate consumption of alcohol with special celebratory meals.*

The religious character of this group creates two complicating factors that are not about alcohol, but might add some confusion to the deliberation. We address this separately below so Friends can discuss them explicitly rather than under the guise of discussing alcohol, if they wish. Neither the MHMC nor the Management Team consider these factors to be barriers.

First, we learnt from one of our members, Duncan Wallace, that this particular group has experienced opposition within the wider Jewish community because of its liberal views and has struggled to find meeting space as a result. MHMC are keen to support them as a faith community and feel that it could open up helpful interfaith dialogue for Friends, if so desired.

Second, we acknowledged the possible tension arising from Quakers in Britain’s very clear position on Palestine and the fact that the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and other pro-Palestine groups regularly use our building. We undertook to ensure that a full and frank discussion on this was had before any confirmation of hire took place – to make sure that all building users felt safe in our spaces.

We are reminded that Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2025 asked us to reach out with friendship to people who are Jewish and their communities, whilst clearly condemning the Israeli State in its genocidal actions.

We are also aware that there may be some future users of our Meeting House who would be uncomfortable using a room in a building where alcohol was being served and consumed. We don’t currently have any regular groups for whom this would be the case but, were this to arise, our

Management Team feel confident they can manage it in a sensitive way. Friday evenings are quiet for bookings at the Meeting House generally meaning that the likelihood of a clash is lower.

It is also worth noting that no licence needs to be sought from either the group or the Meeting House as alcohol is not being sold on the premises, simply brought in by a group and consumed.

**We would very much like to hear Area Meeting's views on this, to discern whether the consumption of alcohol by this group poses an obstacle to our exploring a hiring relationship with them further – or not.**

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FROM SOUTH EDINBURGH LOCAL MEETING

### *Minute from Meeting for Worship for Business, 13 September*

#### **2026:3:13 Ecocide**

Background paper (below) is attached to these minutes. A bill in the name of Monica Lennon MSP fell out of time at Holyrood. We maintain our concern about the need to legislate on ecocide as a crime against humanity.

We ask SE Scotland AM and QiS to raise this with BYM and Agenda Preparation Committee. A clerk needs to be identified as a special interest group. Hilary Saunders has been nominated.

#### ***Briefing Paper***

#### **Quaker Support for establishing Ecocide as a Crime Against Humanity**

Quakers in Scotland (QiS) has actively supported the proposed Ecocide bill in the Scottish Parliament since 2021. Sarah Komashko, QIS Parliamentary Engagement Officer (currently on parental leave) met Monica Lennon MSP in 2021 and 2022.

#### **Encouragement to Area Meetings and Individuals to engage**

In December 2023 Sarah encouraged Area meetings and individuals to respond to a consultation open until February 2024. SESAM did respond along with individual Friends and in 2024 there was a vote in the Scottish parliament about the Ecocide Bill which Sarah encouraged Friends to write to their MSPs to ask them to support it.

QiS responded supportively to a Scottish Government consultation in 2025 about the Ecocide Bill and Sarah encouraged Friends to individually respond to the consultation.

#### **Current status in Scotland**

An article from March 2026 explained that the Ecocide Bill was dropped pre-election[see <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/monica-lennon-ecocide-scotland-bill-scottish-parliament-holyrood-5619584>]. Monica Lennon (who recently joined Parliament again as a list MSP for Glasgow) aims to reintroduce it within 100 days of the start of the new parliamentary session. Lucy le Roux, currently the PEO, is sure PEWG will engage with this and offer support if it happens.

#### **A concern of Area Meetings in England**

On a UK-wide stage there have been a group of Area Meetings in SW Eng-

land who have consistently raised a concern in support of the growing international calls for legislation on Ecocide led by groups like Stop Ecocide International.

We have heard that Hilary Saunders – a key architect of that concern – has been advised by the Recording Clerk and Head of Quaker Life to formalise this concern and encourages nominations for clerk of a special interest group so that Quakers in Britain are able to communicate clearly with all those wishing to raise Ecocide as a concern.

I hope South Edinburgh LM might reflect on our continuing concern to support legislation on Ecocide and to raise this concern with South East Scotland Area Meeting and with Quakers in Scotland and to support the nomination of Hilary Saunders as clerk of a new UK-wide Quaker concern on Ecocide.

**David Somervell**

## Doors Open Day, Saturday 26 September 2026

**T**HE COCKBURN ASSOCIATION organises 'Doors Open Days' in Edinburgh each year; we were invited to participate, and decided to open the Meeting House to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday 26 September. Just over twenty Friends offered to help for longer or shorter periods during the day. Detailed briefing sheets were issued to everyone.

Visitors arrived through the main door from Victoria Terrace and were met in the main foyer. They were invited to climb the stairs to the Meeting Room on the second floor where they were met by members of the Meeting who welcomed them, showed them the views from the windows and engaged in initial conversations. They then proceeded to the Hall on the first floor, where there were tables with free leaflets, groups of chairs for longer conversations, a table for children's activities and notice boards with posters and print-outs of information both about Quaker history and about the history of the building itself.

Coffee, tea and biscuits were available (and a collecting bowl for donations).

Over the day the building received just over 150 visitors, most in couples, but occasionally alone or in groups of up to four. There were about six accompanying children. Lunchtime and mid-afternoon were the busiest times.

Most people were curious about Quakerism; some were mainly interested in the history of the building. It was certainly a rewarding time for members of the Meeting. The Bow Room was not open to visitors, but members of the Meeting used it as a place for peace and for coffee or refreshment.

**John Phillips**

*The volunteers who helped on the day were: Jane Angel, Lynne Barty, Cathy Bell, Olivia Cox, Sara Davies, Catriona Dickson, Frankie Hannah, Madeleine Harding, Dorothea & Robert Hay, Simon Jackson, Susan Kime, Emma Lawrence, Phil Lucas, Annie Miller, Jacqueline Noltingk, John & Kerstin Phillips, Gareth Rae, Jonathan Riddell, David Sterratt.*

## *The Meeting Room, Victoria Terrace*

This is not the place you would want to be  
 high up above  
 the most photographed street in Edinburgh  
 home to Harry Potter  
 and a whole roasted pig.

And Quakers  
 the mysterious silent sect

If you like tour constant Instagram feed  
 your earbuds  
 channelling your play list directly to your brain  
 background noise  
 in your foreground

DO NOT ENTER HERE

For a few brief weeks in August  
 it was almost normal  
 taken over by the fringe  
 resonant with rappers  
 with the stomp of flamenco  
 and poetic promptings  
 of iambic pentameter

And I hear you could even buy  
 BEER!!

Today  
 First Sunday after Fringe  
 the sacred silence is resumed  
 except for the ritual reading  
 of the big red book

All sound falls away  
 you will hear yourself breath  
 wait for a pin to drop  
 notice the merry-go-round  
 of your thoughts rotating  
 look over the mute old town rooftops.

Close your eyes  
 go within  
 wait  
 remember  
 the beyond is not  
 far away.

Jane Angel  
 September 2026

## *Closing minute for the Living our Peace Testimony gathering, 13 June 2026*

**A**ROUND 70 FRIENDS have gathered at Friargate Meeting House in York for a day of reflection, connection and discussion on the theme of *Living our Peace Testimony*.

Meeting at a time of significant turmoil and violent conflict in the world, we started our day with contributions focusing on different aspects of peace, from individual responses to conflict in our own lives to the global situation.

We have been encouraged through these to consider the challenges as well as the need for acts of hope and ways of contributing to peace. 'Let us then try what love will do'.

Reflecting and talking together as a gathered group and in smaller discussions and workshops we have explored a number of concerns and issues, including:

- *Speaking our truths*
- *Tensions and dilemmas*
- *Peace and young people*
- *Peace and planet-care*
- *Israel and Palestine*
- *Violent conflicts in the world today*
- *Sharing and working towards vision of 'the republic of heaven on earth'*
- *Paper-crane workshop*

We have heard from Friends about their responses in these different settings.

Insights shared have included the importance of developing an awareness of balance in our own lives and our inner peace and working outwards from there.

One of our strengths is simplicity. We have been reminded that the opposite of fear is hope.

We acknowledge the significant demands on us and the wider community in seeking and building peace in these current times. As we close our meeting we hold in the light Friends and others across the world who are striving for peace in all aspects of life. We take courage and hope from being part of this web of connections and of positive and committed action.

*Among the Friends pictured opposite, **Irenée Rajaona-Horne** will be the new NFPB coordinator when **Philip Austin** retires at the end of December. **Hannah Brock-Womack** is the peace lead for Quakers in Britain; **Suzanne Wilson** and **Alan Frith** are the clerks at the table in the central picture, and **Robin Bowles**, of Quaker Roots, is in the right foreground. **Hannah Gaskell** is the Board rep. for North Wales AM and **Raymond Chadwick** for Teesdale & Cleveland AM. (Photos by Elspeth Moore.)*



*Irenée Rajaona-Horne in a workshop*



*Right: Hannah Brock-Womack demonstrates folding a peace crane*

*Below: Philip Austin introduces the event*



*Speaking ... (Hannah Gaskell)*



*... and listening (Raymond Chadwick, centre)*

## Northern Friends Peace Board: Glasgow, 26 September

**A**TTENDANCE at our Autumn meeting was evenly split between those participating on Zoom and Friends present in person at the Renfield Centre, a new venue for us, at the Charing Cross end of Bath Street; in its favour was a nearby Palestinian restaurant, highly praised by those who'd not brought sandwiches, but the acoustics of the room we were in made it hard for those online to hear all that was said.

### *Living Our Peace Testimony*

After opening worship and introductions, our first item of business was to consider a report of the event at York in June (pictures of which, and its closing minute, are on the two preceding pages). Particularly appreciated was the prepared ministry in the first session; some of the afternoon workshops were felt in comparison to have lacked focus, however, which was the only real criticism of the day. Several participants had asked when the next such event would be.

### *Trustees' Report*

The main focus of trustees' work in the past six months had been the recruitment of a new Coordinator. The meeting also had an update on our finances: we will be drawing on reserves to cover the costs of the hand-over period and of moving the office from Bolton to Lancaster.

### *New Coordinator*

Irenée Rajaona-Horne, unable to be with us in person, nevertheless joined us online, and was welcomed.

### *Guidelines for NFPB representatives from Area Meetings*

Philip Austin introduced a paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting, a possible new version of guidelines on the role of Area Meeting representatives. We were reminded that reps make up the Board, and that the role offers opportunities for helping us connect with and support Area Meetings, as well as involvement in developing and sustaining NFPB's work in different ways.

### *Members Forum*

As usual, we heard about a great variety of work carried out by Friends in their local areas.

### *Conscientious Objection in the Second World War*

Barry Mills, formerly of Bolton, now of Glasgow, has been working for many years on what started as a single-handed attempt to identify all the men – and, in the Second World War, women too – who sought recognition as conscientious objectors. He was originally inspired by the work of Cyril Pearce, who, in retirement, did pioneering research on the C.O.s of the First World War, establishing that the widely-cited figure of around 15,000 for their total number was a significant underestimate. Barry's project is now under the care of the Peace Pledge Union; the data can be searched at

the website <https://www.conscienceww2.uk>. Significant help was given by Ellis Brooks, formerly of Quakers in Britain, and by Dixie Wills, Peace Campaigns Coordinator. A booklet has been published to encourage interest in local C.O.s' stories – see:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/a-walk-in-their-shoes-conscientious-objection-walking-tour>

### ***Britain Yearly Meeting***

We noted the new provision for the forwarding of minutes from Quaker Recognised Bodies such as ourselves to BYM, as mentioned in Dan Dickson's report [see page 5; first bullet point under 'Key Take Aways'].

### ***Scottish Peace Platform***

Ambitious plans for a Scottish Peace Institute, set out by the Scottish Government in 2021, were subsequently scaled back but not abandoned, and the Scottish Peace Platform was established last year *"to network and cohere a growing group of diverse Scottish organisations and individuals focused on peace through member events and by sharing best practice and new research on peace-building"* (see <https://scottishpeaceplatform.org/>).

We welcomed Shona McCallum, programme coordinator at Beyond Borders Scotland, which runs the Platform together with the University of Edinburgh. She told us it has some 30 member organisations (including QiS, Secure Scotland and Peace & Justice) and that our Friend Janet Fenton sits on its advisory board. Its aspiration is to promote Scotland as a world-leading expert on building a culture of peace.

A recent article on the website of the Scottish Council for Global Affairs, 'Peacebuilding in Scotland' by Noor Al-Naser, former manager of the SPP, addresses various questions on the situation in which it is working and the scope of its work. See <https://scga.scot/2026/09/23/peacebuilding-in-scotland/>.

### ***Quaker Voluntary Action – 'The Svartbäcken Summons'***

Kit King, Coordinator for QVA, and Matthew Bittle, one of the trustees, introduced the minute on peace that came from a recent week-long retreat in Sweden, which has been circulated under the (perhaps somewhat immodest?) title of the 'Svartbäcken Summons'. [See pages 20-21.] The minute notes *"the rich legacy of the Religious Society's witness to our peace testimony"* that had prompted the participants *"to consider and envision radical solutions that Quakers on an individual, local, national, and international level could pursue to and work towards a more peaceful world."*

As small groups, we each discussed a question from the list of queries attached to the minute [see page 22] and found them stimulating – many of them seemed to relate to issues of communication which affect all aspects of our life both as a worshipping community and as part of wider society.

The Board meets next at Manchester Meeting House on 28 November.

**Alan Frith**

## *Minute QVA 2026/07/01 The Svartbäcken Summons*

At a Working Retreat run by Quaker Voluntary Action at Svartbäcken Quaker Centre, Sweden, in July 2026 we met to discern what Quakers can do about the global issues of today during a session exploring our theme, 'Pathways to Peace'. The ministry in this session, as shown to us by the Spirit, led us to discern a summons – a call to action.

We began by considering the enormity of the challenges we are facing in the world. We are conscious, though, that at many points throughout Quaker history, Friends have faced what have felt like existential and insurmountable threats. We identified intersecting and interrelated barriers to our witness of creating the Commonwealth of Heaven on Earth. At the root of many of these challenges is a feeling of disempowerment, othering, and a lack of agency on a deeply spiritual level. This discord has led to conflict in communities, repression of truth in society, local and international violence, and often underpinned and driven by the climate crisis.

We are conscious that the necessary brevity and oversimplification of the immense and nuanced challenges facing us does not fully capture what is deeply understood by those present in our company and those who will read our minute.

Nevertheless, the rich legacy of the Religious Society's witness to our peace testimony prompted us to consider and envision radical solutions that Quakers on an individual, local, national, and international level could pursue to and work towards a more peaceful world.

Education and learning is a sacred gift. Conscious of the beauty and strength of intergenerational connection within our community, we are keen to encourage the sharing of perspectives, particularly around peace work. We are grateful for the work that Quakers already do in the field of peace education and in training young people to be peer mediators. Empowering people to spread peace in their communities and through their relationships trains generations of peacebuilders and provides the long term, steadfast impact we hope to make through our work. Exchanging wisdom and understanding offers an opportunity to help us learn from the mistakes of the past and emboldens us to mirror powerful actions that our Quaker ancestors took in response to the issues of their time.

We also have an opportunity to share those gifts beyond the Religious Society. This can be through advocacy campaigns on issues that Quakers and others care about, lobbying those in service of the public to make tangible and lasting change, and in Britain in particular, working with Quaker Members of Parliament to shape policy that furthers our testimonies to peace and truth. We could be providing toolkits to individual Friends which would give them the skills to effectively lobby their elected representatives.

Quakers are known for living and working with integrity, which enables us to provide non-partisan safe-spaces for dialogue and listening. From these

spaces for gathering, we may effectively speak truth to power in love, and take action from a source of Spirit-led, grounded, and discerned purpose. How can we offer our experience of seeking truth in an era of disinformation? As a faith body, we are small in number but we enjoy a trusted and therefore impactful voice on the issues we speak upon. We can provide a clear flowing stream for people from all walks of life to bathe in together, share in its healing properties, and wash away the ills of the world.

Essential to the building of a more peaceful home is solidarity and fellowship among all peoples, but particularly those that share our human values as represented in our Quaker testimonies. Interfaith networks and coalitions can add power to peace work, broaden the scope for change, and instill a spiritual grounding that engages across a diverse range of theologies to reach people beyond ourselves. We hope that in times where civil society, peace workers, and activists are under increasing pressure, that we might serve as spiritual stewards of a movement so deeply ingrained in our collective past, present, and future.

We heard ministry about the formation of gospel. Jesus entered the desert for 40 days and 40 nights to fast, pray, and reflect. During this time, he resisted temptation, and came back to spread the Gospel. How might we retreat, reflect, and return to the world with love in our hearts and peace on our lips? We know from our experience that each of us has a direct and unique relationship with the Divine. Expanding our chaplaincy and fellowship work into communities, and beyond prisons, hospitals, and universities, can help that message reach those it needs to and provide a spiritual home for those looking for one.

It is important that the world knows that our work is Quaker work. We should communicate that work done by Quaker organisations is done by following the leadings of the Spirit. When we do work as individuals, we feel we ought to tell the world that we are not just doing it because we care or because we have relevant skills. We need to be persistent in saying 'I am a Quaker and this is my ministry.' When we do, we stand together as a faith community, with a bold and united voice, and we seek to honour the Quakers who came before us. We are summoned by the Spirit to memorialise their work in ours and pave the way for a new generation to confidently say 'I am a Quaker and this is why'.

We forward this minute to the Agenda Planning Committee of Britain Yearly Meeting and Quaker Voluntary Action Trustees. We ask Quaker Voluntary Action staff to publish this minute.

Signed,



Kit King, QVA Coordinator



Matthew Bittle, QVA Trustee

*[The discussion questions associated with the Minute are overleaf.]*

## ***Queries: how can I support Quaker peace work?***

*QVA invites you to use the queries that follow for individual and group reflection on the Svartbäcken Summons. We hope they inspire fresh ideas, insight and action within your Meeting or other Quaker group. We'd love to hear what comes out of your group's work with these queries, so please send your notes, ideas, and/or reflections from these discussions to us by email: [contribute@qva.org.uk](mailto:contribute@qva.org.uk)*

1. How can I create opportunities for inter-generational/all-age sharing and action for peace in my Quaker communities, and beyond? How do I share my wisdom and experiences with others? How do I encourage others to share wisdom with me?
2. What resources do I need to feel confident contacting my elected representatives about peace work? Does our local Quaker community engage with elected representatives about issues we care about?
3. How can I as an individual, or my Meeting, take time out to refresh and resource ourselves to 'return to the world with love in our hearts and peace on our lips?'
4. Do my Local and Area Meeting, or other Quaker groups, feel like 'non-partisan safe-spaces for dialogue and listening'? What would help them feel so? If my Meeting has a Meeting House, do we offer it as a non-partisan, safe space for dialogue and listening within our Quaker communities and for others?
5. How do I engage with Quaker campaigning? How does my Meeting support Quaker campaigning locally through activists in our area? Do we provide enough spiritual and practical support? How do I and my Quaker community support the national level campaigning that Yearly Meeting does on our behalf?
6. How can our Quaker community support chaplains? Am I called to chaplaincy in a prison, hospital, or university? Are there avenues for chaplaincy beyond prisons, hospitals, and universities?
7. How comfortable am I saying 'I am a Quaker and this is why' or 'I am doing this work because I am a Quaker'? What would help me feel confident saying those statements?

## **Quakers in Scotland: Discussion Day**

***Saturday 10 October, Subud Centre, 7 St Leonard's Bank, Perth PH2 8EB***

### **MENTAL HEALTH: What does love require of us?**

Led by Rosemary Roberts, co-author of *Quaker Voices on Mental Health*, available as a free download at <https://quakervoicesonmh.org.uk/activities/qvomh-book/>

Chapters 6, 9 and 12 will be the basis for discussion groups.

Funded by the Camfield Trust – lunch & refreshments are provided

To book contact **Pamela Brunt** (*contact details in the Book of Members*)

## **‘LIVING THE VISION, GROWING OUR FUTURE’ (Quaker Outreach Workshop, No. 2)**

**Saturday, 17 October, 2026: 10.00 am – 1.00 pm** (*tea/coffee from 9.30 am*)  
**St Columba’s by the Castle, 14 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2PW**  
 facilitated by **Elizabeth Allen and Rosemary Hartill.**

Please email *both* facilitators to register. Closing date: Friday 9 October.  
*[Email addresses in the Book of Members]*

*The organisers hope each local meeting will send a representative to participate in the workshop, and they also encourage individual Friends interested in Quaker outreach to attend, so please remind Friends in your meeting about it.*

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## **BLACK: The Colour of Velvet**

**Celebrate Black Art Song with Quanda Johnson**  
*– an evening of songs by Black composers  
 accompanied by cello, Africa drum, and dance*

**Saturday 31 October, 7.00 – 8.00 pm**

**Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace**

Tickets (free) from

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-the-color-of-velvet-edinburgh-tickets-2000521958029>

A fundraising concert celebrating Black Art Song where you can dive deep into the world of velvet black – a classical world full of rich improvisational sound. This Black British History Month don't miss out on a unique experience – all about the depth, heart, and classical soul of Blackness.

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## **Yearly Meeting 2026: London, 21 November**

*Yearly Meeting will meet again on 21 November, 9.30 am – 4.30 pm, at Friends House and online.*

Everyone in our Quaker community is welcome to join, whether a member or not. There will be programmes for children and young people. Registration is required, but if you have already attended a Yearly Meeting session in 2026 you are already registered and do not need to do so again. You do, however, need to book for the YM session you wish to attend, and there is a separate registration/booking process for the Children and Young People's Programme. See <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>.

Documents for the meeting appear at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/documents> as they become available; *Our Quaker Way* (the draft of the new Book of Discipline) which the Meeting will receive, is to be released on the day.

## Christian Aid News

### *Prayers for Peace in the Middle East*

Christian Aid supporters pray together on the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month on Teams – meetings resumed in September after the summer break. To sign up, go to <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>

### *Harvest of Hope – South Sudan*

The climate crisis is making it harder than ever for families to grow food. In countries like South Sudan, flooding and unpredictable seasons are destroying harvests, leaving farming families struggling to feed their children. This Harvest, worshipping groups in Scotland can stand in solidarity with farming communities: protecting their land, strengthening their livelihoods and planting seeds of hope for the future. Resources available for use at and around events include posters, worship materials and a recipe for a traditional Sudanese soup; see

<https://resources.christianaid.org.uk/uk/resources/harvest>

Tut Nuguth, from the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, and James Wani, Christian Aid's lead in South Sudan, will be visiting Scotland **18-22 October**. Please look out for the events we will be hosting to hear about the reality of life in this forgotten region and about the work of Christian Aid and the Churches in advocating for the humanitarian needs of the people as well as peace building in this young country.

### *Time to Act – the Just Peace Coalition*

Across Palestine and Israel, communities are living through devastating violence, loss and injustice. Palestinian Christians have called on the global Church to respond not with silence or despair, but with courage, compassion, and action.

The **Just Peace Coalition** brings together churches and Christian organisations across the UK to respond to that call. Together, we are inviting individuals, churches, and communities to commit to working for a just peace for all who call the Holy Land home. See <https://justpeacecoalition.com/>

### *Debt Justice*

Malawi is one of 25 African countries spending more on debt repayments than on education. Fewer than half of Malawi's children complete their primary education; only 15 % finish secondary school. But if Malawi's external debt were reduced to 10 % of the Government budget, they could put 523 more primary teachers into schools, or enable 16,500 more children to complete primary school. This autumn, the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill will be reintroduced at Westminster. If passed, it would encourage private lenders to participate fully in international debt relief initiatives and mean that countries like Malawi wouldn't have to spend more on debt than on vital public services such as education.

**There is more about Christian Aid's campaigns, events and resources at**  
<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/scotland>.

# Woodbrooke Courses: October to the New Year

Unless marked otherwise, events are online. It is necessary to book beforehand (at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>) as places are limited. If a price is shown, it is the **standard** fee, and a **50 % discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35. If a price is *not* shown, participants are invited to “pay as led”: there is a cost to Woodbrooke in putting on events and courses, and it is hoped contributions by those taking part will cover them.

*The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in Sesame.*

*For bursary help, speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email [sesamtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:sesamtreasurer@gmail.com).*

***The Quaker Renaissance in Britain*** £72

6 sessions: Wednesdays, 30 September – 4 November, 19:00-20:30 Mark Russ

***Book Club – Tangled Roots: Navigating the Complex Legacy of Early Quakers*** £54

4 sessions: Thursdays, 1 October, 26 November, 28 January 2027,  
& 25 February, 19:00-20:30 Stuart Masters

***Quakers and the Afterlife*** £48

3 sessions: Thursdays, 1–15 October, 19:00-21:00 BST Benjamin Wood

***Slow Stitching as a Mindful Practice*** £36

2 sessions: Thursdays, 1 & 8 October, 13:30-15:30 BST Gill Sewell

***Heal the Voice and Make a Joyful Sound!*** £72

6 sessions: Sundays, 4 October – 8 November, 19:00-20:30 Carolyn Baynes

***Becoming Friends*** £60

6 sessions: Mondays, 5 October – 9 November, 19:00-20:30 Marilyn Higgins,  
Mark Russ

***Resilient Spiritual Practices for a Time of Climate Crisis*** £60

6 sessions: Mondays, 5 October – 9 November, 19:00-21:00 Stephen Lingwood

***A Quaker Exploration of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises*** £72

5 sessions: Tuesdays, 6 October – 3 November, 19:00-21:00 Gill Sewell

***Exploring Theologies of Liberation: Disability, Justice and the Churches***

Tuesday 6 October, 19:30-21:00 Emily Richardson, Naomi Lawson Jacobs,  
Tanya Hubbard, Benjamin Wood

***Story Weaving: Love***

Friday 9 October, 19:00-20:30 BST Till flo\* Krapoth

***Essentials of Quaker Eldership***

Monday 12 October, 19:00-20:30 BST Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto

***Meet the Students: Sheryl Metzger***

Tuesday 13 October, 19:00-20:00 BST Sheryl Metzger, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

***The Quaker Journey: Reflections Through Images*** £36

2 sessions: Wednesdays 14 & 21 October, 14:30-16:30 BST Duncan Dwinell

***Sunday Sessions: Talking Confidently About Our Quaker Faith***

Sunday 18 October, 12:15-13:15 BST Rhiannon Grant

- 1656 and All That: The Second Period of Quakerism** £60  
 4 sessions: Tuesdays 20 October – 10 November, 19:00-20:30 Stephen Angell,  
 Erica Canela, Richard C. Allen, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion, Stuart Masters
- Good News? Reclaiming Evangelism for Religious Liberals**  
 Tuesday 20 October, 19:00-21:00 BST Stephen Lingwood
- A First Look at Quakerism**  
 Thursday 22 October, 19:00-20:30 BST Wendy Hampton
- Truth and Repair: Our Quaker Journey Towards Justice** [BLENDED]  
 Friends House [Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ] and online  
 Friday 23 October, 10:00-17:00 BYM Trustees' Reparation Working Group
- Why Nominations Matter to Quakers**  
 Wednesday 28 October, 18:30-20:30 Elize Sakamoto, Christine Habgood-Coote
- Quakers and the Supernatural**  
 Friday 30 October, 19:00-20:30 GMT Benjamin Wood
- Sunday Sessions: Meeting for Worship for Business**  
 Sunday 1 November, 12:15-13:15 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Lectio Divina and the Great Incarnate Word** £54  
 4 sessions: Wednesdays, 4–25 November, 18:30-20:30 GMT Barbara Birch
- Quaker in Europe**  
 6 sessions: Wednesdays, 4 November – 9 December, 13:00-14:30 GMT  
 Jeannette Law, Jasmine Piercy  
*This course is for participants from Yearly Meetings outside Britain Yearly Meeting – BYM Friends are asked to book on Essentials of Quakerism instead; that course will run again in 2027. (4 sessions: 2-23 March (£30))*
- Finding Depth in Quaker Worship** £60  
 4 sessions: Thursdays, 5–26 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT  
 + a follow-up session on Thursday 14 January 2027 Simonne Wood
- Exploring Theologies of Liberation: Eco-Justice and Liberation Theology**  
 Friday 6 November, 19:30-21:00 GMT Leah D. Schade,  
 Cherice Bock, Xavier Johnson, Tanya Hubbard, Benjamin Wood
- Spiritual Nurture and Pastoral Care in a Nutshell** £45  
 Saturday 7 November, 10:00-16:00 GMT Heather Rowlands, Helen Chambers
- Essentials of Quaker Eldership**  
 Monday 9 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto
- Read, Reflect, Respond: Preparing Your Meeting**  
 Monday 9 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT  
*Help your meeting engage confidently with Our Quaker Way, the new draft Book of Discipline. This practical session explores how to plan opportunities for Friends to read, reflect and respond together in ways that suit your local context.*
- Serving on a Quaker Committee**  
 Wednesday 11 November, 18:30-20:30 GMT Jennifer Barraclough,  
 Elize Sakamoto

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- The Cave and the Light: Quaker Journeys with Plato*** £48  
 3 sessions: Wednesdays, 11–25 November, 19:00-21:00 GMT Benjamin Wood,  
 Ann Conway-Jones
- Quaker Visions of God*** £54  
 4 sessions: Fridays, 13 November – 4 December, 19:00-21:00 Windy Cooler,  
 Benjamin Wood
- Poetry Reading As Spiritual Practice*** £30  
 Saturday 14 November, 14:00-18:30 GMT Tracey Martin
- Quaker Clerking in a Nutshell*** £45  
 Saturday 14 November, 10:00-16:30 GMT Elize Sakamoto
- Stronger Loving Communities: The Potential of Quaker Listening Spaces*** £72  
 6 sessions: Mondays, 16 November – 7 December, then 11 & 18 January 2027  
 Alistair Heslop, Pip Harris, Ivan Hutnik
- The Spirituality of Walking and Wheeling***  
 Monday 16 November, 19:30-21:00 GMT Anna Lyon
- Living More Deliberately: Spiritual Activism With Henry David Thoreau***  
 Tuesday 17 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT Robert Oulton
- The History of the Book of Discipline*** £42  
 3 sessions: Tuesdays, 17 November – 1 December, 19:30-21:00 Lily Chadwick
- Enquiring Into: Quakers and Christianity*** £25  
 2 sessions: Thursdays, 19 & 26 November, 19:00-21:00 GMT Rosie Carnall
- Read, Reflect, Respond: The Big Read***  
 8 fortnightly sessions: Mondays, 23 November – 1 March 2027, 18:45-20:45  
 Rachael Swancott  
*Join Friends from across Britain Yearly Meeting as we read the new draft Book of  
 Discipline together. Through reading, worship and conversation, we'll explore  
 the text chapter by chapter to discover what emerges as we journey together.*
- Jesus in Luke's Gospel*** £48  
 4 sessions: Thursdays, 26 November – 17 December, 15:30-17:00 GMT  
 Timothy Peat Ashworth
- Quakers and Abolitionism in the American South***  
 Friday 27 November, 19:00-20:30 GMT Katy Telling, Lily Chadwick
- Creatures Among Creatures: Animals, Food, and Faith Theology***  
 Monday 30 November, 19:30-21:00 GMT  
 Rachel Muers, David Clough, Tanya Hubbard, Benjamin Wood
- Examining Our Past: Historical Quaker Theologies of Enslavement***  
 3 sessions: Thursdays, 3–17 December, 19:00-21:00 GMT Lily Chadwick,  
 Benjamin Wood
- Quakers in Kenya: A History of Kenyan Friends to the Present***  
 Monday 7 December, 19:00-20:30 GMT Lily Chadwick, Oscar Lugusa Malande
- Read, Reflect, Respond: Preparing Your Meeting***  
 Tuesday 8 December, 19:00-20:30 GMT [See note for the session on 9 November]

- Folding & Unfolding: Reflecting on the Past Year*** £20  
Saturday 12 December, 16:00-19:00 GMT Michèle le Roux
- Sunday Sessions: Making Meeting for Worship Accessible***  
Sunday 13 December, 12:15-13:15 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Essentials of Quaker Eldership***  
Monday 14 December, 19:00-20:30 GMT Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto
- The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Unlock Creativity*** £140  
12 sessions: Wednesdays 6 January–24 March 2027, 10:00-12:00 David Curtis
- The Book of Revelation for Quakers*** £60  
5 sessions: Wednesdays, 6 January – 3 February 2027, 19:00-20:30 Mark Russ
- Folding & Unfolding: Preparing for the New Year*** £20  
Saturday 9 January 2027, 16:00-19:00 GMT Michèle le Roux
- Enquiring Into: The Idea of Quaker Discipline***  
Sunday 10 January 2027, 19:00-21:00 GMT Rosie Carnall
- Essentials of Quaker Eldership: Foundations***  
Monday 11 January 2027, 19:00-20:30 GMT Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto
- Read, Reflect, Respond: Preparing Your Meeting***  
Tuesday 12 January 2027, 19:00-20:30 [See note for the session on 9 November]
- Write From the Heart: Our Quaker Way*** £60  
4 fortnightly sessions: Tuesdays, 12 January – 23 February 2027, 19:00-21:00  
Rosie Carnall
- Read, reflect and respond to the new draft Advices & Queries through writing prompts that encourage you to write from the heart rather than the head. Engage in creative writing as a process for spiritual reflection and development through a range of reflective writing activities.*
- Read, Reflect, Respond: The Big Read***  
8 fortnightly sessions: Thursdays, 14 January – 22 April 2027, 18:45-20:45 GMT  
Rachael Swancott
- [See note for the course beginning on 23 November.]
- Encounters With Beauty as Spiritual Practice***  
Saturday 16 January 2027, 14:00-15:30 GMT Jan Sellers
- Sunday Sessions: Newcomers' Questions about Quakerism***  
Sunday 17 January 2027, 12:15-13:15 GMT Wendy Hampton
- Quakers and Care: A Brief History of Pastoral Friends and Eldership*** £36  
3 sessions: Tuesdays, 19 January – 2 February 2027, 19:00-20:30 Lily Chadwick
- Truth-Telling as Reparative Justice: The Haitian Revolution***  
Tuesday 19 January 2027, 19:00-20:30 GMT Esta Nyeko, Tanya Hubbard
- Read, Reflect, Respond: Open Conversation***  
Wednesday 20 January 2027, 19:00-20:30 GMT 'Ben' Pink Dandelion
- Reading Our Quaker Way – the new draft Book of Discipline. Join Friends from across Britain Yearly Meeting for an informal online conversation – a welcoming opportunity to share reflections, ask questions and encourage one another.*

# An Open Letter to the Prime Minister

*In July, more than fifty faith-based or pacifist organisations signed a letter to Keir Starmer which had been drafted by Quakers in Britain and the group Rethinking Security on the subject of military spending – see Sesame 266, page 29. Just over two weeks later, some of the same signatories wrote to Andy Burnham; this time the text had originated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation:*

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you at the start of your premiership. A time in office that will be tested by real and gathering pressures including war continuing to reshape Europe and the Middle East, summer heatwaves making plain the climate emergency as a present reality, and communities around our own nation feeling increasingly fractured, anxious, and pulled toward division rather than solidarity.

How you choose to respond to it will define your time in office more than any single policy decision. We write to draw your attention to three shared priorities that we think can make a real difference to your premiership and the long-term well-being of this country.

First, we ask that you make peace and diplomacy the organising principle of your foreign policy. Not an afterthought to military might and deterrence. That means renewed investment in the institutions built precisely for moments like this – chief among them the United Nations – rather than allowing them to be starved of funds and influence just when they are needed most. Multilateral diplomacy is slow, unglamorous, and easy to underfund, but it remains our best tool for de-escalation and long-term stability, and a Prime Minister willing to champion it would be doing something genuinely inspirational. This year will see the new Secretary General of the United Nations appointed and the UK will have a key role in voting through candidates and then enabling them to be successful in their role.

Second, we ask for a change in economic direction. Research has shown that an arms industry-led model of growth is a dead end, not a strategy. An economy built on weapons production ties our national prosperity to the persistence of armed conflict elsewhere; it is not a sustainable foundation for the country's future. We need an economic system that works for us, not against us, through the climate crisis. We urge you to prioritise activities that contribute to the common good and are less reliant on fossil fuels or military might to secure access to fossil fuels – industries like clean energy – and public health, education and sustainable infrastructure.

Third, at a time when it would be easy to scapegoat migrants and refugees for our national anxieties we ask you to write a different story. Britain is stronger, not weaker, for its diversity. We need a Prime Minister who says this clearly and often. By doing so, rather than ceding political ground to

those who would divide us, you will help hold our communities together rather than let them fracture further. We know the roots of much division is in fact economic inequality and your progress on that will help stop the further spread of this language.

We write to you as faith leaders and leaders of faith-based movements who share a vision of a better world – one built on peace and justice for all. We will continue to play our part in building it, in our communities and beyond, and we invite you to do the same in the office you now hold.

Yours sincerely,

*John Cooper*, Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation

*Paul Parker*, Recording Clerk, Religious Society of Friends

*Sue Claydon*, Chair, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship

*Philip Austin*, Coordinator, Northern Friends Peace Board

*Liddy Buswell*, Coordinator, Methodist Peace Fellowship

*Heinz Toller*, Moderator, Iona Community Common Concern Network

*Andrew Fellows*, Peace and Justice lead, Community of Christ

*Fred Ashmore*, Steering Group, Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network

*Simon Barrow*, Coordinator, Ekklesia Network

## Climate Justice and the Rule of Law – *recent news items*

NOT STRICTLY a *climate* case, but an environmental matter in which the law has been slow to act: in July, the Environment Agency started the prosecution of four individuals including Matthew Wright, the former chief executive officer of Southern Water, who were charged with conspiracy to defraud, in respect of the company's falsified pollution records. The maximum sentence for this offence is ten years' imprisonment.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ea-commences-criminal-proceedings-against-southern-water>

THE CASE of *Suncor v. Boulder* – in full, *Suncor Energy Inc. v. County Commissioners of Boulder County* – is awaiting hearing by the US Supreme Court; the energy company is arguing that federal law does not allow claims under state law for firms to be held liable for climate change, a stance supported, unsurprisingly, by the Trump administration. In the Colorado courts, in 2018, the city and county of Boulder sued Suncor and ExxonMobil for numerous offences (public nuisance; private nuisance; trespass; unjust enrichment; violation of the Colorado Consumer Protection Act; and civil conspiracy), all on the basis that the companies had sold fossil fuels, knowing that doing so would harm the people of Colorado. If it were determined that companies have deceived the public and that state courts have authority to punish them, it could cost the industry billions – other actions are pending elsewhere. On 28 September, the conser-

vative justice Samuel Alito recused himself from the case; although he has no shares in Suncor or Exxon, he does have holdings in other oil companies, so would be likely to benefit if their appeal were upheld.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/sep/28/samuel-alito-supreme-court-oil-climate-case>

IN A RECENT BBC INTERVIEW, Simone Rossi, the head of EDF Energy, said that as well as accelerating support for heat pumps and electric vehicles the UK Government should consent to the development of the Rosebank oilfield and Jackdaw gas field. In this he joins others in the energy industry who have said that increased fossil-fuel extraction from the North Sea is not incompatible with climate action, as well as politicians such as Ed Davey, and Michael Marra MSP, the new leader of the Labour Party in Scotland. It is expected that the announcement of the decision will be delayed until after the Holborn & St Pancras by-election.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/sep/30/uk-gas-and-oil-climate-crisis-energy-edf-boss>

In July, *The Guardian* carried a profile of the new Energy Secretary:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2026/jul/23/who-is-miatta-fahnbulleh-the-radical-thinking-new-uk-energy-secretary>

AT COP26 IN GLASGOW in 2021, global leaders pledged to “phase down” coal use, coal being the dirtiest of fossil fuels. However a study by Urgewald, a German environmental and human rights organisation (see <https://stillbankingoncoal.org/>), has found that UK-based banks, in particular Barclays and HSBC, increased their coal financing between 2022 and 2025: Barclays’ increased by 34 %, from around \$1.2bn in 2022 to \$1.6bn in 2025, while HSBC’s more than doubled from \$200m to \$414m. Urgewald found that although some UK banks *had* reduced their coal financing, the overall financial flows from Britain-based banks to the “coal value chain” grew by 17 % over the period, as against a 46 % reduction overall from EU banks.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/sep/30/uk-banks-are-europe-biggest-providers-coal-financing-report-finds>

TWENTY-ONE STATES, led by New York, are suing the Trump administration over the Environmental Protection Agency’s repeal of limits on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. The Democratic-led coalition argues that “gutting one of the country’s most significant climate protections” will set the nation back decades and worsen the climate crisis; the Agency says repeal will save the industry more than \$300bn in costs and help “unleash” American energy. It also plans to prevent future administrations regulating climate pollution from power plants. The case will go to court on 4 October.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/oct/01/us-states-cities-trump-epa-climate-emissions>

## 2026 Quaker Truth & Integrity Award

*As noted in Sesame 265, Quakers in Scotland at its March meeting endorsed the suggestion of **Alastair Cameron** that the group Defend Our Juries should be nominated for the annual award by the Quaker Truth & Integrity Group. (Previous winners have been the journalists Carole Cadwalladr and Peter Taylor, in 2023 and 2024 respectively; and last year, jointly, the human rights campaigner Phil Laurie, and Dr Peter Wilmshurst for his work on medical ethics.) This nomination has been successful, as reported in the following citation:*

**T**HE QUAKER Truth & Integrity Group is honoured to present its 2026 Award to Defend Our Juries.

Defend Our Juries is recognised for its courageous and persistent defence of the constitutional importance of trial by jury, and in particular for bringing public attention to the right and responsibility of juries to exercise their own judgement and conscience.

At a time when the role of juries, the right to a fair trial and the freedom to scrutinise the exercise of public power have come under increasing pressure, Defend Our Juries has insisted that these principles must not be taken for granted. Through peaceful public action, campaigning and the dissemination of legal and constitutional information, it has sought to ensure that the public understands the vital role played by ordinary citizens in the administration of justice.

The campaign grew from Trudi Warner's action in 2023, when she displayed a placard outside Inner London Crown Court drawing attention to the principle of jury equity. Defend Our Juries helped turn that individual act of conscience into a wider public campaign, with people across England and Wales peacefully repeating the message outside Crown Courts. In April 2024, the High Court dismissed the Solicitor General's application to commit Ms Warner for contempt, finding that her conduct did not provide a reasonable basis for committal.

In doing so, Defend Our Juries has demonstrated qualities particularly relevant to the Quaker testimony to Truth and Integrity: willingness to speak plainly when important principles are at stake; readiness to challenge the misuse or abuse of authority; respect for conscience; and a determination to place fundamental principles above personal convenience or advantage. Its work also recalls the historic connection between Quaker witness and the independence of juries. The celebrated case of William Penn and William Mead in 1670 established an enduring principle that jurors could not simply be compelled by judicial authority to reach a particular verdict. Defend Our Juries has brought this history back into public discussion at a time when the independence and constitutional significance of juries require renewed attention.

This is the fourth year of the Quaker Truth & Integrity Award, but the first time it is being made to an organisation rather than an individual. For its

courage in challenging complacency, its dedication to transparency and public understanding, its persistent defence of conscience, justice and the integrity of the jury system, and for the bravery and commitment of its individual members, Defend Our Juries is an exceptionally worthy recipient of the 2026 Quaker Truth & Integrity Award.

### Quaker Truth & Integrity Group

*On behalf of Defend Our Juries, its co-founder, Tim Crosland, a former barrister, said:*

*"We are honoured to receive the Quaker Truth and Integrity award and the recognition that the work of Defend Our Juries is as aligned to Quaker values today, in 2026, as it was in 1670, when the independence of juries was struggled for, and won by Quakers for us all.*

*"When facing the increasingly hostile and repressive political climate we are in, it is the power of conscience, nonviolence and community that maintains our collective ability to confront injustices and speak up for truth."*

*This "repressive political climate" is more marked in England & Wales, where recent legislation allows judges to impose custodial sentences for offences with which defendants have not been charged, and of which, therefore, a jury has not convicted them. Judges in several protest trials have stopped defendants telling the jury why they acted as they did and three people were sent to prison for doing so. Some judges have also warned juries that acquitting on grounds of conscience could itself be a criminal offence; and the barrister Rajiv Menon KC is facing contempt of court proceedings after reminding a jury of their right to acquit on conscience.*

The QTIG Award will be presented to Trudi Warner and Tim Crosland on behalf of Defend Our Juries on Friday 16 October, at 2.00 pm in the Library at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NM1 2BJ.

**All are welcome** and refreshments will be served afterwards. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to [quakertruth@gmail.com](mailto:quakertruth@gmail.com) to aid planning.

FROM CENTRAL FIFE LOCAL MEETING

## New Clerking Team

Laura Pearson having stepped down as Clerk, the work is being taken on by

**Tony Wilkes**

**Paula Frost**

**Philippa Killick**

Telephone numbers and email addresses for all three are in the Book of Members; they can also be contacted at [centralfifequakers@gmail.com](mailto:centralfifequakers@gmail.com). Anything needing to be sent by post can go to Tony's home address, also in the Book.

*Congratulations to **Sue Proudlove** and **Tony Wilkes** who became grandparents on 11 September; the new arrival, **Layla Quarry**, is the daughter of their daughter Rhianwen and son-in-law Paul.*

## *The Life of Moses (1909)*



*Pharoah (enthroned at left) cowers before Moses (centre) played by Patrick C. Hartigan, the only actor credited in a particular role. The other named cast members were Julia Arthur, William J. Humphrey, Charles Kent and Edith Storey. The writers were Madison C. Peters and Rollin S. Sturgeon; the director, J. Stuart Blackton, was an immigrant from Sheffield who had co-founded the Vitagraph Company in 1897. By 1907, it was America's most prolific film production company; it pioneered (comparatively) naturalistic performances, letting actors turn their backs to the camera. In 1925 it was taken over by Warner Brothers.*

ONE OF THE MANY festivals that take place in Edinburgh in August is the Festival of the Sacred Arts. This includes a wide variety of events: visits to churches, exhibitions, music, poetry – and film. The one event I managed to get to this year was a screening of *The Life of Moses*, made by the Vitagraph Company in 1909, more than a hundred years ago. It was on five reels, so when new would have been quite long and difficult for the projectionist.

In its fifty minutes, the film shows the main events of the life of Moses as recounted in Exodus, from Pharoah commanding the death of all Hebrew boy children at birth, and the infant Moses hidden in the bulrushes and found and brought up by a daughter of the Pharoah; his flight into Midian as an adult, after killing an Egyptian, and God appearing to him there in a burning bush, telling him to return to Egypt and deliver the Israelites out of bondage; Pharoah's refusal to let the Hebrews go free, and the resultant ten plagues, the last of which was the death of first born children, from which the people of Israel were saved by the Passover ritual; the

departure from Egypt of the Israelites, who passed miraculously over the Red (or Reed) Sea where all the pursuing Egyptians perished; their forty years' wandering in the desert, led by Moses and fed with manna from heaven; Moses receiving from God on Mount Sinai the Ten Commandments, but, on returning to the people, finding them worshipping a golden calf [*see page 1*], on seeing which he broke the tablets; the Lord telling him to take the people to a land of milk and honey and giving Moses another two tablets of the Ten Commandments; and, finally, Moses, at the end of Deuteronomy, sleeping with his fathers in the land of Moab, not permitted to enter the Promised Land.

An old silent film with lots of jerky movements, lots of arms raised in the air, lots of bowing, a huge cast. Interesting that so early on in the history of film a long film was made of a Biblical story. I enjoyed it but with reservations.

Kate Arnot

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## *Becoming Benjamin Lay*

**Wednesday 7 October, 7.00 pm – Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House**

**D**IRECTED by Tony Buba and produced by Marcus Rediker, the 56-minute documentary *Becoming Benjamin Lay* explores the life of the militant and, until recently, largely overlooked eighteenth-century abolitionist Benjamin Lay.

Marcus Rediker, Distinguished Professor of Atlantic History at the University of Pittsburgh is the author of *The Fearless Benjamin Lay* (2017), the book that brought renewed attention to Lay's life and legacy, inspiring a successful stage play, a graphic novel, and a children's book.

The film examines Lay's commitment to ending slavery at a time when few publicly opposed the practice, and the dramatic means he used to confront his contemporaries. It also explores how his dwarfism shaped his politics, why his story was largely forgotten, and why it is becoming increasingly important to many communities today. Dismissed by one historian of slavery as a 'mentally deranged ... little hunchback', Lay is now being rediscovered as one of the eighteenth century's most radical and uncompromising opponents of slavery.

The film will be introduced by Katie Hunter. Katie is an educator and co-runs the Edinburgh and East of Scotland branch of the Historical Association. She has a long running interest in Edinburgh's Quaker abolitionist women and wider transatlantic histories.

As part of the 'Concerns of the Day' series, the event is free and open to all. After the screening there will be a brief silence and a discussion.

To book a place via Eventbrite go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/becoming-benjamin-lay-film-screening-and-discussion-tickets-1999171435580>

# *The People's Emergency Briefing*

**Saturday 14 November, 3.00 – 5.00 pm  
Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House**

**T**HE PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING is a 50-minute film presented by Chris Packham that outlines the urgent risks of the climate and nature crisis to public health, food systems, the economy, and national security. The evidence it sets out was presented to politicians and others in a live briefing at Westminster in November 2025. Having heard it, Professor Saul Humphrey, Senior Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Building, said:

**"I for one have never attended a more insightful, authoritative or inspiring event."**

Other comments were:

**"The National Emergency Briefing could not be more timely. The science is moving fast, and every year the risks become clearer. Britain has led before, and we must lead again – not with words, but with action to protect our people, our prosperity and our children's future. But first, all policymakers must ensure they are fully informed."**

Lord Deben (formerly John Selwyn Gummer)  
Former chair, UK Climate Change Committee - 2012 to 2023

**"We face a climate emergency. MPs need to be awake to the risks and ready for action, which is why I ask them to prioritise attending the National Emergency Briefing."**

Professor Joanna Haigh CBE  
Former president of the Royal Meteorological Society,  
Professor of Atmospheric Physics and  
Head of the Department of Physics  
at Imperial College London

**"I urge all policymakers to attend this vital briefing, which brings the latest science from leading experts straight to the people in power. I'd like to see one in every country."**

Professor Michael Mann  
Presidential Distinguished Professor in the  
Department of Earth & Environmental Science  
at the University of Pennsylvania

There is more information at <https://www.nebriefing.org/resource-downloads>

## The Spider and the Fly

*Forty years ago at Woodbrooke, Henry Selz, an American Friend, introduced me to the 'Archy' poems of Don Marquis (1878-1937). Archy is a 'vers-libre bard' reincarnated as a cockroach; he types his poems laboriously by butting the typewriter keys one at a time with his head, but, unable to work the shift key, he cannot use capital letters or punctuation. Henry read this poem at the end-of-term entertainment:*

i heard a spider  
and a fly arguing  
wait said the fly  
do not eat me  
i serve a great purpose  
in the world

you will have to show me  
said the spider

i scurry around  
gutters and sewage  
and garbage cans  
said the fly and gather  
up the germs of  
typhoid influenza  
and pneumonia on my feet  
and wings  
then i carry these germs  
into the households of men  
and give them diseases  
all the people who  
have lived the right  
sort of life recover  
from the diseases  
and the old soaks who  
have weakened their systems  
with liquor and iniquity  
succumb it is my mission  
to help rid the world  
of these wicked persons  
i am vessel of righteousness  
scattering seeds of justice  
and serving the noblest uses

it is true said the spider  
that you are more  
useful in a plodding  
material sort of way  
than i am but i do not  
serve the utilitarian deities  
i serve the gods of beauty  
look at the gossamer webs

i weave they float in the sun  
like filaments of song  
if you get what i mean  
i do not work at anything  
i play all the time  
i am busy with the stuff  
of enchantment and the  
materials  
of fairyland my works  
transcend utility  
i am the artist  
a creator and a demigod  
it is ridiculous to suppose  
that i should be denied  
the food i need in order  
to continue to create  
beauty i tell you  
plainly mister fly it is all  
damned nonsense for that food  
to rear up on its hind legs  
and say it should not be eaten

you have convinced me  
said the fly say no more  
and shutting all his eyes  
he prepared himself for dinner  
and yet he said i could  
have made out a case  
for myself too if i had  
had a better line of talk

of course you could said the  
spider  
clutching a sirloin from him  
but the end would have been  
just the same if neither of  
us had spoken at all

boss i am afraid that what  
the spider said is true  
and it gives me to think  
furiously upon the futility  
of literature

*So far as I know, Henry's death in 1995 went unnoticed in Quaker journals or the British press, but the New York Times carried an obituary which can be accessed here:*  
[https://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/22/obituaries/henry-selz-72-who-gave-aid-in-many-lands.html?eafs\\_enabled=false](https://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/22/obituaries/henry-selz-72-who-gave-aid-in-many-lands.html?eafs_enabled=false) (ED.)

# SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Saturday 11 July 2026 11:00 – 16:00  
at Kelso Quaker Meeting House, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF  
and by remote video conferencing**

## **2026/07/01 Worship and introductions**

During opening worship we heard readings from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 3.01 and 3.04 reminding us of the history of our meetings for worship for business and how we hold and conduct ourselves in our corporate decision making. We heard the words of Isaac Penington on how our lives are to be “... helping one another other up with a tender hand” (C.F. & P. 10.01).

...

*[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]*

[*Redacted*]

**2026/07/11 Closing Minute**

56 Friends (51 members and 5 attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting either in person or on Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

|                                                    |                                                          |                                 |                                     |                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Central<br>Edinburgh<br><b>22</b><br>+ 2 Attenders | Central Fife<br><b>2</b>                                 | East Lothian<br><b>3</b>        | Falkirk &<br>Polmont<br><b>2</b>    | Kelso<br><b>4</b>           |
| Penicuik<br><b>1</b>                               | Portobello &<br>Musselburgh<br><b>7</b><br>+ 2 Attenders | South<br>Edinburgh<br><b>10</b> | Tweeddale<br><b>-</b><br>1 Attender | Visitors/Others<br><b>-</b> |

We thank our Elders for today, and Violet Grothey who managed the Zoom today, for the first time! We meet next for another all day meeting on Saturday 3 October at Falkirk & Polmont. We thank Kelso Meeting for their warm hospitality and Kate Atchley, Marianne Butler and Lurna Robertson for hosting the sound journey, the poetry session and the guided walk. We have greatly benefited from and enjoyed being here today.

(Signed)  
Sara Davies, Jacqueline Noltingk  
Co-Clerks

## SESAM Accounts Summary 2025

Contact details: **Jonathan Riddell**, SESAM Treasurer [se-treasurer@quaker.scot](mailto:se-treasurer@quaker.scot); **Chris Jardine**, SESAM Assistant Treasurer (LMs and Meeting House Management Committee) [se-assistant-treasurer@quaker.scot](mailto:se-assistant-treasurer@quaker.scot)

### SESAM Bank Accounts:

Bank of Scotland (current), Triodos (savings), Charity Bank (savings), Unity (Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House (EQMH))

Jan. 2025: £510,209.07 Dec. 2025: £488,367.61 Deficit: - £21,842

Includes EQMH; John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust (JWET); and most of Sylvia Marshall Bequest

Rathbones (Greenbank) Investments

Jan. 2025: £259,312 Dec. 2025: £273,001 Surplus: + £13,689

### Local Meetings

These all operate slightly differently according to their needs.

#### Central Edinburgh

Jan. 2025: £16,203.05 Dec. 2025: £15,914.99, Deficit: - £288

Largest cost is an internal transfer for meeting house rent to SESAM £7,200.00

#### Central Fife

Jan. 2025: £594.85 Dec. 2025: £1,187.94 Surplus: + £593

Expenses are mostly donations and building rental

***East Lothian***

Jan. 2025: £3,345.85    Dec. 2025: £2,051.18    Deficit: - £1,294

Biggest expense is a surplus transferred to SESAM

***Falkirk & Polmont***

Jan. 2025: £4,948.75    Dec. 2025: £ 5,464.75    Surplus: + £516

Main expense is rental in Falkirk: about £1,900. In 2026, moved to Polmont.

***Kelso***

Jan. 2025: £11,630.09    Dec. 2025: £10,885.49    Deficit: - £744

Income is from rental of the meeting house, expenses are utilities and upkeep.

***Portobello & Musselburgh***

Jan. 2025: £7,597.67    Dec. 2025: £6,171.71    Deficit: - £1,425

£1,000 was to purchase a share in Bellfield, Portobello's Community Hub, with a 4-year plan to rebuild the building and return the money; see

<https://www.bellfield.scot/>

***South Edinburgh***

Jan. 2025: £4,527.36    Dec. 2025: £6,330.97    Surplus: + £1,803

Income mostly earmarking, rental expense is about £4,000

***Edinburgh Midweek Meeting***

Jan. 2025: £583.92    Dec. 2025: £735.32    Surplus: + £151

Mostly Special Collections Acting as Agent

***John Wigham (Enjoyment) Trust***

Jan. 2025: £ 5,055.61    Dec. 2025: ~£6,000    Surplus: ~+ £1,000

About £2,000 grants in 2025; earmarking donations income about £3,000

***Sylvia Marshall Bequest***

Jan. 2025: £47,249.14    Dec. 2025: £47,276.19    Surplus: + £27

Granted £832.68 in the year, income is from bank interest

[*Part of Central Edinburgh*]

No accounts at Penicuik but that is about to change mid 2026.

No accounts at Tweeddale, North Edinburgh Worshipping Group, Berwick-upon-Tweed Worshipping Group.

***Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House***

This earns about £100,000 in 2025 from lettings and catering including renting to C Arts for the Fringe.

8 staff members (all part-time) cost about £90,000 in 2025. Energy about £16,400. Insurance £9,000.

Including repairs and cleaning and other expenses, the cost to SESAM for 2025 is about - £58,000

3F2, 6 Upper Bow tenement rental earns about £10,000. (Flat 4, at 6 Upper Bow, is for the managers.) Internally to our accounts Central Edinburgh LM pays the £7,200 mentioned above and we consider other Quaker use to be worth around £25,000 to us, giving an accounting deficit of £15,800.

***SESAM Quaker Work Spending***

We give contributions to Northern Friends Peace Board, Summer Shindig,

Wiston weekend, General Meeting/Quakers in Scotland and Britain Yearly Meeting.

*Sesame* newsletter: about £2,800 printing costs

*The Book of Members & Attenders* address book costs, after allowing for income, about £365.

Also grants to individual Friends for attending BYM, Summer Shindig, JYM, Woodbrooke sessions.

The hardship fund was unused in 2025.

Our costs for accountancy and examination are about £11,000.

Exact figures are in our return to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), and publicly published after we have made our return.

**Jonathan Riddell,**  
AM Treasurer  
June 2026

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*The complete Trustees' Report for the year ending 31 December 2025, as presented to Area Meeting, runs to 33 pages, and so is too long for inclusion in Sesame. It comprises the Report itself (11 pages); the Report of the Independent Examiner, the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of Cash Flows (one page each); and 18 pages of Notes forming part of the financial statements. A PDF of the text was sent out with the Clerk's email of 22 June. If you would like a paper copy of the Report, please contact the Clerk of Trustees.*

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## ***Recommendation: a book from the AM Library***

### ***Quakers Do What! Why?* by Rhiannon Grant**

This is one of the Quaker Quicks series, designed to give an introduction to people who wish to know (as the title indicates) what Quakers do and why. It aims to provide answers to common questions about Friends, our practices, and how the community works. As a staff member at Woodbrooke and a regular leader of workshops, Rhiannon is well used to giving answers; what she has to say is not just of interest to newcomers and enquirers, but worth reading by experienced Friends as well. Most of her chapters suggest further reading on particular topics, much, if not all of it, accessible online.

I have mentioned before remembering Swarthmore lecturers and other Quaker authors as little children: Rhiannon is one. (Her parents Jim and Stephanie were at Watford Meeting, which I attended 1970-83.) So I am biased in her favour – but this is still a good read.

**Rachel Frith**

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## QUAKER MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP IN SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members. 'QMH' = Quaker Meeting House

### MEETING IN PERSON

**Berwick-upon-Tweed** – St Aidan's Hall, Church St, Berwick, TD14 1DX

*On the 2nd Sunday in the month at 4.30 pm. Tea beforehand at 4.00*

**Central Edinburgh** – QMH, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

*Sundays at 9.30 & 11.00 am. Tea & coffee afterwards; soup and bread & cheese lunch, 12.30.*

*Wednesday, 12.30–1.00 pm. Tea & coffee; you may bring your own lunch.*

*Contact the office for updates.*

**Central Fife** – The Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EH

*On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am. On 1st Sundays, also at 10.30 am, at*

*Linburn Scout Hall, Abbey View, Dunfermline KY11 4HA.*

*Contact the Clerks (Tony Wilkes, Paula Frost or Philippa Killick) for further information.*

**East Lothian** – Dunbar Town House, 79 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1ER

*On the 1st, 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Worship on 1st Sundays is all-age; there is a children's meeting on the last Sundays. Contact Phil Lucas for updates.*

**Falkirk & Polmont** – Polmont Community Hub, Greenpark Dr., Polmont FK2 0TZ

*Sundays, 10.30. Contact Denise Marshall if bringing children; Anna Levin for updates.*

**Kelso** – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

*Sundays at 10.30 am. Contact Anne Macnaughton for updates.*

**North Edinburgh worship group** – 4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm, meeting in Friends' homes. Contact Tony Gross or Rufus Reade for further information.

**Penicuik** – For confirmation of the venue, contact [penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk](mailto:penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk)

*1st Sundays at 11.00 am – contact Mark Hutcheson for updates and further information.*

**Portobello & Musselburgh** – Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

*On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, with a children's meeting.*

*1st Sundays: Evening meeting at Bellfield, 7.00 pm; NO children's meeting.*

*3rd and (when there is one) 5th Sundays: Hollies Community Hub, 183 High Street, Musselburgh EH21 7DE, 7.00 pm. Contact Robin Liebmman, Sarah Martin or Marian Willoner for further information, [portymussclerks@gmail.com](mailto:portymussclerks@gmail.com).*

**South Edinburgh** – The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 5HY

*Sundays, 10.30 am. For information contact the clerking team, [sedclerks@gmail.com](mailto:sedclerks@gmail.com).*

**Tweeddale** – 2nd Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, meeting in Friends' homes. For further information contact Lesley Morrison

### MEETING BY ZOOM

**Central Edinburgh** – for login details contact [centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk](mailto:centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk)

*Every Sunday at 9.30 am ONLY (blended with the meetings in person).*

**Central Fife** – for login details contact Laura Pearson

*Every Sunday at 10.30 am; blended with the meeting in person on 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th.*

**Penicuik** – available if requested in advance – for details contact Mark Hutcheson

**South Edinburgh** – for login details contact [sedclerks@gmail.com](mailto:sedclerks@gmail.com).

*Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with meetings in person.*

*1st Thursdays at 7.30 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.*