

Among Friends

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Exec

Dear Friends,

Welcome to issue 111 of *Among Friends*! I am writing this in Baltimore, where my husband Mick, son Rob and young friends Rose and Stephanie are spending two weeks in the home of Kevin-Douglas Olive, member of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, who in turn is in our home in Cambridge with his partner and a friend. Although we have not met in person yet, we have got to know each other through correspondence for some months now, and, as well as our homes, we swapped our Meetings – K-D has been going to Jesus Lane Meeting in Cambridge, whilst we have enjoyed the fellowship of his Homewood Conservative Monthly Meeting here in Baltimore. Ties between European and American Meetings are, of course, rooted in history, and kept alive particularly through the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, which is taking place as I write, in Scotland and Northern Ireland. I hope to bring you a report and photographs from it in the next issue. On Sunday 13th July I was surprised and delighted to arrive at my Meeting to find that the Pilgrims who toured the States in 2006 had been having their reunion there over the week-end, and were going to share in our worship. I was glad to meet them and hear the huge impression the Pilgrimage had made on them, and the strength of the connection they felt they had made with each other. And a particular joy was to see Berne Weiss again, from Budapest Worship Group, who had been one of the group's adult escorts.

Inside this issue:

Serving Friends in France	2
QCEA and the European Investment Bank	3
Working with prisoners in Italy	4
Ten years on QUNO committee	5
News from Woodbrooke	6/7
Our Rail-Road to Damascus	8
Paris City of Two Salons	9
News in Brief	10
Baptism by Bonfire	11
Diary Dates	12



QYP's 2006 reunion at Jesus Lane Meeting, Cambridge

Another journey features in this issue – I am sure you will enjoy reading about Young Friends Matt Loffman and Julian Weinberg travelling by train from London to Damascus.

There are reflections from Judith Roads on visiting Friends in France, and from Martin Kunz on serving for ten years on the Quaker United Nations Committee (Geneva Office). I think we have much to learn from both.

Woodbrooke has been well used by European Friends recently, with an Anglo-Scandinavian week-end in early July, followed by a week-long translators' course, part of the On-line work we have been undertaking jointly through the Ministry and Outreach project. The wonderful news is that the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has made EMES a further grant of £136,400 over the next two years to build on this project, and strengthen our communications and network. We have much work to do, and look forward to the challenge. Look out for progress reports in future issues.

In the meantime, I hope you will enjoy catching up on life, service and worship in the Section through the articles in this issue.

Marisa Johnson
Executive Secretary

Being a visiting Friend in France

I am coming to the end of my first triennium as the Amie Visiteuse for France. Although I live in London and a member of BYM, I was nominated for this post, funded by France YM, partly as a result of my existing activities supporting the fledgling Quaker Centre at Congénies.

Before starting work, I asked for terms of reference and what the job might involve. I was told: “why don’t you do the job for a year and then come and tell us.” Now there’s confidence for you! My predecessor, Anton van der Wissel who lives in the Netherlands, worked out a combination of phone and letter contacts with isolated Friends, plus a 6-weeks grand circuit of the country once a year. As I was working full-time, I had to find other ways of reaching the 150 or so Friends and sympathisants living in France. My way has been to do an annual two-week tour of one area plus going specifically to one city or one person whilst in France for other meetings.

It’s a really lovely job. I use email and phone to set up visits and itineraries. People are very generous at inviting me for a meal or to stay a night or two with them – they give me a great time and then actually thank me for coming. I never know what the situation will be with any individual or group until I get there, although I’ve just about got round the country now, so if I am reappointed, I will have met most people at least once. I find that Friends don’t plan themselves tidily in neat geographical areas but are mostly scattered with only a few in regular Quaker Meetings. These include: Paris, Groupe Languedocien (based at Congénies), Midi-Pyrénées (Toulouse and the river Lot region), Brittany, Côte d’Azur.



Gaby Treanton



Judith and Alan

The job is a mixture of elder, overseer, friendly contact, a link with what’s going on nationally among Quakers and linking back to the national body from isolated people and groups. It can also be outreach, helping to deepen the spiritual life of a group, working with enquirers and facilitating “Quaker Studies” weekends. Many francophone people in France come across Quakers through books and online. They never just drop in to a Quaker Meeting – I met one such person in the Toulon area who had been studying Quakerism for five years and I was the first real live Quaker he had met. We had a little Meeting for Worship in his farmhouse which he found very moving.

It can be an excellent way to keep communication going and to be a catalyst for growth as well as an early warning system for any isolated Friend or group who may be quietly in trouble. It turns out that I may be “travelling in the ministry”. I hadn’t at all seen it that way but began to see it thus after accepting a very cordial invitation by Julia Ryberg to join over a dozen Friends for a gathering in Sweden in 2007. A really valuable sharing and deepening time for me, and much appreciated by all.

Judith Roads

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA): success with the European Investment Bank

On 30 June 2008, the European Investment Bank held its Spring Workshop with Civil Society Organisations in Brussels. Martina Weitsch was there both for QCEA and as part of a larger delegation from the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a network of 25 peacebuilding NGOs of which QCEA is a founder member. This was one step along a now two-year old path of involvement with the Bank.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is one of a number of International Financial Institutions; it belongs to the 27 Member States of the European Union, who are the shareholders and sit on the board.

Most of the EIB investment is within the Member States (nearly 87%), with the rest being invested in third countries. The EIB has six key objectives, which include environmental sustainability, the development of the trans-European Networks for transport and energy, and sustainable, competitive and secure energy.

Outside of the EU, (where some 13% of the lending goes,) these broad objectives, (security of energy supply, environmental sustainability and infrastructure development,) feature along with the development of the private sector.

So what is QCEA's interest in all this?

The Bank has, for some time, had an interest in developing its social and environmental standards in the context of its corporate social responsibility agenda. Two years ago, at a similar gathering, where the corporate social responsibility report for that year was being presented, QCEA raised the question of whether and to what extent, the Bank was considering how conflict-sensitive its lending policy (i.e. in the assessment of projects) was. At that time it turned out that this had not been considered at all in the discussions around Corporate Social Responsibility. In part, this might have been because the Bank assumes that there are no conflict issues within the EU that it would have to take into account and that outside the EU it would only invest in regions that were relatively stable. But that is, of course, only half the story. Investments in post-conflict countries, especially in major infrastructure projects, carry a high risk of fuelling latent conflicts; and investment, sensitively handled, can also be a driver for peace.

In 2007, QCEA spearheaded a high-level discussion at the Bank with other EPLO members at which there was general agreement that the Bank had more work to do in understanding what a conflict-sensitive approach would look like. In early 2008, the Bank published for consultation a draft Statement on Environmental and Social Standards. QCEA worked closely with other EPLO members to draft a response to that consultation; key points were the fact that both conflict sensitivity and human right issues were not given adequate space in that statement.

The Spring Workshop in June was focused on climate change – but QCEA was there to raise again, the question of how this, too, has a conflict dimension which the Bank needs to be aware of and to factor into its work. QCEA also highlighted that even within the constraints of the work the Bank is doing on climate change the response looks to be too slow, given the overwhelming issues facing us.

QCEA's new project on Energy Security, Conflict and Climate Change (featured in the last edition of *Among Friends*), will incorporate the very necessary advocacy with the Bank on these issues: the fact that the Bank still invests in non-renewable energy sources at all is something we would like to see ended; the European Parliament has asked for this, too, so we have strong allies.

In the margins of the meeting, the recently appointed staff member responsible for social policy invited the EPLO delegation to draft a new section for the EIB handbook on social and environmental issues; this section is to operationalise the question of conflict sensitivity so that project staff can use it when assessing loan applications. This will be the task of the next six months.

One of our key messages to the Bank has been (and will remain) that sometimes it is better to say 'no' to a project because it is falling short of acceptable environmental and social (including conflict sensitivity and human rights) standards even if that means someone else will fund it instead. Not doing the wrong thing can be as important as doing the right thing.

Martina Weitsch
Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

Witness in an Italian prison

I started teaching in the prison in Bologna in the Autumn of 1998, not only as an opportunity for service and to express solidarity, but also because I wanted to test the validity of an ethical approach in the context of cultural diversity. I wanted to work in particular with foreigners: there are many different nationalities in Italian jails. Almost from the beginning I was helped by my students (I teach moral Philosophy at Bologna University). We formed a group that we called “A Way”. Our activities, with both men and women, are described below.

We gather in silence to begin the meeting on Fridays, for about 15 minutes out of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. At first we drew from the silent Quaker Meeting, later I also used practical instructions from vipassana Buddhist meditation (without being Buddhists). Then we read a text, taken from different traditions, from Friends’ writings, but also Sufi and Buddhist, followed by a quick round of reactions to the reading. Generally, we take to the prison the same text that we have read together at the University in our weekly meeting there, which we hold in the garden whenever possible.

With Arabic-speaking inmates (mainly from Morocco, some from Tunisia) we work together translating a classical text from Arabic into Italian (I have studied the language myself, and some of my students have started learning because of this work!). At present we are translating Hayy ibn Yaqdhân by Ibn Tufayl, a text beloved of Quakers from the time it was first translated around 1670, because of its idea of the inner light. Recently, I have started to practice a short period of silence with this group as well.

We help inmates who are students with their studies; we accompany those who have temporary leave of absence from the prison, and welcome them in our meetings at the university; we contribute to the prison library.

In the past we have visited the families of inmates in Tunisia. Severing social ties, freeing oneself from the often oppressive obligations of one’s own tradition, becoming anonymous can be attractive. Taking on false names and aliases is strongly associated with deviant behaviour. The young immigrant, most often of illegal status, feels he has come to a permissive place, but at

the same time he suffers the loss of a familial context and its rich relationships and attachments. Helping him to re-establish these links is generally beneficial.

The guiding principles are firstly, aiming at a moral, rather than confessional approach. Education is available in prison, as are many other activities delivered by an excellent body of teachers and volunteers; there is religious activity (not exclusively catholic), but it is difficult to find someone concerned with ethical development outside a confessional religious context. Laity, secondly, but not in the sense of agnosticism, rather in the sense of a plurality of spiritual paths. We want to demonstrate that many spiritual paths exist, that in all of them it is necessary to follow knowledge and practice living righteously. Whilst the strictly religious option is indispensable for some, it is not for everyone.

Thirdly, trust: trust in the possibility of emancipation through knowledge (Plato’s cave), trust in “the light that lights up every man” (George Fox and the Quaker tradition of witness in prisons), trust in the practice of self-awareness (sati in the Buddhist vipassana practice), trust in the pedagogy of reading the great texts: L. Tolstoj.

Finally, placing care of the self and of interpersonal relationships above the struggle against prison as an institution. We don’t know whether prison is capable of being reformed, yet people are (and we are not talking only of inmates).

To evaluate results is always difficult when one is working on the soul. To open the mind to the understanding of a great text, to introduce someone to the joy, subtle but real, of being gathered in silence, to give a glimpse of the dignity and beauty of a life that puts knowledge first, this is truly the only real experience that we can offer these inmates in the short time we spend together.

Pier Cesare Bori, Bologna Worship Group
www.amicidelsilenzio.it
piercesare.bori@unibo.it

10 years on the QUNO Committee – a personal reflection

In 1997 an international advisory committee was established for the Quaker Office at the United Nations (QUNO) in Geneva. Before then, British Friends had been in charge, while the New York QUNO office was working under the umbrella of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

Half of the new Geneva committee consists of British Friends – partly because Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) continues to bear the lion's share of the costs. The innovation was the addition of Friends recruited via the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC): One for each section; my slot was that of EMES - the European and Middle East section.

However, it was clear right from the beginning that it would be impossible for one person to act as a conduit for a whole continent/region: Even if it were possible to some extent to be up to date on what is currently being discussed in 'one's region', it is physically impossible to keep 'the region' informed about the work of QUNO as a volunteer. So what can the role of the committee be? Under certain circumstances, it can support the Friends, who 'at the heart of power' promote Quaker concerns, emotionally and spiritually. In truth, this is probably the most important contribution the committee can provide - particularly in instances when the powers that be and the diplomatic channels stall or move at a snail's pace at best. The whole area of 'disarmament' seems to have stagnated for years in the Geneva based international organizations.

A second role could be to contribute expertise. But here, too, reality defines very narrow limits. The topics under consideration are most of the time so detailed and complicated, that even on a global scale very few experts exist who can actively contribute to a discussion. The topical area that I was 'attached' to in the committee was 'Justice in global trade'. Even though I had studied international politics, and am working full time in Fair Trade, I often found it challenging to simply understand the issues being discussed - let alone be in a position to come up with an educated judgement/recommendation.



Martin Kunz

Five years after it was introduced, the committee was evaluated, and (as far as I know) I was the only one to say: Bringing Friends from all regions of the world to Geneva (or London) twice a year (initially three times) for a long weekend is too expensive, too much hassle (organising logistics and visas ...), does not provide enough value for money.

Mine was a minority opinion, five years on the QUNO committee has become firmly established. The sister office in New York, too, has opened up for a cooperation with FWCC, and who knows, maybe in another 10 years' time we will have ONE JOINT committee for both QUNO-offices - a dream I postulated in the very first meeting in Geneva!

In 2002 FWCC extended my mandate for the Geneva group for another five years. No doubt, the highlight was being able to participate as an observer at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in December 2005 in Hong Kong: While there was practically no movement on the political agenda, for me it was a once in a lifetime chance to see global politics close up.

Martin Kunz

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

Woodbrooke has had an unusually large number of European visitors this summer. Two July events sponsored by the Catchpool Fund found Friends from all over Europe enjoying Woodbrooke, many for the first time. The **Anglo-Scandinavian Weekend** (3 – 6 July) was an opportunity for Friends, both British and Scandinavian, who speak Norwegian, Danish, Finnish and Swedish to meet and share experiences of what it is to be a Friend in their various contexts. Ingrid Greenhow, a British Friend with Norwegian roots, and Torbjörn Söderqvist, a Swedish Friend, facilitated three days that included a wide variety of activities. Group portrait painting (involving more laughing than serious creative expression!), singing and small group sharing were included in the programme. A talk by Helen Rowlands about George Fox and a trip to Fenny Drayton (his birthplace) and to Lichfield were highlights of the gathering. British Friends were able to brush up their Scandinavian language skills, and some Scandinavian Friends found that their English skills were better than they had initially thought!

A few of the Scandinavian participants stayed on at Woodbrooke for an extra night, which meant they were able to meet Friends coming to **Translating in a Quaker Context** (7 – 11 July). Indeed, a few Friends attended both gatherings. Participants in the translators gathering represented 15 European languages. Rex Ambler and Renato Lings took part as resource persons. Rex offered enlightening sessions on early Quaker understandings of words like “light”, “salvation” and “notions”. Renato shared his rich



Translators Group

experience of translating in a Quaker context. Ruth Homer and Julia Ryberg co-facilitated the gathering, the purpose of which was to offer time and space for participants to translate texts included in the online introductory course, *Quaker in Europe*. This project is co-sponsored by Woodbrooke and EMES, and the course will soon be available in many languages as an outreach resource that will certainly also function as an inreach one. This was apparent as the group struggled with issues of translation, Quaker identity, expressing individual spiritual experience, and with the difference between sharing our particular personal experience and representing the wider Quaker family. We were able to meet at a deep level in worship sharing and other small group exercises. We explored the fundamental differences between meeting face-to-face and online, and began considering how to “translate” good face-to-face fellowship into the online medium.

Woodbrooke continues to offer learning opportunities that focus especially on the needs of European Friends. There will be a **course for European clerks in February of 2009**, facilitated by Judith Roads and Julia Ryberg. And, judging from the success of both the Anglo-German (2007) and Anglo-Scandinavian gatherings, as well as the first translators gathering in 2007 and this year’s further exploration, we can hope that similar events will be offered in future. In addition, of course, many of Woodbrooke’s courses and gatherings are equally valuable for Friends from all over Europe.



Translators at work

Looking ahead:

- Imagining a World without Oil: preparing for an (un)certain future, 21 – 23 October 2008
- Praying for Others, 24 – 26 October 2008
- Seeking Simplicity: finding serenity in a complex world, 30 December – 2 January 2008/9
- Understanding Conflict: in our lives and in our meetings, 6 – 8 February 2009
- Inner Spring Cleaning: an event for ‘seasoned Friends’, 9 – 11 February 2009

Thinking of attending a course? Catchpool Fund bursaries are readily available if financial help is needed. Contact Julia Ryberg, European Project Co-ordinator, for information on the Catchpool Fund at julia.ryberg@woodbrooke.org.uk or +46 (0) 175-715 30. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk for general information and to request a course brochure.

Becoming a Friend in Residence at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham

Some of you may have visited already for one or more of its short courses, or read publicity about Woodbrooke. On any given day the Centre has four Friends in Residence who maintain a Quaker ethos of worship, welcome and well-being. Resident Friends are members of the Society of Friends, or long-term attenders at Quaker meetings, who feel able to give of their time as a form of Quaker ministry for a period of between two weeks and three months to undertake this rewarding and fulfilling work. Accommodation and meals are provided, as are incurred travel costs on presentation of the relevant travel document, up to a maximum of £50 per week of service.

Woodbrooke is a very attractive place. The library is phenomenal (and open 24 hours) the food superb and the surrounding grounds a haven of peace and biodiversity of awesome richness. There is a daily rota so that the amount of time any one person is on duty or on call does not exceed the reasonable. Those staying for four weeks or more get two days off a week – the rest-day allowance for shorter stays is usually slightly less generous.

Duties consist mainly in meeting and greeting, reception and security cover outside the working hours of the Administration Office, nurturing the Quaker ethos, including responsibility for the nightly 15-minute epilogue and the half-hourly meeting for worship at 08.30 each morning. There are curtains

to be closed and opened night and morning, and the flower arranging needs its overseers. The opportunity to live for some time in a daily-worshipping Quaker community is one of the privileges of this work. Teamwork in practical tasks is also paramount, and from time to time there will be late nights and early mornings. You may also be asked to set up and organise rooms and equipment for the presentations associated with courses and conferences, though during office hours Centre staff are available to undertake this. It is sometimes though just a matter of “waiting in the light”, or responding to questions varying from the routine, to those that you might feel are weighty and “cosmic”.

Many who come return for further turns of duty, so clearly find it to be a life-enriching experience. Woodbrooke always needs new people to join this diverse and vibrant group, people who are physically fit, able to be flexible, and to take initiative and learn quickly whilst, when appropriate, adhering reliably to established procedures. Confidence in speaking English is also important. A huge range of able-bodied people aged “18 to 80” can fulfil this role magnificently. If this all sounds attractive, then please contact me for further information and an application form.

*Robin Bowman, Resident Friends Coordinator,
Robin.bowman@woodbrooke.org.uk*

Our rail-road to Damascus

At a time when relations between the so-called Western and Islamic worlds are particularly strained, dialogue and a more sophisticated understanding of cultures are vital in dismantling prevailing misunderstandings and erroneous stereotypes.

As two young Friends, we have been brought together by a shared Concern to promote more peaceful solutions and attitudes to the difficulties faced both in the Middle East region and in Europe. Our hope is that by living in Syria and studying the Arabic language extensively we will be well placed to make a real contribution to a more peaceful world.

Following more than a year of planning and anticipation, it was exciting to finally be leaving London. We caught the Eurostar and stayed for a night in Friends House Brussels before visiting the magnificent cathedral in Cologne and taking an overnight train from there to Vienna. As the train rattled along the banks of the Rhine we shared an evening drink with another young Friend who had boarded the train. We were all entertained for some hours by a 1st Century A.D. historian who was studying life of Jesus.

Gathering for Easter with Friends from the Europe and Middle East Section of FWCC was a wonderful experience and helped to focus our minds on the need for more work to be done in our area of interest. After saying goodbye to some good friends, we left Vienna on the eastbound intercity train.

After changing trains in Budapest we arrived in Belgrade. We found Belgrade vibrant and intriguing. The cathedral was remarkably busy with people of all ages coming to pray. When we left it was saddening to be approached by three young children begging and smoking. Rather than give them money we bought some chocolate and sat some distance away and played music. It was a really nice moment when, on hearing us, they ran over and just stood and listened. We were lit up by the smile of the little girl when we gave her the chocolate. We were interrupted by a sudden snowstorm though, and soon left for Sofia.

From there we caught the overnight train to Istanbul. The trains were noticeably slower and more rickety the further south and east we travelled, but with increasingly comfortable sleeping quarters!

It was a good time to visit Turkey. One of the local football teams, Fenerbaçe, had just beaten Chelsea (from London) and most people we met were happy to remind us of this with a broad smile. We wondered around the city for hours, soaking in the atmosphere, visiting some magnificent mosques, and occasionally eating the freshest of fish sandwiches next to the Bosphorus. Two colourful nights later we boarded the Tauros Express train that would take us to the northern Syrian city of Aleppo. As the train wended its way southward we could see Europe slowly disappearing.

Our first Arabic teas, an easy border and soon we were passing through some Syrian villages and waving to the farmers and children by the train tracks. As we pulled into Damascus in the afternoon we were greeted by our new family.

Damascus is an incredible city. Tasting the oldest continually inhabited city in the world and its rich culture must be experienced by Friends rather than described in words.

It is impossible to be lonely here, some feat for a city of some 4 million. We continually experience the warmth of the local hospitality, being regularly invited for tea and dinner with our neighbours and friends, enjoying conversation that would not be complete without one of our new friends quoting Shakespeare or Marlowe.

We began our Arabic studies at the University of Damascus where we had a very interesting and successful month. Since then we have continued our studies outside the university, learning more about the fascinating cultures and some of the many difficult challenges facing the region.

Our new lives have presented many challenges and will continue to do so. However, our time so far has been productive and fascinating and we're looking forward to spending our next months here. If any Friends visit the city be sure to be in touch and we hope that a Meeting will be possible. We would like to thank all Friends in the section for the support and encouragement we have received and look forward to meeting with you again soon.

Matt Loffman and Julian Weinberg

Paris - city of two Salons

CULTIVONS LA PAIX. This was the motto of the 3rd International Salon for Peace Initiatives held at the Science Museum at the end of May in Paris. Ironically, it is what the organizers of the Eurosatory Arms Fair held two weeks later at the Parc des Expositions also claimed. Both these salons are held every two years.

The Salon de la Paix gathered together some 180 NGOs ranging from ACAT (Action des Chretiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture) to the Women in Black via the Ba'hai, Islamic Aid and the Sufis, not forgetting the Centre Quaker International de Paris. Throughout the three days a variety of workshops, debates and round tables were held as well as showing films. The Quaker contributions, coordinated tirelessly by Jeanne Henriette Louis, included Nancy Irving (FWCC) on child soldiers, Kat Barton (QPSW) on security: energy, resources and conflicts, David Forbes on mosque in cities, especially Birmingham, as a place of inter-religious dialogue, Maarten Bronkhorst with a clown workshop, (but safety regulations prevented them from lighting their candles for peace), and Chuck Fager sponsored by ACAT. Some 13,000 visitors attended, including many school parties. It was a fitting event to mark 60 years since Gandhi's death and the Declaration of Human Rights, and 40 years since the death of Martin Luther King.

Eurosatory was on a much larger scale (1200 exhibitors from 50 countries) with money speaking volumes. It was not open to the public, only to "defence professionals" (48,000 visitors), so a small group of us demonstrated at the entrance to the RER metro, welcoming the employees as they arrived, and saying goodbye as they left in the evening. For five days, we stood from 9-6 lead by Yvonne



Friends from France Yearly Meeting

Kressman, hearing both supportive views and fiercely opposing opinions.

Not everyone present was selling arms, and we met academics from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) who know Quakers at QUNO in New York (but not in Sweden) and RUSI (Royal United Services Institute) who work with the Bradford School of Peace Studies. A new departure was a Think Tank Village where the emphasis was on strategy and some conflict resolution. There were also firms who work at de-mining. Amongst other thumbs up signs and bon courages, a soldier in civvies whispered that he agreed with us as did one of the hostesses who was earning her holiday money.

A drama on the last day was the controlled explosion of two suitcases left where we were demonstrating. The cases turned out to contain mainly peanuts which scattered far and wide, and the owner (an African in military uniform) never re-appeared. Earlier in the week, the police had prevented our "Quakers for Peace" poster from being stolen while we rested our swollen ankles over lunch!

Maarten Bronkhorst and a friend, Felicien, (who acted as mute and used sign language to attract attention) managed to entry the Salon and conduct a questionnaire asking the person's history and relation to the army; description of their products; ethics; whether they would support an enterprise creating weapons/tools for peace; whether they had any children, liked nature and were happy, making the point that silent manifestations/demonstrations are disarming in themselves.

Libby Perkins and Maarten Bronkhorst



Quaker Stand

Quaker involvement in the “Kindertransport”

The little bronze statue of a boy, sitting on his suitcase, was unveiled in the Viennese West Train Station in March, 2008, shortly before Easter. It commemorates the 1938-1939 “Kindertransport”, a heroic effort by many groups to save Jewish and non-Jewish children from Nazi persecution and the concentration camps. The child who served as a model for the statue is the descendant of one of the children rescued in this way. Go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindertransport> (English version). German readers will find additional information by going to <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindertransport>. Quaker involvement is omitted there. There is also little mention of other European countries who contributed to the rescue.

The plaque says (translated from German):German):

For the Child – Vienna

Dedicated to the British People in deepest gratitude.

They saved the lives of 10,000 Jewish and non-Jewish children, who could flee from the persecution of the Nazis to Great Britain

The so-called “Kindertransport”.

For most of the children, their journey began at the West Train Station in Vienna.



“Whoever saves the life of one single human being, it is as if he saved the whole of mankind”.

Art Funkhouser

Quaker Youth Book Project

An opportunity for Young Friends to take part in international dialogue.

The editorial board, from four continents, reflects what they hope will be the spirit of the book: an open-minded and loving care that will bring Quakers together from all over the world. The anthology *Whispers of Faith* has been very popular within many yearly meetings. The focus of this second project is to extend an invitation to older young Friends to find their voices:

- you may write something (if you are between the ages of 15 and 35 years),
- tell others about the project,
- volunteer your skills as a translator, or
- run a writing workshop, either your own design or using activities provided.

Financial contributions are also needed for travel by young Friends on the editorial board and with the costs

of publication. Visit the website for more information: <http://www.fgcquaker.org/qy/quipbook>. Contact: Harriet Hart harrietdjhart@yahoo.co.uk

Report on Church and Peace

Kees Nieuwerth of Netherlands YM has written a detailed and interesting report on the Annual General Meeting of Church and Peace, held 23rd-25th May 08 at Barchem in the Netherlands, which has been posted on our website www.fwccemes.org <<http://www.fwccemes.org/>>. Full texts or a printed copy from Kees on k.nieuwerth@wxs.nl or from EMES office.

Baptism by bonfire!

Jasmine Piercy, the recently appointed Co-ordinator for Quaker Voluntary Action's working retreats programme, describes her inaugural project at the newly re-opened Quaker Centre at Congenies in France.

Seven of us set out from Britain, and were joined by Italian, American, Irish and French Friends on what was to become a truly joyous celebration of communal living. For eight days in sunny April we 'retreated' gently and worked hard physically. Each afternoon exploring ways for focussing on our spiritual journeys and in particular how we might bear witness to, and shed light on our Quaker testimony to simplicity. Each morning working in the grounds: cutting and clearing, paving and pruning, grubbing and gritting, rooting out and heeling in, paring back, creating space, letting in the light.

This physical manifestation, not only paralleled in the group reflection sessions but so expressly borne out in the unfolding and opening to new life in such evidence within the growing community of Friends resident in and around Congenies. Its newest member happened to arrive in the middle of our week, hastily unpacked, dispatched her Pickfords van back to the UK and came across to share our evenings – invariably of songs and stories, and Epilogues round the bonfire.

Ah, that fire; that hearth under the heavens. We'd had to get the local mayor's signature just to light it, but once obtained, a single match sparked and sustained five glorious days of burning bliss. We may not have kept to the letter of the permit but the spirit of the fire emboldened and energised us in our endeavours to keep her alive.

One local, who had only been attending Meeting for a couple of months, joined our work party most mornings and would engage anyone willing to have a go at their French in lengthy conversation. Another delightful local Friend, now losing her sight, was determined to participate and joined us daily for Meeting for Worship followed by a meditation on each of our senses before



setting about the delicious task of preparing fresh coffee and madelines for our breaks.

Our Friend in Residence for the week (also recently relocated), an absolute Martha-angel, was always there to catch the pieces and gently steer us out of practical problems. And behind it all, the unwavering dedication and light-handed commitment of the on-going project managers of the newly emerging Maison Quaker Centre, an Anglo-French couple who had thought they'd moved to Congenies a dozen or so years ago to retire! (Do Quakers ever..?)

But what blossoming: what a bunch of beautiful beings and a sacred sanctuary to welcome the stranger and the guest. What a witness. I heard stories of a difficult and damaging past for Friends in France, but out of the ashes there hovers hope, strength, forgiveness and loving concern at Congenies, and a generosity of spirit which will not be extinguished.

May Friends across Europe, in Britain, and beyond, be encouraged to gather here for refreshment and renewal, for retreat and holiday, for work and learning, for fellowship and for fun! QVA certainly anticipates a return visit building on a very positive shared experience and keeping the embers of friendship and the fire aglow. If you'd like details of Congenies's facilities or programme see www.maison-quaker-congenies.org For information about QVA Working Retreats contact jasmine@qva.org.uk

Diary Dates 2008

We are short of space for full postal addresses and phone numbers. Please contact the EMES Office if you need this information.

19–21 September Border Meeting, Netherlands, Contact Hadewijch Touwen, Netherlands YM Secretary, Religieus Genootschap der Vrienden (Quakers) Postbus 2167, NL-7420 AD Deventer

10–12 October FWCC-EMES Peace and Service Consultation, Kortenberg Abbey near Brussels. Contact Marisa Johnson emes@fwcc.quaker.org

31 October–2 November German Yearly Meeting, Bad Pyrmont. Contact: pyrmont@quaeker.org
Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwcc.quaker.org

Programme Assistants

Duration: 1 year Location: Brussels

QCEA is looking for up to three individuals to work as Programme Assistants from January 2009. This is an opportunity to

- Work on one of QCEA's programme areas: human rights, economic justice and peace-building
- To assist in the day to day tasks of QCEA and Quaker House
- To gain work experience in an international Quaker setting.

You need to have an understanding of and interest in European institutions; commitment to the advancement of Quaker concerns at the European level; sympathy with the Quaker approach; willingness to undertake routine and domestic tasks; good working knowledge of English. A reasonable knowledge of French or Dutch will be helpful though not essential.

Knowledge of other European languages would be very welcome.

Accommodation and living allowance provided.

For more details and an application form please see our website at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/pa/index.html> or contact Martina Weitsch, QCEA, Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels. Email: mweitsch@qcea.org.

Deadline for applications: 22 September 2008.

Interviews will take place on 13 November 2008. Candidates invited for interview will need to arrive in Brussels the day before.

If we need to have two rounds of interviews, the first will be by phone and will be on 7/8/9 October 2008.

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. We want **Among Friends** to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

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Deadline for Among Friends 112: 1 November 2008