

Among Friends

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The Joy of Encounter

Dear Friends,

Gretchen Castle, General Secretary of FWCC, came to her first Annual Meeting of the Europe and Middle East Section in early May, at the Old Abbey, Kortenberg, Belgium, and reminded us of the World Office's ministry of *Connecting Friends, Crossing Cultures, Changing Lives*. Lee Taylor, one of Britain Yearly Meeting's Representatives to FWCC-EMES, penned a Haiku:

*Old Abbey, ancient tree
Blossom, ducklings
Dandelions shine
Do we?*

This captured the rich Spring atmosphere we met in, the vibrancy, expectations, vitality and joy we experienced simply because we were together. Our Epistle stated: "Strengthening these personal and Meeting connections in our Section and world family is essential". It is therefore fitting that much of this bumper issue – 16 pages rather than the usual 12! – is taken up with reports from Border Meetings – the German speaking one that took place in Lindenberg in March, and the Central European Gathering in Litomyšl, Czech Republic, in June. We are also treated to many fond memories as Janet Kreysa and



*Gretchen Castle with Sasha Bosbeer at Kortenberg.
Photo: EMES*

Pieter Ketner piece together the history of the Border Meeting, usually held in September, which brings together Friends from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands and beyond. Many Yearly Meetings also feel like family reunions, I was delighted to be once again with Friends in the Netherlands as they met near Bennekom this year, in a venue called Bosbeek – which means "Stream in the Forest" or "Woodbrooke"! Making community is what it is all about.

Yet these days relying only on face-to-face meetings is no longer enough. We have a concern about our small numbers, the toll we impose on our environment, and the financial expense of travelling and arranging hospitality. We are therefore experimenting with other ways of making community – through correspondence, on-line forums, and even on-line worship! During our Annual Meeting in Kortenberg we joined Young Friends in Lancaster in a world-wide live-stream worship, which felt gathered and real, and Sue Glover Frykman describes in this issue her experience of taking part in an on-line retreat.

Julia Ryberg, our Ministry and Outreach Co-ordinator, and I meet regularly to work together on Skype, and to worship. We give thanks for the human ingenuity that makes it possible for us to shrink the 1,258 miles between our homes to no more than a heartbeat.

Marisa Johnson, Executive Secretary

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History of Border Meetings

Janet Kreysa and Pieter Ketner write:

At present a group of Friends from Belgium and Luxembourg Monthly Meeting is busy planning the forthcoming Border Meeting to be held near Brussels in September. Meanwhile a group of German Friends has reserved accommodation and a speaker for Border Meeting 2014 in Germany in 2014, and Netherlands Friends are making plans for 2015. What makes these Friends in different European countries take on these quite onerous organisational tasks? Despite a complete lack of structure, without any ongoing committee or funding, with no requirement to conduct business meetings, write minutes or epistles, year after year a Border Meeting takes place over a September weekend in either Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands or France, attracting enthusiasts from right across the region, and beyond. Although many of those involved are active within their own Yearly Meetings, there is a feeling that this too is a yearly meeting of friends and Friends, extending beyond national boundaries. As one German Friend put it, on volunteering to help with organisation:

“This Border Meeting is so important to me as it “takes in” all the countries in which I feel at home: country of Birth-Germany, country of spiritual liberation-Great Britain, country of studies and inner freedom-the Netherlands, country of combining Faith and political action via QCEA-Belgium, country whose language is a pleasure to my ears-France.

I always feel so refreshed after those Border Meetings. And this particular international mix of searching and



*Border Meeting 1960 in The Netherlands
With Ute Bönneke (G.) (now Ute Antoch) in the front.
Photo: Pieter Ketner*



*Border Meeting 1964 in Belgium.
Klaus and Jutta Rosenkranz top row left
Photo: Lottie Ketner-Boll*

sharing spiritual experiences fills my heart with Light and strength”.

What happens at these Border Meetings?

Friends from various western European Yearly Meetings meet from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. Essential ingredients are worship, a theme, a speaker, who may be “home grown” or from abroad, and discussion groups in different languages. It is an opportunity to make and renew friendships that cut across borders and language barriers, and to learn more of the lives of fellow Quakers. Also to relax together at meal times, on walks, while sharing a late evening drink, making music, and enjoying the (often hilarious) Saturday night entertainment.

How did it all begin?

The first written record of Quaker Border Meetings dates from 1956, which was a time of recovery from the effects of war, and of re-establishing communication between countries. In that year at Easter, ten Friends (2 German, 2 French, 2 Dutch and 4 Belgian) met in Ougrée near Liege at the invitation of René and Lucie Matthieu Plumhaus to consider a concern of René “Interpénétration Quaker des Allemands, Belges, Hollandais et Français”. The European Section of FWCC had also expressed their interest in this concern. It was a gathering of the four bordering countries, based on Quaker principles, held in order to come closer to each other, and to come to a better understanding. On the Sunday morning a Meeting for Worship was held and the ministry included “Let us try everywhere, under all circumstances to create peace, also in our own neighbourhood”. At a business meeting where various initiatives were considered as to how to carry forward this



Border Meeting 1981 in Germany

Klaus Rosenkranz (3rd left and Marianne Boelsma (6th right). Photo: Vivien Flynn

concern, it was decided to try to organize Border Meetings four times a year, each time in a different country.

The first of these Border Meetings took place in September 1957 in the “Ausländerhaus” in Dortmund, Germany, followed by one a year later in the Netherlands. The aim of holding four meetings a year never did materialize. In 1959 two Border Meetings were held, one in April in Lille and later another in Dortmund. Other years when two gatherings took place were 1961 and 1964. Up to the present a total of 55 Border Meetings have been held: 12 in Belgium, 8 in France, 17 in Germany, 17 in the Netherlands and one in Luxembourg. That is almost every year, with the exception of 1971 (Triennial, Sweden), 1991 (World conference), and 1993, 1994 & 1996. The number of participants has varied from 26 to 84 but the average attendance is around 40. The term “western Europe” is also very flexible. One meeting had participants from as far east as Vienna and as far west as Seattle.

Particularly in the first 25 years, (and occasionally in recent years) Young Friends and young children have taken part, the latter often with their own programme under the care of a friend especially hired for this purpose.

In the early years, the language, and “flavour” always depended on the host country. But over the years, this has changed. With the increase in importance of the Council of Europe, the EU and the number of international organisations in the region, expatriate Friends of many nationalities but living in Europe, have come to play an active part in Border Meetings. They have contributed much, but it has meant a gradual shift in the language

of the meetings, from that of the language of the host country (with translations as necessary) towards the widespread use of English (with translations into French, German and Dutch). This represents a departure from the original concept of Border Meetings. It has become vital for both organisers and participants to ensure that no-one is left feeling excluded because of inadequate knowledge of English. This involves hard work and patience and an awareness of the needs of others. The best Border Meetings are those in which there is a real effort to speak each other’s languages, not only during formal sessions, but also at meal-and leisure times. What a joy that we can worship together without the need always to understand the spoken world.

Locations of Border Meetings.

Efforts are made to find simple, inexpensive, inclusive accommodation, easy accessible by public transport, and near to a common border. This has generally meant cloisters or training centres, but Naturfreundehäuser, and Youth Hostels have also been used. Some favourite locations, where frequent Border Meetings have been held are Cadier & Keer (southern Netherlands), Maison de Mesvin (Namur, Belgium.) and Bornheim-Walberberg (near Bonn, Germany). On one meeting in France, a last-minute problem with our booked accommodation caused us to be moved to a hotel, where meeting-for-worship had to be held in the dining room sitting around tables set for a meal of several courses. This meal took so long that our opening sessions had to be conducted between courses, each session being accompanied by the appropriate wine....

Themes:

The full list of themes covered over the years gives a



Border Meeting 1981 in Germany. At the dining tables. Photo: Vivien Flynn.



*Border Meeting 1983 in Belgium.
Luc Geraerts (B.) and Harald Stamm (G.)
Photo: Vivien Flynn*

fascinating insight into what Friends consider important. The speaker at the very first Border Meeting in 1957, on Reconciliation, was Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, the founder, together with Henry Hodgkin, of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. At many subsequent meetings we have examined our testimonies and their implications for us living in modern-day Europe. “How do we live as neighbours in Europe?” How can I as a Quaker contribute to the intercultural dialogue?” “The doom of Consume”. The 2001 meeting in France was memorable when, still all stunned by the events of September 11th, we considered: “Pleading for conflict intelligence”. This was one of the few meetings from which we were moved to write an epistle, to be sent to our respective governments. In other years we have looked at our Quaker beliefs and spiritual development: “What are we trying to do in Meeting for Worship?”, “The power



Border Meeting 1984. From left to right: Pam van der Esch, (B.) Franco Perna (L.), Vivien Flynn (L.) and Verity Stanley (L.). Photo: Vivien Flynn



*Border Meeting 1984 in Köln, Germany
Klaus Rozenkranz (D) Henry Schulz (F) and Pieter Ketner (NL)*

Photo: Vivien Flynn

of praying, the power of Love” “Who am I, where am I, where do I go?” “Inner light, truth and power; symbolism or reality?”, “Spinoza and the Quakers”, “Quakers and Islam”, “How recent discoveries about the universe affect the way we think about ourselves, our world and our religion”. Notable too over the years has been the way that, whatever the theme, Friends have brought their own concerns and appreciated the opportunity of sharing them with others. Some say that would attend Border Meeting whatever the theme, or even if there were no set theme or speaker.

An on-going movement

Since the 1990s the Border-Meeting concept has spread to other European Yearly Meetings, and local Friends Groups, inspiring them to arrange meetings near their common borders. (Baltic States; Nordic Meetings, South France, South Germany, Budapest-Vienna Border Meeting.

Did those pioneer Friends of 1956, (some of whom are still alive and actively participating) and all those who worked so hard in the early years of Border Meetings know that they were starting a movement which, whatever the outward circumstances, goes on encouraging Friends to come together across borders “to know one another in that which is eternal”?

Border Meetings have their own website: www.grenztreffen.be. Both “Among Friends” and the FWCC-EMES website include details of forthcoming meetings in their calendars of events. Including the details of the next one in September - see page 7.

Leo Engelhardt (1919 - 2013)

Martina Weitsch writes:

Leo Engelhardt was a central figure among German Friends. Most of the time, he didn't speak much, but when he did, it was always of substance.

Leo was born in a little village near Frankfurt (Main) where he lived until he was 9 years old and where he attended a small village school up to their 3rd grade. Upon the family's move to Karlsruhe, he was sent directly to the first year of the local Grammar School where he experienced real problems of settling in, including experience of what today might be called bullying.

As a result, he was moved to the Hermann Lietz School; this was an alternative boarding school based in several different centres (three different age groups in three locations). The current website of the school describes the education as: an environment in which young people are safeguarded from the negative influences of city life, sheltered in family like structures, where their head, heart and hand is educated and developed after the manner of Pestalozzi (paraphrased translation by the author).

Leo found this education, and the exchange visit to England which was part of the programme a positive experience.

Leo found himself a prison of war at some point during WWII and when he came back, he began to study chemistry. He would have wanted to study medicine but felt that he was, by now, too old to do that. Once he had finished his studies, he joined the family firm, Kondima, a manufacturer of marzipan and paraliné. For Junior Young Friend of my generation this was a major bonus - we got samples of these goodies at our Easter gatherings!

Leo spent some time in Halifax in Yorkshire to work in the firm which a friend of the family was setting up and producing the same products as the Kondima under licence.

Leo's mother, Luise Engelhardt, had come into contact with Friends during the Nazi years but had not discussed this much with her children during that time because she thought that might be risky for them.

After the war, Leo, and his wife Lore who he married in 1949, became involved with Friends being active in their local group (Karlsruhe), their local Quarterly Meeting (South West), the Yearly Meeting and EMES.

They both were accepted into membership in 1962.

I first met them in the mid 60s at which point at least to me they seemed to be at the heart of the life of Friends in the South West of the Federal Republic of Germany. My own family, living in a very small town about two and a half hours drive away from Karlsruhe, regularly attended Meeting for Worship there and these visits (about once a month or so) were a highlight of my experience of Friends during my childhood, not least

because of the warm reception we had in the Engelhardt home.

Leo was clerk of the EMES Service Committee during the late 60s and much of the 70s and contributed to the development of the section's service work significantly. He began his service just as the service project in Algeria came to an end and was instrumental in developing new projects. This included the Am'ari Play Centre in Ramallah and the expansion of the Kaimosi project in Kenya to include midwifery.

Leo was a free thinker; the non-dogmatic position of Friends was essential to him. He was very clear that new experiences and new insights had to impact on one's views and that it was important to have the courage to stand by changes of view if they were informed by such new insights and experiences. Rationality, along with conviction and values, were central to the way he saw and expressed things.

To me, he was a very important influence on my own thinking and my own Quakerism. He engaged with Young Friends (even at a very young age - I was just into my teens when I first met him) on an equal footing; I never felt patronised by him; I never felt that my views were belittled. In my gallery of great Friends he will always be one of the key figures.



Photo: Anne Engelhardt

Inauguration of the Quaker Service Memorial

Helen Lockwood, Trustee of the Quaker Service Memorial Trust writes:

On the 20th April, after weeks of cold and wet weather, the sun shone all day at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire, UK. Over 450 people arrived to participate in the inauguration of the Quaker Service Memorial which has been established to commemorate the wartime and immediate post-war service of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) and Friends Relief Service (FRS). Those present included former members – now in their 90s, their families, individual Friends and Meetings, and representatives of donating Trusts as well as of Britain Yearly Meeting and EMES. It proved to be a joyous occasion with many moving moments.

It has been just two years since the Meeting for Sufferings of Britain Yearly Meeting gave its support to the establishment of a memorial to this Quaker pacifist service and also to mark the 1947 award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Religious Society of Friends worldwide for its relief work. The Quaker Service Memorial Trust was then formed as a charitable trust to carry through this project, following on from the original working party appointed by Staffordshire Area Meeting. During this time, the memorial was designed by Staffordshire Quaker and sculptor, Rosemary Barnett, to resemble a meeting for worship using a warm, natural stone sourced from a local limestone quarry. The funds were raised through great support from Trusts, Quaker Meetings and Friends in Britain and Europe.

On arrival at the NMA, our guests were welcomed in a large marquee by Anthony Wilson, Clerk to the Quaker Service Memorial Trust after which they walked or had transport to the Quaker site about ½ mile away, along the main NMA avenue then into the natural area close to the river, passing by beehives to the memorial sited in a woodland glade close to a wildflower meadow. There Anthony Wilson introduced the Meeting for Worship followed by the reading by Sybil Ruth, a Birmingham-based Quaker writer, of UA Fanthorpe's poem 'Friends Meeting House, Frenchay, Bristol'. During the Meeting there were a number of very meaningful unprogrammed contributions and then

the outgoing Clerk to Britain Yearly Meeting, Lis Burch shared with the Meeting the experiences of her father, a pacifist, which included imprisonment during WWII. In the silence of the Meeting, we heard birds singing and felt at one with nature.

The National Memorial Arboretum (www.thenma.org.uk) contains the main British memorial to those who have died in post war military service. It also has many other memorials to those who died on armed service as well as others – but fewer – dedicated to civilian service, children and community organisations. The Quaker Service Memorial brings a message of peace and reconciliation and also is recognition of those who tried to put this into practice through their pacifist convictions and service as conscientious objectors.

Former members and their families attending the inauguration had links to so many countries through FAU or FRS service – throughout Europe, North Africa, Middle East, India, Burma and China. A group of those who served in the immediate post war Berlin were able to meet up again – all in their 90s – and share the experiences they had, working with the German people on re-establishing their devastated communities, and also with some of the many thousand displaced refugees. We have heard of the long term friendships – contacts maintained between individuals and families resulting in the exchange of visits to each other's countries and homes over the years.

During the afternoon, speakers talked of their particular experiences: Martin Wainwright of the life of his late father, former FAU member, Richard Wainwright who served in a British hospital before travelling to France and Germany; Michael and Christa, the adopted children of the late Edith Snellgrove, read extracts from her memoirs about her time with the Friends Relief Service firstly in Holland before going onto Berlin and returning home in 1948 with the brother and sister who had been orphaned during the war; and Jenny Carson of Manchester University Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, who talked of her interviews with members of the FAU and FRS – which she felt had been an enormous privilege.

The work of the Quaker Service Memorial Trust does not stop with the completion of the memorial. Trust

members continue to interview surviving members so that their experiences can be recorded and shared via the QSMT website (www.qsmt.org.uk). Jenny Carson has completed a Quaker Service Exhibition for the Trust which was displayed at the National Memorial Arboretum and is now being loaned to Quaker Meetings for use in Meeting Houses, Libraries and other public buildings. The Trust is also working with Jenny on the educational project for which she has produced a remarkable pack for schools. The Quaker work with WW2 refugees has lessons for today

concerning the reception of refugees within our own communities.

The Trust continues to welcome contacts with those who can share memories of the FAU and FRS. Anyone wishing to visit Quaker Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum can also contact the Trust for advice about getting there (qsmtrust@hotmail.co.uk). We would gladly meet visitors to the memorial at the NMA or off the train. We do hope that Friends will make the effort to visit – we don't think you will be disappointed!



Photo: David Faul

Border Meeting 2013

'The individual and the community, reflections on the mystical path.'

Speaker: Harvey Gillman

Friday 6th – Sunday 8th September, Kortenberg Abbey, Belgium

Erica Royston (1931-2013)

Sally Alderson writes:

Erica was one of the most well-known and well-loved members of Geneva Monthly Meeting – but also of the bigger Quaker family throughout Switzerland. And yet when she first came into contact with Quakerism she kept rather aloof for a time. As she said: “We came to the Quakers through Michael. In his twenties he went through a belated adolescent search for spiritual meaning: Zen Buddhism, Whirling Dervishes and the like, till one day he heard a Quaker meeting on the BBC and went off to Ifield Meeting. With a new baby I remained on the fringes – curious, but didn’t really start attending until we moved away from there.” “There” was England, her adopted country, which had taken her in as a refugee twice: the first time as an eight-year-old fleeing from the Nazi takeover of her home, Czechoslovakia, and having to learn English in a hurry, and the second time ten years later. At the end of the war she and her parents had returned to help in the rebuilding of their home country, but the Communist takeover put paid to that and so the family returned to Britain. It is some measure of Erica’s ability to readjust to different circumstances that she not only took up English again but within a few years gained a place at the prestigious London School of Economics. She always loved figures and was an excellent mathematician but didn’t fancy teaching so became a statistician. This was to stand her in good stead, working for Marks & Spencers (the first statistician they ever employed) and later for Rolls Royce where she had her first experience with computers (massive IBM 360s). Later, the Quakers were happy to find someone who was so capable with accounts and budgets!

Another country, another language and another career came with Michael’s move to Geneva, where Erica started freelancing as an editor at WHO but soon found her life project with the launch of the Safe Motherhood



Erica Royston Photo: Marge Berer

Initiative in 1984 in Nairobi. Her magnum opus, *Preventing Maternal Deaths*, co-edited with Sue Armstrong, appeared in 1989. After retirement she and Michael enjoyed many happy years until his death from cancer, which left her “feeling amputated” as she said. But her adaptability and appreciation of the support she received from Quakers meant she threw herself into work both for GMM and SYM. She carried on editing *News & Views* and became perceived as the memory of Geneva Meeting. “Ask Erica !” was the inevitable reply to any question about Quaker affairs. Her warm hospitality and availability for others means she will be greatly missed – but will remain an inspiration to all who knew and admired her.

News from Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre

New global learning project from Woodbrooke now underway

An exciting new global pilot project, which builds on experience from the Quaker in Europe and Salt and Light groups, has begun. A group of 10 Friends, representing each of the FWCC Sections, are exploring how various kinds of technology and social media can serve Friends in learning more about our various Quaker contexts and traditions and about what is important to Friends around the world. The project feeds into the development of Woodbrooke's e-learning programme.

Short courses & opportunities for European Friends

There is an upcoming opportunity for Friends in isolated Meetings during a weekend event at Woodbrooke between Friday 1 and Sunday 3 November 2013. Arne Springorum (Prague) and Julia Ryberg (Sweden/Woodbrooke/EMES) will co-facilitate the weekend of sharing, learning, worship and fellowship.

In September 2014, there will be another Woodbrooke course for Friends coming from outside Britain, also sponsored by the Corder and Gwen Catchpool Fund, focusing on politics and activism in Europe. It will be a workshop-based event for building skills to develop our work around Quaker concerns and testimonies, including opportunities for participants to share their experiences of working as Friends in different cultural, political and ecumenical contexts.

In the longer term, Woodbrooke is considering the possibility of developing an online forum for Friends who are interested in documenting the history of their Meetings in Europe between 1914 and 2014. A focus of this work would be the documentation of the lives of individual Friends who have actively served in peace building. The online forum would be an opportunity to learn the craft of oral history and to support each other in that work.

Woodbrooke on-the-Road in Europe

Woodbrooke's Associate Tutors have delivered two four-day on-the-Road events across Europe this Spring. At the end of May, Roswitha Jarman travelled to Germany to train elders from across the Yearly Meeting. Switzerland YM also hosted a workshop exploring 'Prophetic Voice' in May. Tutor Christopher Hatton describes the weekend course:

"What does it mean today, to live in the Spirit, and how do we move to that point where we find ourselves living from the Spirit?" This is how I interpreted the question that was asked of us at the Switzerland YM 2013 gathering between 17 and 21 May in Herzberg near Aarau. Switzerland YM kindly invited me via Woodbrooke on-the-Road to talk about the processes in determining if I was being called, and my spiritual experiences of working under concern with Christian Peacemaker Teams. I concluded how I came to experience the healing power of God's love in several powerful and moving forms.

For information about holding a Woodbrooke on-the-Road event, please call +44(0)121 4725171 or email off-site@woodbrooke.org.uk.

New online resource centre

A new online resource centre has been launched by the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (CPQS).

The Quaker Studies Resource Centre hopes to make the work of major Quaker scholars, graduates from CPQS and other universities, and postgraduate students more widely available and accessible to Quaker meetings as well as students and academics researching in theology, history and social science.

As well as podcasts of public talks and lectures, the site also provides summaries of a large number of theses on Quaker Studies, links to other theses on Quaker topics and access to the Joseph Wood Archive, a collection of notebooks and diaries kept by a travelling Quaker minister at the end of the eighteenth century.

Betty Hagglund, Project Development Officer for CPQS, said: "We are one of the first University departments to summarise Postgraduate theses and publish them in this way. We hope it will mean that the work will be more accessible to a wider audience." The Quaker Studies Resource Centre can be accessed by following this link: bit.ly/cpqs-qsrc.

Thinking of attending a course at Woodbrooke? 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.

Border Meeting of German speaking Friends from 22 to 24 March: **Fear and Trust**

Brigitte Seger, Zürich Group writes:

Each of us has the experience of these two basic feelings: the fear of losing ground beneath one's feet and the trust when standing on solid ground. How aware are we of these two extremes and the many "betweens" in our daily life?

These archetype questions formed the frame of the 10th Border Meeting of German and Swiss Friends. Unfortunately, German speaking Friends in France are rare and there was none from this bordering country with us. The Haus Maria Lindenberg near Freiburg in the Black Forest was again an ideal resort for such a delicate topic.

19 persons, roughly equal numbers of men and women, German and Swiss Friends. Most of the participants had met before. In a playful way we were inspired to move and thus brought in contact with each other. Everybody was invited – nobody was obliged to take part. In the same way we did the sequence of the "bibliolog". That is a method of reading and interpreting a text from the Bible. In our case it was the story of Jesus walking on the waters. When Peter tried to do as Jesus he sank (Matt. 14, 22 – 33). The story was read sentence by sentence. In between we had to slip into the role of a disciple and express our



Photo: Martin Höfflin-Glünkin

feelings in the respective situation. So we came into a lively interaction of feelings and the story began to reflect our own experiences of fear and trust.

One Friend gave us a lecture on his question: "Is Fear the Result of Distance from God"? His lecture was both, theologically based and personally experienced. Another topic was "Business with Fear", and the Indian parable of the "Black and White Wolf". Another aspect of fear was presented to us, coming from the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. He claims that fear is the toll of man to be paid for freedom. It is the inevitable passage in man's life to develop.

It was the shared personal experiences that made the seminary so special. An openness and sincerity could be felt and made the atmosphere warm and safe. This confidence made us speak out of a silent worship and vice versa. Questions of personal importance came up and had to be spoken out. And as usual, there was not enough time to dig deeper into the different aspects of the presented theses.

It is impossible to repeat the abundance of impressions and insights in such a short written report. I felt inspired by the Meeting and again I am impressed by the high level of knowledge and creative power among Friends and their willingness to generously share it with us.

The next Border Meeting will be held from 11 to 13 April, 2014. It will deal with God's leadership.



Photo: Martin Höfflin-Glünkin

Enjoying Community at Congénies

Richard Thompson writes:

A small, but creative and happy group of Quaker Voluntary Action made their own way in the middle of March by train, by plane and by campervan to the only purpose-built Quaker Meeting House in France, Congénies, near Nîmes. We were able to have our introduction (fire regulations, shopping and sous-chef rotas etc) before a good meal together. The new wardens Judy and Dave Kashoff said they were happy to be involved as little or as much as we liked. We drafted them in full-time. Dave played the newly arrived piano with gusto!

The week began beautifully on Sunday morning with our introduction to the theme of pilgrimage. The Meeting for Worship with members and visitors which followed went more deeply into the theme.

Team Work. We were well prepared on Sunday after lunch and began in earnest Monday morning, uprooting self-seeding trees and painting the shutters. Each session was preceded by a “prologue” in which I presented a phrase to remember during our “awareness pause” on the hour when the church bells strike conveniently with a two minute pause – “Where is my attention?”, “Attention without Judgement”, “Stop and Listen”. The “uprooters” had a taste of success with at least four stubborn ash trees but the palm trees proved too strong. We moved to the long garden wall and totally transformed it, removing the weeds. For people arriving it really is a first good impression! The cookery volunteers did a superb job. For our last meal, we were away at Aigues-Mortes all afternoon and a kindly neighbour stepped in and provided a banquet.

Free Time. A mis-nomer! The group enjoyed staying together, We did an amazing sculpture walk, cycled to Sommières on the “Voie Verte”, had a work session (it had rained a bit in the morning), walked up to the windmills overlooking Calvisson (from where we saw the snowy Cévennes and the bright thread of the Mediterranean Sea), our last day picnic at Ambrussum (a Roman bridge on the Vidourle) and on to the mediaeval walled town of Aigues – Mortes.



Alison and Richard Thompson

Photo: Richard Thompson

Retreat Sessions were memorable. On our first day, we used the worship sharing process to share “What does pilgrimage mean to me?” I decided not to take notes. Each Friend contributed personally and beautifully. On Monday, we were invited to be open to the present moment with the meditation “Opening Procedure”. On Tuesday, each of us offered a “Special Announcement” – wow!, Wednesday we enjoyed a Sophrology session led by Mauricette, a local Attender. She concluded with a prayerful text on “Gratitude” On Thursday, a tour de force French lesson by a local teacher who had spent a memorable year in Huddersfield!

Social Times were varied; “Around the piano” with Quaker songbooks, a DVD “Meetings with Remarkable Men” by Peter Brook, a portrait session – each of us doing a couple and leaving the surprising results on the Meeting Room door for future generations to see, a games session and our evaluation forms.

The weather – We were well away from the Arctic Blast and enjoyed lots of sunshine especially in the T’ai Chi sessions at 7.30 every morning.

Central European Gathering, Litomyšl, Czech Republic, 17-20 May 2013 (40 participants)

Zsuzsa Eastland writes:

Setting. One morning we held a most amazing Meeting for Worship in the park of Litomyšl Castle. It was a setting of freshly green trees and shrubs under the clear blue sky, birds chirping in the trees and statues from past centuries looking down curiously on us. A huge chestnut tree provided candles of blossom and inspired a ministry. There was sunshine and shade with the freedom to choose between them. A Paradise.

Content. Rex Ambler and Catherine King Ambler guided us through Experiment with Light in George Fox's footsteps. After Rex's introduction into early Quaker insights we were seeking the truth about ourselves and about the world in the form of guided meditation. We tried to capture the truth in a sequence of silence, visual expression, group work and plenary sharing. Struggling to express what we found we failed to articulate the unspeakable.

I think we all feel the need to learn more about early Quakers.

Joy and enrichment. We were greatly enriched by the presence of the children, who also contributed to the joyful music-making of our Czech Friends. We enjoyed the singing leading up to silent worship and the cheerful dances in the evenings.

Experience of the family of Friends. We pushed our chairs back a little to widen the circle of worshippers and include our Evangelical Friends from Tolna, Hungary. A kind of Pentecostal experience happened when Tony Frei of Tolna drove a diverse group of Friends (Russian, Serbian and Hungarian) in his bus on an outing to Prague. They belonged to different Quaker traditions and had no language in common. However, they managed to build bridges between their divisions through understanding and love.

We were gathered by "the peace that passes all misunderstanding...", as our Serbian Friend, Ema Videnovic put it.

Photos: Catherine Butler



Report on FWCC-EMES “Meeting for Exploration” in Svartbäcken, Sweden

Suzanne Eade Roberts writes:

At the start of March, in a change from the usual routine, I went to Sweden for the weekend. I had been asked to take part in a consultation about what sort of support the European and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation (EMES/FWCC) can provide for Quakers on mainland Europe. We were welcomed by Julia Ryberg, a Swedish-American Friend who, from her base at the Swedish Quaker retreat centre in Svartbäcken, works for EMES and Woodbrooke, including running the “Quakers in Europe” (QinE) online course. This course has now been run 19 times in 9 different languages, as a way to introduce newcomers to Quaker history and ways. It was good to meet Julia in person at last as she had trained me as an online facilitator for a QinE course in French and a Salt and Light discussion group before the world conference. Also present were Marisa Johnson, secretary of EMES, and about a dozen people from meetings ranging from Portugal in the west, to the very north of Finland, and Prague and Budapest over in the east – and Moscow further east still. One of Friends House Moscow’s two current staff members, Natasha Zhuravenkova, was present, and I enjoyed catching up on FHM news with her and my fellow former FHM Board member, Elena Belyaeva, a Latvian who now lives in Worthing.

On the first evening, during the introductions, I was very surprised to find someone else from Hampshire! It turned out that Cathy Butler of Alton meeting, with support from the Area Meeting, is a regular visitor to the meetings in Vienna, Budapest and Prague, and the Central European Gathering. Maybe “twinning” like this between different regions in Europe will catch on.

Over the weekend we wrote on notes which we pinned to the wall and had discussions in small groups, often in a worship-sharing way, about what EMES has done for our local groups or yearly meetings so far and what assistance could be provided in the future. Some ideas related to specific contexts: a Danish lady, the youngest of the four members of Copenhagen meeting although aged 80 herself, wanted help to set up a website. Natasha hopes for EMES help in arranging a Russian-speaking

Quaker gathering. In France Yearly Meeting, meanwhile, we dream of funding to reinstate the Visiting Friend programme, so that someone can visit isolated Friends in a huge country where meetings are few and far between. (We can offer the model of the “Boucle des Amis” – a “Friendly Loop” – in which people correspond with two others and act as overseers for each other. Could there be a pan-European version along these lines?) But there were common features. The challenge of outreach was mentioned by several people, as was the need to support the Quakers who keep small meetings going. So perhaps this could be a new focus for EMES work: preparing some sort of manual or training about how to bring new blood into meetings and putting an online forum in place for people such as clerks, or people interested in outreach, to share their experiences. Marisa, Julia and others on the EMES committee will take all these thoughts away and work out what exactly EMES can propose over the next few years.

For me the highlights of the weekend were meeting people from all over Europe and finding that we often had similar issues in our meetings; the calm atmosphere in our wooden building surrounded by thick snow and extremely icy paths; a feeling of being listened to and not being so isolated; and time to reflect by myself when on the train. And a brief break from the daily marathon of putting the children to bed! My thanks to Portsmouth meeting, EMES and France Yearly Meeting for their support.



Quaker Council for European Affairs

Stop Press!

Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) is recruiting a new Deputy Representative and Programme Assistants

See:

<http://www.qcea.org/home/involved/vacancies/> for more information.

Deepening the Life of the Spirit – an online retreat exploring prayer and spiritual practice

Sue Glover Frykman writes:

When the invitation to take part in an online retreat with Woodbrooke dropped into my inbox in November 2012, I immediately knew that this was for me. A few weeks prior to this I had been asked to talk about how we nurture our relations with each other and with God at the Nordic Quaker Gathering to be held in June 2013 - a challenge that at the time seemed somewhat daunting. "Yes", I thought, "I can give the talk if I do the retreat."

The online retreat took place from 8th February to 21st March 2013. Twenty Quakers took part, including Ginny Wall, the retreat leader, and Jeff Hunter, the accompanying Elder. We all lived in different parts of the world – the UK, Germany, Switzerland, France, Australia, the USA and Sweden – and represented various time zones. As we could choose the times and days to engage, this did not pose any problems. Working online is all-inclusive!

The retreat offered opportunities for rest, reflection and the exploration of a number of spiritual practices. We were also offered spiritual nourishment and opportunities for renewal in the midst of our everyday lives. After an initial 'getting to know each other' period, we settled into the retreat programme.

In the first week of the retreat we were invited to look at our everyday experiences with a view to finding God at work in them. Here, specific practices included a Review of the Day and Gratitude Practices. These allowed us to reflect on our everyday lives and take stock. We then moved on to practices that helped us to understand the sacredness of the everyday, and were encouraged to actively seek the sacred in every person, place and experience, so that we might find it easier to live "in the power of God" as expressed by George Fox. Exercises that were helpful here were Mindfulness, Breathing Practice and Walking Meditation, all of which helped us to live in the present moment and enjoy every step we took. In the subsequent weeks we practised Waiting in the Light, Imaginative Contemplation using an Ignatian approach and nature visualisations, Holding ourselves and others in the Light and a Mindfulness of Sounds. Some of us also arranged to have a Quiet Day at a time



Sue Glover Frykman and Irma.

Photo: Lars Longueville

that suited us during the retreat.

Despite being scattered in different corners of the globe, we quickly became a tight-knit community and felt safe enough to share our experiences of the daily practices with each other. We created our own individual programmes for doing the exercises. I christened the daily afternoon walk with standard poodle Irma 'our retreat walk', to remind myself that I was in that space. We also shared in the joys and sorrows of each other's daily lives, and held each other in the Light as we groped and explored.

Looking back at the retreat, re-reading the wealth of material we were provided with and the weekly responses from each participant, I can only express gratitude that the invitation from Woodbrooke dropped into my inbox. I now feel much better equipped to introduce 'my' subject at the Nordic Quaker Gathering. If you think that you too might benefit from such an opportunity, I have only one piece of advice to give: Sign up!

Europe and Middle East Young Friends summer event

This summer experience what it would be like to live within a Quaker community.

Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) warmly invites you to our Open House - Open Community event in Congénies, France between the 16th and 25th August 2013. (see page 11 for another report from Congénies).

For 10 days we will be hosting an open event for Quakers of all ages, who have been involved in Friends for any length of time, including those who are new to Quakers.

We will begin each morning with a period of unprogrammed worship before spending our day on any number of activities available in the local region. All of the activities will be optional and some people may choose to do their own thing or relax at the accommodation whereas others may prefer renting bikes and exploring the near-by National Park or the picturesque villages and markets all within easy walking or travelling distance. At the end of the day we will have a community meeting and an epilogue.

Some important information:

It's for 10 days do I need to come for all of it?

No - we plan to be flexible with the accommodation to enable people to come for a couple of days, a week or all of the event, Please let us know on your registration form how long you would like to be with us for. Please be aware that in our attempt to be open and flexible it may be difficult to accommodate everyone's specific accommodation and time requirements. We will confirm your booking as soon as possible.

EMEYF is usually for Young Friends - do I need to be a Young Friend?

Absolutely not. EMEYF holds gatherings which offer a safe and nurturing space for Young Adult Friends across the region but this event is a little different. It is open to everyone - including families. All we ask is that you might consider yourself to be "young-at-heart"!

How much does it cost?

EMEYF is providing the accommodation for free however we ask for a payment of 5 Euros per person

per day to cover the costs of food. You will also need to arrange your own travel. Please contact Leo on leo@cornerstones-slochteren.org if you require financial assistance towards the costs of travel.

What accommodation is available?

Congénies is the Quaker House in the south of France. There are limited number of rooms in the house - all of which are shared rooms. In the garden there is space for 5 tents and there is the possibility of further accommodation in the Bed and Breakfast across the road. If you have any special accommodation requirements please contact us.

The accommodation is self-catering and we will share out the food preparation and clean up tasks throughout the time.

Will there be workshops or more structured time?

The idea is to spend our time as a community. Whilst there is a planning and organisation group to ensure that our practical needs are met the rest of the time is open for anyone to do plan something. If you would like to plan an activity or workshop then please let us know and come prepared!

Sounds great! How do I register?

Please fill in the registration form attached and send it back to us. We will then be in contact with you further. Our email address is openhouse@emeyf.org

You can also have a look at our webpage:

<http://emeyf.org/openhouse>

I have a question!

Please get in contact with one of the planning team. Email us at openhouse@emeyf.org

We look forward to hearing from you,

In friendship,

*Leo Vincent, Kristin Skarsholt,
Mieke van Ophuesden, Tobias Buchmann*

Diary Dates 2013

More dates for 2013 and beyond are available on the website: www.fwccemes.org. Please send items for inclusion in the diary to Marisa Johnson at emes@fwccemes.org.

27–30 June 2013: Nordic Yearly Meetings

See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/nordic-yearly-meeting-2013>

24–28 July 2013: Ireland Yearly Meeting

Contact Rosemary Castagner: office@quakers-in-ireland.ie

25–28 July 2013: France Yearly Meeting

Contact Sylvette Thompson: assembleedefrance@gmail.com

6th – 8th September 2013: Border Meeting, Kortenberg, Belgium

See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/border-meeting-2013>

27th – 29th September 2013: Experiment with Light International Gathering, Woodbrooke

See: <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/experiment-with-light-international-gathering>

31st Oct – 3rd November 2013: German Yearly Meeting. Contact clerks@quaaker.org

15th – 17th November 2013: QCEA/QPSW Conference

See <http://www.fwccemes.org/calendar/qcea-qpsw-conference>

17th – 18th November 2013: EMES Peace and Service Consultation Contact: emes@fwccemes.org

Europe, Economics and Justice: Can we do better with less?

A conference organised jointly by QCEA and Quaker Peace & Social Witness

15-17 November 2013 in Brussels

What are the causes and consequences of the European economic crisis? What alternatives are there to austerity? How can we, as Quakers, contribute to the building of a just and sustainable economy which meets human needs without destroying the planet? These questions will be addressed with the help of keynote speakers and workshop facilitators. Please come and join us as an interested individual, or as a representative of your Area Meeting or worship group.

The conference fee, including meals and accommodation from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, is £160 or €185 (£145 or €170 for QCEA supporters or associates). (Brussels locals: contact us for the price of the conference and meals.)

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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If you wish to make a bank transfer, please use the details below:

From outside the UK: (Payment in Euros can now be made to a German Bank. Details from the Secretary)

Unity Trust Bank plc, Nine Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB, UK

IBAN: GB11 CPBK 0800 5150 0732 10

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It is also essential that you quote the following details:

Account Name: FWCC-EMES

Account Number: 20180696

Sort Code: 08-60-01

For holders of UK bank accounts please send cheques or CAF vouchers in GBP to the EMES office. Scottish Charity number: SC 036528

Deadline for Among Friends 128: 1 October 2013