

Fell where we held Meeting for Worship in the company of several horses and sheep. Here is an excerpt from my journal on that day:

*...we went to Firbank Fell and saw George Fox's "pulpit" where he spoke to about 1000 people. I walked around by myself for a while and was really present. The surrounding hills and valleys were so beautiful, the stone walls curved across the fells just like I have always pictured England. I removed my sandals and I placed myself firmly on English soil and checked out my surroundings. I ran through the soggy ground dodging sheep poo all the way and felt the Spirit moving in me as I looked across all this beauty. We held Meeting for Worship with the horses looking across to the Lancashire Sea and it was rather gathered. The horses nibbled my toes and hair as I relished the beautiful day. I feel very at peace. I have many questions and I am so unsure, yet so relaxed...*

We walked to the train station and boarded a train bound for Holyhead, Wales, where we would catch a ferry to Dublin, Ireland. I was sad to leave England, but knew I would return soon as I was so touched by it. Upon arrival in Ireland some pilgrims pulled out their fiddles and played a jig while I did some Irish dancing to welcome us all to the Emerald Isle. In Dublin we volunteered for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland and visited several cultural locations, then bussed our way north to Northern Ireland and Moyallon Centre. There we delved into learning about "the Troubles" and today's current political situation. We learned about the role Quakers had played and continue to play in conflict resolution, and also learned how diverse Quakers are in our beliefs. The theme of our pilgrimage was a journey through conflict to peace. In Northern Ireland we learned about this in a historical context, but also within our group, as we struggled to understand and appreciate each other's beliefs and find unity. We visited the Giants Causeway on a most beautiful sunny day and went for plenty of walks through the woods near where we were staying.

With but a few days left we ferried again across the Irish Sea back to Scotland where we spent our time in retreat at an old hunting lodge. Here we had time to just be together with the

amazing friendships we had formed. We played games, laughed, cried and had many hugs and cuddles. The last morning we had together a few of us climbed up a nearby hill. Here is what I wrote:

*As we clambered over fences through muddy fields the sun rose from behind a hill on our right. The mist was dotting the pastures and our faces were flushed by the cool morning air and the kiss of the sun. We climbed up, up, up, and I got quite out of breath, but partway up I paused with another pilgrim and as we looked over the countryside she said, "This is God", and it was the truest thing I had ever heard...*

We were finally separated at the airport where we had a very hard time saying goodbye to the European pilgrims. I spent a night in Philadelphia then left early the next morning to fly home. I cannot express enough my gratitude for this experience. I formed the most amazing friendships with Young Friends from around the world and I learned so much about my own spirituality. I found out what being a Quaker means to me, and what it means to others.

I would like to thank all those who supported me on this journey, both financially and spiritually. This experience was something I will never forget.

*Rachel, of Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting is in grade 12 at Lester B. Pearson United World College, Metchosin, BC.*



*Sisters together: Amy Jean (left) and Rachel Singleton-Polster*