



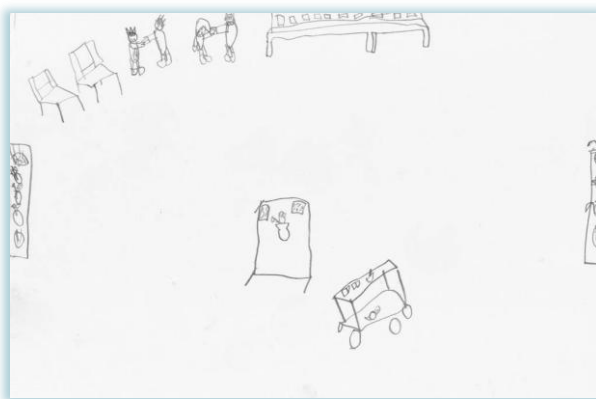
Valuing the contribution of young people

“We wish to see all our meetings being inclusive worshipping communities, where everyone is welcomed and valued. We all need to ... integrate and value the contribution of young people, in all-age worship, in sharing our faith and in learning and listening.”

(Extract from Priority A of the Framework for Action – Strengthening the spiritual roots in our meetings and ourselves.)

It seem a long time since the last gathering of Meeting of Friends in Wales that hosted Quakers of all ages. In my own area meeting (South Wales) it is years since we welcomed children to our AM gatherings. So where have all the young Friends gone – and how can we bring them back, for our benefit and theirs? Should we even try? These are questions that the Spiritual Hospitality Project was unable to find answers to, but some clues can be found in David Binney’s report.

I recently read about some research indicating that the younger you are, the more likely you are to suffer from mental illness. In the USA young people have become about five times more likely to be mentally ill today, compared with 60-70 years ago. The figures for the UK are probably similar. Related studies seem to suggest that the reason for this is probably the huge increase in materialism among young people. Today’s school students are under unprecedented pressure to measure their status by money, celebrity and electronic gadgetry – and the hollowness of these aspirations is starkly



"Flowers in Meeting"
drawn by Taliesin Oldridge

Flowers on the mantle piece at both ends of the room, and on the table in the centre of the room. Also shows bench, chairs, friends shaking hands, and the trolley for tea and coffee after MfW.

demonstrated by the fact that they literally make you ill. Humans cannot live by BlackBerrys alone.

I am thankful to learn how very different young Quakers are in their values – so much so that they are often isolated and even bullied at school. It seems that young Friends place enormous importance on their Quaker identity and on living out the Quaker testimonies in their daily lives. The young people in Simon Best’s study show the same steadfastness and courage as the children of Bristol

Meeting back in 1682, who kept the meeting for worship going while their parents were in jail, despite vicious assaults. Young Friends today may enjoy unconventional trappings in their worship and prefer the company of their own age-group to an ‘elderly’ local meeting, but it seems clear that the future of the Religious Society of Friends is safe in their hands. So perhaps the oldies shouldn’t fret when the young ones grow up and ‘disappear’; for when the older generation has itself disappeared, today’s young Friends will undoubtedly still be here, keeping their meetings and following the Quaker way.

Stevie Krayer
Editor

Where have all our young Friends gone?

On 12 June David Binney gave a talk on young Friends at a joint meeting of Mid-Wales and Southern Marches Area Meetings at The Pales Meeting House. The following are extracts; the full text can be obtained from David Binney on dkbinney@btinternet.com or found on the Current Mailing section of the MFW website

Where indeed have they gone? We are all familiar with those children who come to children’s meeting, then reach a certain age and disappear. Well, they don’t all entirely disappear; some of

them go to JYM and report back enthusiastically to Area Meeting afterwards. Some of them go to Young Friends' General Meeting. Some of them go to Quaker camps or other activities, but we never see them at meeting for worship. Why is this? Is it something about the way we weighty Quakers are doing things? This is our chance to find out what Young Friends are thinking.

What follows is based on research done by Simon Best for a PhD in Quaker Studies. Simon works in the Children and Young People's section of Quaker Life in Friends House. It is in the public domain and he is anxious to receive comments and feedback.

Young Friends place a high degree of importance on their involvement in the Religious Society of Friends. 85% of those questioned stated that being involved in Quaker activities was either very important or quite important for them. Individuals gain a feeling of belonging through their involvement and significantly the majority of young Friends (58%) affiliate most closely with exclusively young Quaker groups. A further 10% said that the Quaker group they felt they most belonged to was Britain Yearly Meeting, which many of them would have experienced through the programme for children and young people. Just over a quarter of Young Friends (27%) felt they most belonged to their local meeting and only 3% felt they most belonged to their area meeting.

Young Friends' experience of worship

For young Friends participating in communal worship at Quaker events is a means of binding individuals to the group. It creates a separate physical and psychological space in which the young Quaker group operates and in which Young Friends experience both a separation from the world and a sense of themselves as a distinctive worshipping community, separate from adult Quakers.

There are several distinctive features of Young Friends' worship, which are also important to them. First it includes programmed and semi-programmed, as well as un-programmed worship.

Silence remains the basis of worship, periods of worship begin and end with silence and programmed contributions are made out of the silence, but it gives religious and spiritual value to contributions through speech, music, song and dance by making them an integral aspect of worship. Secondly the setting is less formal than the adult group.

➤ I find a field in the sunshine much more conducive of spiritual thought than a cold meeting room (Female 18).

➤ The whole point of Quakerism was that we could worship where we wanted, when we wanted... Meetings do not need to be on a Sunday, and especially they do not need to occur in a meeting house (Male 17).

Young Friends frequently sit in one large circle, often on the floor, without lines or rows, and worship is usually

closed by the whole group joining hands in a circle. This is also symbolic of community togetherness.

These differences lead to separations – both physical and psychological. Although there is little shared practice, the demands of the adult group in terms of practice extend to occasions when Young Friends are present. Significantly they also extend to the adult groups' judgment of young Quaker practice. A familiar example of this is the description of semi-programmed worship, which is common practice for young Friends, as 'alternative', so limiting it to infrequent times when adults are also present.

I believe in God....

The content of their beliefs is not important to young Friends. Believing in God is not necessarily part of being a young Friend. More young Friends believe in God than not (41% compared with 18%). Young Friends' descriptions of God are closely related to the idea of 'that of God in everyone', but often the focus is not on God, but rather on that of 'good' in everyone, including one's self.

➤ I put much less [importance] on God and more on good in everyone (Female 18).

➤ It's as though it's the inside of you – it's not as though it's God, but just goodness – sometimes it just makes you want to be good and try and be a better person – so it's just inside you (Female 16).



Although belief is marginal for young Friends, they are very ready to talk about what they as individuals believe. This is quite different from adult Quakers.

Young Friends are different

Since belief is marginal, values have an increased importance and are a way of young people displaying their Quaker identity. For young Friends Quaker values inform a particular world view which influences individual's behaviour.

Young Friends identify their values and world view as enlightened over that of other religions:

- We value things more than other young people – because [we are] more educated about people who have less' (From observations in the field).
- I try and live with the testimonies, I think I am less violent and more honest than most of my friends because of this (Male 15).
- A lot of people [young Quakers] are picked on for their beliefs. Other people want to pick on us because not only are we different but they know we're kind of like accepting and they don't understand it and they have to try and take us down to their level. I'm not saying that we're better than them but they try to make us feel small and awkward (Male 15).

Quaker apartheid?

Just as adults separate themselves from them, so too do young Friends separate themselves from adults:

- I've kind of given up going to my local meeting because I think the average age is about seventy (Female 17).

Young Quakers identify differences in theology, practice and culture between themselves and the adult Quaker group.

- [We young Friends] are placing less value on going to meeting/God worshipping but [more on] just holding our own beliefs (From observations in the field).
- Older Quakers have their defined Quaker values that they believe in but at the same time they've learnt to live in the world and they've got that balance. (Female, 18)

Conclusion

The theological and cultural differences between the two groups, that is Young Friends and adult Friends, remain publicly unacknowledged, and in some cases unidentified, by the adult group. To

acknowledge these differences would require the adult Quaker group to acknowledge the Young Friends as a different group with distinctive values and practices.

The failure of the adult group to acknowledge the young group as a separate and different sect within the Society of Friends, together with the young group's sectarian attitude towards the adult Quaker group, results in it remaining hidden within the Society of Friends to all but its own members. It ensures its continuing cultural, institutional and theological marginalisation and its being a 'hidden sect'.

Young Quakers **are** Quakers, not by virtue of believing the same thing, or by behaving in the same way, but by **being** the same thing. They are part of a network of personal friendships with other young Quakers. They behave as Quakers in both Quaker time and non-Quaker time and the groups they belong to are distinctive groups of Quakers, which practice in different ways and gather in separate spaces from other Quakers.

So what do we have to ask ourselves?

- Does any of this matter to us? If so, how?
- What can we do to make young Friends feel more welcome and at home in our meetings?
- Should we sometimes change our way of worship?
- Should we do anything at all?

Walking the Talk

Thirty-one Friends from across Wales met in warm sunshine in Newtown on 26 June – Helen Porter of Newtown meeting reports.

Our morning matters of business had a strong emphasis on outreach – Quakers will have a presence at the Eisteddfod in both the Cytûn (Churches Together) tent and the Peace tent; Outreach Week posters are being translated into Welsh; and Catherine James has been approached by S4C about making a film about Spiritual Journeys entitled '**Y Daith**', based upon the Quaker trail around the Dolgellau area which Catherine was instrumental in setting up. There was a lively discussion about the idea that Ben Pink Dandelion's '**Celebrating the Quaker Way**' be translated into Welsh. Although the offer from JRCT was welcomed there was a suggestion that original

material in Welsh often feels newer and fresher than translated material so local Meetings will discuss the idea further.

Both interchurch and interfaith cooperation currently stress good community and race relations. Much of this work is subtle and unseen but work is continuing on the establishment of a **Peace Academy for Wales**, as a place to focus on peace in all aspects of Welsh life, and Jane Harries of Bridgend Meeting gave us an introduction to the **Alternatives to Violence** workshops. These are designed to help us develop the skills and tools to deal with violence and conflict in positive and creative ways. The building blocks of the AVP approach are affirmation, building community, communications, decision-making, cooperation and conflict resolution. The outcome can be a transforming power (the ‘aah!’ moment, Jane called it) where we learn to expect the best of others, and ourselves, respect and care for others and ourselves, think before reacting and look always for a non-violent way of responding. Currently this training tends to be city-based but we have the chance of workshops in our local areas if we are interested and the skills learned could benefit both our Meetings and our wider communities.



We talked about Working with Woodbrooke, with the aim to support particularly remote and rural Meetings and a focus on rediscovering some of the things that hold us together as Quakers, our historic theology: for example: what is a gathered meeting, what do we mean by right ordering? And we gave the usual attention to administrative matters, apparently routine matters that can still arouse a surprising energy and debate; and quite rightly – we are ‘it’, in this Society where all own the process and the decisions.

But our major focus for the day was on our response to our broken world - *Walking the Talk* –

practically what can we do about sustainability?

Four Friends from Machynlleth Meeting first energised us with a heartfelt perception of the current state we have brought the world to, then both entertained and provoked us with a role-played ‘Any Questions’ featuring Johnny Extra-Green, Mrs Middlemiss and Barbara (Bar) Gunn who responded across the spectrum to questions such as “How do you manage your money?”, “Where did you buy your last item of clothing?” and “What did you have for your main meal last night?” Their answers to “How do you heat your house?” ranged from “cob walls, long johns and lots of woollies” to “oil-fired central heating and an electric heater in the conservatory”; and to “What is your main form of transport?” – from bike and car club to the BMW.

The result was much rueful laughter, a recognition that we have sneaking sympathy for Mrs ‘Bargain’ as our unreconstructed self, and a reinforcement of our Quaker conviction that all of our choices can be, and should be, made mindfully.

We were then put on the spot ourselves – divided into groups and given topics such as food, transport, money etc and asked to come up with an Advice or Query that addressed it. Our instructions reminded us that “this should challenge Friends to consider deeply their own actions, bearing in mind that Advices and Queries are not rules to walk by, but for our guidance in the Spirit. Our actions should not be seen as a burden, but as a privilege to be joyfully undertaken.”

Our discussions were intense and the resulting Advices and Queries were challenging. These were read out in the course of our closing worship. We ended with a reminder that there is a place for optimism, as long as we use the power we have to ‘be the change’ – only half jokingly summed up as “Walk cheerfully over the world – in long johns”.

Roots and Shoots

Elizabeth Darlington (Aberystwyth) reports on the Meeting of Friends in Wales retreat on 14 April at St Paul’s Methodist Church, Aberystwyth

We were discouraged from making ‘notes’, so if anyone thinks they were at a different Quaker ‘Day’, they probably were not!

I was expecting a day of mostly meditation and silence, but it was actually a fairly busy workshop. It was conducted by Lizz Roe from Woodbrooke. Lizz used the image of a tree: what are our (own

personal) roots, what nourishes them, where are our new shoots, do any of them need pruning and, if so, is now the right time or not? Do our fruits look good and taste right to other people? We were to look at ourselves, reflect on what we saw, plan what to do next and promise ourselves to act on it.

Rather a tall order for one day, I felt, but Lizz reminded us that perhaps we do not need to be perfect. Perhaps we need to give ourselves permission to be 'good enough'. After silent worship, we played a game which made us mix and mingle. Among other things we were helping each other to find the one person who uses a bicycle frequently and the other one who had been to a live football match in the last five years (Lizz!). But we had our serious moments too. Lizz read us four stories – very short but very moving – and reminded us that good schooling uses story-telling as an effective teaching tool.



She used an apple cut into increasingly small pieces to illustrate the percentages of ocean/arable land (half of which has now been built on) and the teeny weeny bit that is available to the very many dispossessed and hungry people.

Towards the end of the day we had a real 'look at ourselves' in teams of four with a floor chart of the things we do that are both 'easy and effective', 'easy but not effective', 'not easy and not effective' and 'not easy but effective' – which usually attracted the most entries –but WHY did we think we *had* to do the things we found most difficult? And WHY do we undervalue the things we find easy? In my group we had to persuade one person to put "I'm a good listener" in the 'easy and effective' square as she didn't recognise or value in herself something that we all knew.

During a day of thinking about our own personal roots, how they are nourished and what they allow us to do, we each reached a few moments of real fellowship, reflection and cultivation.

Neges Ewyllys Da Plant Cymru

[Dafydd Jones tells how, shortly after the end of the First World War, the children of Wales sent a first message of goodwill, in Morse Code, to children and young people all over the world. Since then a message has been sent out on the same date every year – a total of 89 so far. The words and the medium have varied over the years, but the message of peace, co-operation, human kinship and care for our world remains the same.]

His article is followed by the message which was broadcast by radio on 18 May 1934. It is poignant that at a time when fascism was on the rise in Europe, Welsh children were hoping for "the world's nations to be drawn together as members of one great family".]

Are y 18fed o Fai 1922 anfonwyd neges, mewn côd Morse, oddiwrth blant Cymru at blant a phobl ifanc ledled y byd.

Hon oedd y Neges Ewyllys Da gyntaf. Yn 1924 cymerodd Yr Urdd gyfrifoldeb am ddarlledu'r neges trwy'r radio ac er pan anfonwyd y neges gyntaf honno yn 1922 mae 89 o negesion wedi eu hanfon, ar yr un dyddiad pob flwyddyn, at blant y byd gan blant yma yng Nghymru.

Mae geiriau'r neges yn amrywio o flwyddyn i flwyddyn ond yr hanfod pob tro yw pwysleisio'r angen i ymatal rhag rhyfel a thrais, cymell cydweithrediad heddychlon rhwng cenhedloedd ac annog gofal dros ein bydysawd.

Heddychwyr yma yng Nghymru, ac yn enwedig y Parchedig Gwilym Davies, fu'n gyfrifol am y neges gyntaf honno yn 1922. Erbyn heddiw ysgolion a mudiadau ieuenctid mewn gwahanol rannau o Gymru sydd yn paratoi ac yn darlledu'r neges dan ofal Yr Urdd.

Medrwn ymfalchio fod plant Cymru yn dewis anfon eu neges fel hyn trwy'r radio, ar bapur ac ar gryno ddisc at blant fel hwythau ym mhob rhan o'r byd. Wrth wneud hynny maent yn dewis gyfrannu at y ddelfryd o sicrhau heddwch, cydweithrediad a brawdgarwch trwy'r byd.

Neges Flynyddol Ieuenctid Cymru trwy'r Radio i'r Byd

O wlad fach y gerdd a'r gân, yr ydym ni, fechgyn
a merched Cymru, yn eich cyfarch chwi, fechgyn
a merched pob gwlad dan haul.

Llawenhawn wrth wybod y gall ein cyfarchiad eich
cyrraeth trwy'r awyr. Byd y rhyfeddodau yw ein
byd ni; bydd yn fwy rhyfeddol fyth pan chwelir
niwl y dyddiau hyn. Ymhyfrydwn yn yr harddwch
sydd yn y byd – harddwch y ddaear, y mor a'r awyr
– yr etifeddiaeth a berthyn i ni oll, yr etifeddiaeth yr
ydym oll yn un ynddi.

Ymhyfrydwn, hefyd, yng ngwroldeb yr arloeswyr o
bob gwlad a orchfygodd ofn a pherigl. Y mae
gweithredoedd dewr, megis ehedeg, fel y gwnaeth
Lindbergh, drwy'r nos
ar draws yr iwerydd,
yn peri balchter i ni
oll. Ymdrechwn, felly,
fechgyn a merched, i
sichrau y bydd i bob
buddigoliaeth ar
anawster dynnu ein
cenhedloedd yn nes at
ei gilydd fel aelodau o
un teulu mawr.

Tangnefedd ac ewyllys
da a fo i chwi oll, boed
i ni droi ein
breuddwyd yn ffaith.

Mai 18, 1934

Children & Young People's Advocates' weekend near the Wye

What do the Welsh Children & Young People's
Advocates do when they want to spend time
together? They have a girls' weekend!

We met at the home of Julia and Norman
Richardson near to Ross-on-Wye in mid July. On
Saturday we shared the news and challenges from
each of the AMs and were then joined by Isabel
Pebody, the Southern Marches Child Protection Co-
ordinator. This was a very useful session as we
were updated on the latest developments and able to
explore possible problems that may arise. The day
ended with a glorious walk with views of the

mountains and River Wye followed by yet more
delicious food. On Sunday we went to Ross
Meeting, returning home in the afternoon. It was
very special to be able to spend a longer more
relaxed time together, to get to know each other
better and to be surrounded by such beautiful and
peaceful surroundings.

*Kate Binney, Ros Morley, Sue Proudlove and Julia
Richardson (Kate Rastall was prevented)*

“It has this dreamy touch to it, which will make you love it”

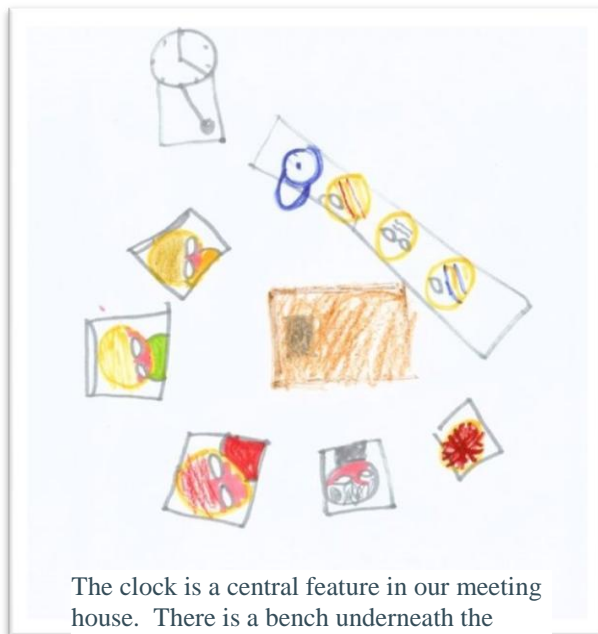
Off Road to Everywhere – children's poetry by
Philip Gross (Salt Publishing £6.99)

Book review by *Katie Nicoll aged 8, and her mum,
Corinna (Penarth Meeting)*

We took it on two camping trips;
to Aberystwyth and to Talgarth,
near Brecon, so the book itself has
been off-road in a tent in several
places across Wales! It's a slim
volume, though packed with a
huge variety of poems, so ideal for
slipping into your camping gear or
suitcase when on your travels. It
was fun to read a new kind of book
while trying out our new tent, as
Katie hasn't read much poetry
since AA Milne's *Now We Are
Six*, having moved on to Enid
Blyton and Jacqueline Wilson with
a vengeance. Both Katie and I
enjoyed trying out something new
and felt there were lots of poems to
enjoy now, and some to 'grow into' as
Katie got older.

Some of the poems were interactive and
encouraged us to get involved. When we read *Tide
Rising Near Tintagel*, Katie and I found ourselves
drumming hands against our knees and chanting the
words, as the poem repeated and grew like a rising
tide. We liked the expanding triangle shape the
poem made as the tide was rising, and the way it
changed shape as the tide started to turn. There were
other poems that were fun because of their shapes as
well, a couple of poems reminded us of chocolates,
as they were a diamond shape!

This is a great book to keep, as it has so many
different types of poems in it that you can enjoy and
read again and again throughout childhood and
beyond.



The clock is a central feature in our meeting
house. There is a bench underneath the
clock, then chairs arranged in a circle around
a central table with flowers on it.

**“Meeting through the eyes of a child”
drawn by Mabon MackWilliams**

Katie took notes in her sleeping bag by lantern-light as we were reading. This is what she wrote:

“This whole piece is extraordinarily creative and also is nice and relaxing. It has this dreamy touch to it, which will make you love it”.

One poem makes you feel like boats by the harbour, which is very quiet and still, with waves lapping gently up to the shore. Also, he describes what he is talking about really well in some of the poems.

There are a variety of different types of poems. The poem called ‘The Gopher’s Tale’ has some rhyming in it and is very funny indeed. In ‘Take a City’ they repeat the words like it is a chorus and it reminded me of a song. In Big Muddy Blues it’s got a message that you can’t be any further down than mud, but you’ve still got to be aware of it, because it might rise up and get you when the floods come.”

Rain in the Rhondda

(from Off Road to Everywhere)

Cloud like the mountains closing over.
Thunder thumps on the lid of the day.
Listen to the Law that needs no preacher.
Water knows knows how to fall.

Chains of rainfall, pump and piston,
clanking wheels of the hills’ machine.
What’s it for, this heavy labour?
Rain says nothing knows it all.

Schoolyard, graveyard, chapel, boozier
wake up blinking from a dream of coal.
Soothe the slag hills, green-grassed over.
Water knows knows how to fall.

Something flooded, drowned some, saved some.
A river of lives that’s turned to stone,
a ten mile street that leads to nowhere.
Rain says nothing knows it all.

Kingfisher flash and quick trout flicker.
No work’s washed the river clean.
What will we do with this fruitless beauty?
Water knows knows how to fall.

Rhondda flowing.
Children growing.
Rain says nothing knows it all.

Philip Gross

The meaning of friendship

The children’s meeting at Cardiff held a session on ‘Friends, friendship and friendliness’, run by Jan Felce. The children talked about the friends they have in school and outside - and said their names. What do they do with their friends? What do they like in their friends? Do they like different friends in different ways? What do they think their friends may like about them? Does it go wrong sometimes? Do they fall out sometimes? What about?

Quakers are also called the Society of Friends. "Friends of the Truth" but also just Friends and friends to one another. If we go to another Quaker Meeting when we are on holiday and they don't know us, they will treat us as friends.

Song (sung when children rejoined MfW):

*If you're friendly and you know it, say "hello"
If you're friendly and you know it, say "hello"
If you're friendly and you know it, and you really
want to show it,
If you're friendly and you know it, say "hello"*

If you're friendly and you know it, give a smile....

If you're friendly and you know it, shake my hand.

How do we show friendliness? eg. shake hands at end of meeting.



The children drew pictures of their friends, and pictures of Meeting for Worship to show the grown-ups.

Pitas (Pictures)

of Nanna and Grandad Oldridge, Gwenno and Verity



Southern Marches Area Meeting

Quaker Link Group

Residential Weekend at

The PALES Meeting House

29th - 31st October 2010

featuring a Saturday workshop provided by

THE LEAVENERS

£15 per participant

This weekend is open to all young people aged 11-18 in Southern Marches and neighbouring meetings.

If the cost is a problem, please ask overseers if support is available.

Bookings by mid September, please

Forms and details from Libby Hudson: libby.ehudson@gmail.com
104 Queensway, HEREFORD HR1 1HQ [Tel:01432-340134](tel:01432-340134)

Main topics: Cynaliadwyedd - Ysgogi Newid
Sustainability - Motivating Change

With / Gyda

Gwen Prince, Jeremy Thorp and Gabi Smith

Gweithio gyda Woodbrooke maeth ysbrydol

Working with Woodbrooke on spiritual nurture

Dathlu Ffordd y Crynwyr

Celebrating the Quaker Way

27th Oct 7.30 pm Windows for Peace Meeting :
The courage to listen: Working for dialogue in Israel/Palestine

Meeting to discuss setting up a "Windows for Peace" group in Wales. Temple of Peace, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3AP. Contact Jane Harries for further details: 01656 768910 (evenings) or ejharries@hotmail.com. Info about Windows for Peace can be found on

<http://www.windowsforpeaceuk.org/About%20Us.htm>

27th November Non-violence workshop An open one-day workshop on ***Playing with power: understanding and changing the system***, facilitated by Turning the Tide. Canolfan Steffan, Peterwell Terrace, Lampeter. Please contact Stevie for further details.

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THE DEADLINE FOR NEXT CALON:

Monday 15 November 2010

Theme:

**We will continue the theme of
Children, Young People and Education**

Editor's note: I'm happy to say that we have been overwhelmed with material for this special number, so we will continue the theme of children and young people in the next issue. New contributions will be welcome - especially from younger Friends.

For your diary

Sept 24th -26th Garden Work Camp. Milford Haven Friends invite you to help restore the Meeting House garden. Free self-catering accommodation. Details from Jean Lewis 01646 636472.

Quaker Week 2nd – 10th Oct

17 Oct 2nd Dance event at Lampeter 5pm, (Canolfan Steffan, Peterwell Terrace) – all welcome, both to Meeting for Worship and to the dance afternoon. Phone or email Stevie for details [see below]

30th October Meeting of Friends in Wales, 10.30 for 11am at Aberystwyth Quaker Meeting House