



Spiritual Hospitality

– what next?

Welcome to our special issue on outreach and the welcoming Quaker community. Some of you will remember the project that Meeting of Friends in Wales ran (with a little help from our Ffriends, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust) on Spiritual Hospitality – our name for all that Quakers do to make ourselves known to spiritual seekers, and to ensure that all those who come to a Quaker meeting feel welcomed and spiritually nurtured, irrespective of race, nationality, age, class, sexual orientation or any other aspect of identity.

Opening the Door, the project's report, was published back in 2003. After a flurry of interest and activity, the report seemed to sink without trace. But as Jesus pointed out, unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, nothing new can grow. A seed was sown, and signs of growth can be seen in many places. A number of meetings have participated successfully in National Quaker Weeks and in Quaker Quest. Quakers have been creative in their outreach, from starting mid-week meetings and Welsh-medium meetings for worship, to the Friend who used his hour on the fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square in London to raise the Quaker profile.

In this magazine you will find evidence of plenty of green shoots; we hope that, as this year's National Quaker Week comes round again, these stories will inspire you and give you new ideas. Successful outreach is only the first step – it's the vibrant and inclusive community we build inside the door that counts. Even the theme for Yearly Meeting Gathering (about to take place as I write) reflects that concern. Who knows - perhaps the seed we sowed in Wales had its influence there too!

Stevie Krayer, Editor

Sue Rhodes, who was recently welcomed into membership of South Wales Area Meeting, talks about her journey.

"Here I am at last!"

These were the words with which I greeted Ann Lewis in Bridgend Meeting on the first Sunday I attended and this was thirty-eight years after I first became aware of Quakers. So, where had I been all that time?

Having been brought up a Roman Catholic I attended a convent grammar school. At the age of eleven, I can remember stomping home one day muttering to myself, "That can't be right! That really can't be right!" What couldn't be right? That only Catholics went to heaven. The gulf grew wider until, in my late teens and leaving home for the first time to go to college, the hierarchical, paternalistic and formulaic nature of this organised religion became more than I could accommodate and I left.

For many years I was convinced that there was no God and that it was merely a human construct, the reasons for which I couldn't imagine. As I entered my middle years, I began to become aware of not so much something missing but of something being there to which I wasn't paying attention and this something kept giving me nudges until I did take notice. The natural world and my connection to this played a key role, as did Shamanism. A visit to a local Church in Wales who were advertising an "Open Church for Quiet Reflection" helped crystallise my direction. When I went in, there were parishioners cleaning, organising a Fair Trade stall, talking... "These people clearly don't understand "quiet" in the same way I do". Three weeks later I finally arrived at Meeting for Worship. "Ah, now then, these people really understand silence."



From my first meeting I knew I was in the right place for me. Others in meeting, several of whom I knew from other groups, were very welcoming and informative. I read extensively from the comprehensive library and chose to attend Premises Committee and several South Wales Area Meetings. All of this was testing that first and deep sense of rightness. Meeting for Worship changed for me following a quiet yet profound experience of the Light bodily moving into me so that I no longer experienced it as something separate. There had never been any doubts and I took this as further confirmation of my wish and need to make a public declaration of my commitment to my local meeting and the whole community of Quakers.

Just over a year later, in June 2009, I was accepted into membership. I have found my home, my community. Here I am at last!



Croeso Cynnes: apelio at y siaradwyr Cymraeg

Huw Meredydd Owen encourages Friends to consider the idea of weekday evening meetings as a spiritual home for Welsh speakers throughout Wales (and beyond).

Ar waethaf gweithredu'n ddwyieithog a bod yn sensitif iawn i le'r Gymraeg yng Nghymru heddiw, canfyddiad llawer o hyd yw mai corff braidd yn Seisnig yw'r Crynwyr. Mae hyn yn arbennig o amlwg ymhlith siaradwyr Cymraeg, ac yn codi, efallai, o le canolog y Gymraeg yn hanes crefyddol Cymru, ac anghydfurfiaeth, yn benodol.

Mae Cyfarfod Pwllheli a'r Bala wedi gweld yr angen i apelio yn uniongyrchol at y Cymry

Cymraeg mewn ardal lle mae'r Gymraeg yn gyfrwng beunyddiol. Er nad ydan ni'n defnyddio geiriau yn aml yn ein haddoliad, mae'n amlwg fod cyhoeddiadau, trafodaeth ac ymwneud cyffredinol y cyfarfod a'i gilydd yn lliwio cryn dipyn ar ei gymeriad, a'i gyd-destun diwylliannol.

Fe'n siarsiwyd mewn blynyddoedd diweddar i fod yn fwy croesawgar yn ysbrydol yn ein cyfarfodydd. Un o fannau cychwyn ein consarn oedd holi ein hunain sut oedden ni'n estyn y croeso hwnnw. Mewn ardal Gymraeg mae defnydd o'r iaith yn amlwg. Fel mae'n digwydd mae mynychwyr cyfarfodydd Pwllheli (heblaw un), Y Bala a Chaernarfon yn medru'r iaith, ac felly mae'n gymharol hawdd estyn croeso Cymraeg.

Mewn ardaloedd eraill mae angen patrwm gwahanol i gyrraedd siaradwyr Cymraeg. Ein hawgrym yw hysbysebu a chynnal cyfarfodydd ychwanegol ar noson waith yn benodol ar eu cyfer, yn agor drwy addoli am hanner awr gyda sgwrs i ddilyn, yn rhannu profiadau neu'n ymchwilio'n fwy haniaethol, ac felly'n cynnig cartref ysbrydol yn eu mamiaith. Byddai hyn yn ychwanegu at fywyd y cyfarfod ac yn weithgaredd ymestynnol gwerthfawr.

Ein gobaith yw gweld unigolion a chyfarfodydd ledled Cymru - a thu hwnt (pam lai?) - yn gweld sefydlu rhwydwaith o gyfarfodydd ar y patrwm hwn i gynnig croeso cynnes i siaradwyr Cymraeg.

www.crynwyrpwllheli.org

[Editor: Huw describes how Quakers living in the strongly Welsh-speaking north-west felt a need to do something extra to attract attenders whose mother-tongue is Welsh. Fortunately, almost all the attenders at Pwllheli, Caernarfon and Y Bala meetings are able to speak Welsh, so it was quite easy to offer a "Welsh-language welcome". In other parts of Wales – and there are Welsh-speakers in most areas - a different pattern may be needed. Huw suggests additional week-night meetings for worship through the medium of Welsh, lasting perhaps a half an hour with a short talk to follow (a sort of Welsh-language Quaker Quest?). Our Friends in the north hope to see a network of such meetings across Wales offering a warm welcome to all Welsh speakers.]

Welcoming change

Zélie Gross

December 2007. I'm at the annual tutor development weekend at Woodbrooke with something on my mind; a thought I have been nursing over several years of working with meetings, and as an elder in my own meeting, is suddenly very clear.

As often happens, it took a coincidence of events for this 'leading' to crystallise. That December was nine months after Philip and I moved to live in Wales. We were, and are, incomers; only from the other side of the bridge, but nevertheless gradually appreciating that this was a different country and that missing our home city was not the sum of our feelings of dislocation. A further significant part of that sum was moving from our very large meeting in Bristol to a small twice-monthly meeting, with a larger meeting nearby for those wanting to worship weekly. So we attended both meetings and mostly put how we felt down to that fact.

But there was something else. For the first time in over twenty years I was experiencing being a newcomer in my meeting. The more I noted my discomfort around that; the more I tried to understand the sense of being an 'outsider', the clearer it became: if this is how it can feel for a seasoned Friend, how much more of an outsider must someone new to Friends feel - and not just early on as it was for me, but continuing into weeks, months, sometimes years after as they attempt to work out what is going on, who is who, what all that jargon is about, what the unwritten rules are... and why is it that I don't feel properly included here?

The second piece of the jigsaw fell into place on Woodbrooke business later that year, when I experienced a breathtaking lack of welcome from a meeting so occupied with its own busyness that Friends had absolutely no awareness of how this would be perceived by an outsider. If that had been my first encounter with Friends, I would have concluded that Quakers were unfriendly, discourteous and clannish people - and I wouldn't have returned.

By the time of the Tutors' weekend I had a concern. The third piece of the jigsaw turned

up in a workshop where I found myself explaining all this to a Friend I hadn't met before. Deborah Rowlands smiled (a bit wryly I thought). "Have you heard of the *Spiritual Hospitality Project*?" So Deborah introduced me to Stevie Krayner, to complete the jigsaw, and with the insights we each brought we went on to develop a "Woodbrooke on-the-Road" course for meetings who are concerned to respond to the needs of all those feeling on the margins of a meeting, not only newcomers. This day-event, ***A Welcoming Meeting Community****, is tailored to address each meeting's particular circumstances, e.g. a high proportion of attenders or a change in the pattern of attendance - falling or rising, and offers practical help and ideas for creating a more inclusive and welcoming worshipping community.

But the course comes with a health warning: you might be successful. Our small meeting in Penarth is now not so small. We are attending to a number of things that make us more open and responsive (including meeting weekly) and building on a long-standing habit of naturally warm welcome; people like what they find and they come back. Recently a number of families with young children have found us a good place to worship. This is both brilliant and a challenge: it will make demands on our time, resources and energies; it will change us. We are mindful that - in embracing the way we are led, in pursuing what is being asked of us - the moment we achieve something, we will be asked to give of it. And if we say, 'no', the thing we so wanted to keep will have changed already.

****If you'd like to explore the possibility of inviting a Woodbrooke tutor to your meeting to work on this topic, contact***

offsite@woodbrooke.org.uk

Tel: 0121 415 6779



Inclusiveness: Friends and committed relationships

Meeting of Friends in Wales, meeting at Felinfach near Lampeter on 26 June focused on inclusiveness in relation to how we recognise and celebrate committed relationships within our Quaker communities. Bryn Jones reports.

A consideration of 'Friends and same-sex committed partnerships', helping to prepare hearts and minds for part of Yearly Meeting Gathering's agenda, formed the main item of business.

Christine Trevett introduced the subject, outlining the history of early Quaker marriage, and offered a short written summary of the Christian theology of marriage. For the first 300 years of our Quaker history, marriage was spoken of as being between a man and a woman, but we now need to consider how there may be more equality in the process of preparation, recognition and support for all couples in Quaker Meetings in Britain.

Five questions were considered separately in groups before coming together in worship-sharing. The lunch interval provided an opportunity for adding comments on post-it notes before the minute was drafted. These questions sought consideration of

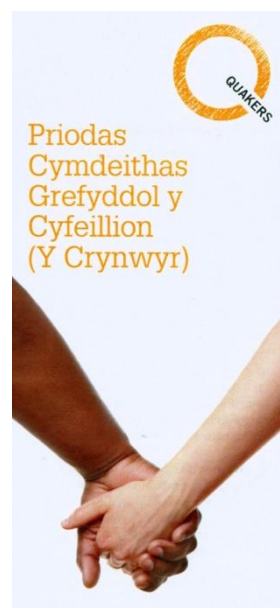
- the meanings we ascribe to "equality";
- the purpose of marriage;
- the importance of the language we use;
- how formal acknowledgement of such partnerships might be accomplished within our discipline;
- the pastoral care of couples in civil partnerships within the meeting.

Notes which Christine Trevett had prepared led us to consider the purpose of marriage – to create a fitting setting for the upbringing of children; to provide a framework for loving faithful sexual relations; and for companionship. (cf. the 1549 Prayer Book, from which most early Friends would not have demurred). If love is of God, should not all loving relationships help to bring us closer to God? If these are the intent of marriage, can we accept that they apply also to same-sex partnerships? If so, do they apply equally? If not, what are our reservations, and why? The meeting did not attempt to come to any conclusions, but to understand more

deeply our personal fears, expectations and values.

The meeting moved on to share ideas on how we might use the *Framework for Action* document to guide Quaker work in Wales over the next few years. The Assistant Clerk, Lynn Moseley, had summarised the responses received by the Recording Clerk's Office from Meetings in Wales, a summary of which has been circulated to local meetings. Working on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, we can co-ordinate activity in Wales, helping local Friends to pursue their stated concerns, drawing up a directory of work. Endorsing this exciting framework locally, our meetings can speak out more confidently for Friends. What is MFW's role in relation to the National Assembly? What have we to say about the Copenhagen climate change summit, for instance?

Proposals for organisational changes to our sub-committee structure so that MFW can become a more enabling structure as a resource to all Friends in Wales, requested last October, and the responses to these proposals, will be used to draw up terms of reference which will be brought back to MFW in October for approval. Clarification of the relationship between MFW and each area meeting, including the financial support from area meetings (which enables the work of MFW), needs to be recorded and recognised as a contractual agreement, possibly by a "Minute of agreement".



New leaflets available

We now have a new bilingual Enquirers Leaflet for circulation in Wales.

In addition leaflets on Quaker weddings and funerals have now been translated into Welsh and are available from:

Jules Montgomery Tel. 01970 832055
Email: quakersinwales.jm@btinternet.com

Long walk to York



Catherine James from Dolgellau explains why she decided to follow fellow Quaker Dorothy Owen's example and go to the movement's annual meeting on foot.

I've been putting together a pamphlet about the Quaker heritage in Dolgellau and I became really interested in Dorothy Owen.

She died in 1793 and was one of the ministers of the Quakers. That isn't the same as a church minister; it's someone who would go from meeting to meeting, inspiring the people to feel God's presence.

According to records kept by another Quaker, Josiah Wood - who kept notes on everyone and everything he saw on his travels - Dorothy walked right across Mid Wales. She also walked to the general meeting of the Quakers in London.

It would have been very expensive to have a horse in those days, and as Dorothy had given most of her money to pay for the meeting house in Tabor, I suppose she decided that the only way to go was on her own two feet.

As there's talk among the Quakers of living a simple life - like reducing your carbon footprint, these days - I decided to go on a journey like Dorothy. I thought it would be an opportunity to give over time to be with God. It's so easy not to realise that the spirit is with you when you're busy.

So I began my walk from the meeting house in Tabor, near Dolgellau, and set off for York. The general meeting of the Quakers is usually held in London, but sometimes it moves to other cities.

As I began the walk, I was accompanied by lots of my Quaker friends, which was a great

pleasure. Then, I had the different experience of being alone; although you're never really totally alone. The spirit was with me.

One of the most fantastic days was when I climbed up a hill when nearing Yorkshire. I'd left the familiar mountains and water behind and was facing a stretch of flat land before me; it really felt like I was entering a different country.

"I'm really looking forward to getting home and putting my feet up though."

I was joined by another friend for the last three days of the journey, which was a very good thing. I had been alone for so long that it was like having a bridge between that and walking into a meeting of 2,000 people!

I would advise taking a day's break every week or so though. I didn't, because I was worried about having so many miles to go, and my feet really hurt.



Spiritually, you need to concentrate on God; on the spirit. Speak to God, be quiet with God. See the creation around you. There's a saying amongst Quakers which says, 'rejoice in the splendour of God's permanent creation,' and I was able to do that as I walked.

I'm really looking forward to getting home and putting my feet up though. Dolgellau is such a special place to live for Quaker. As I walk around I'm always reminded of those brave people in the 16th century who stood up for everything they believed in, those who were prepared to lose everything to defend what they saw as the truth.

Catherine James

Experiences of a Plinther



Peter Davies of Bridgend Meeting describes the experience of being up on the fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square, as part of Anthony Gormley's "One and Other" project:

It was really too easy to apply for a place on the plinth, and I did so on a whim without any

thought of actually winning a place and what I might do up there. It was therefore a bit of a shock when One & Other emailed me to say that I had been allocated a slot at 5 p.m. on 13th July and I realised that *Something Must Be Done*. When I mentioned this to Friends at South Wales Area Meeting that Saturday in Bridgend, it became clear that that *Something* had to be some form of Quaker witness. Area meeting and local Friends were enthusiastic and a small unofficial Plinth group formed to move things along. The simplest and most appealing idea was a Quaker meeting for worship with a few Friends gathered at the base of the plinth. Local press, Friends House and *The Friend* were informed, and we began planning what might accompany me onto the plinth by way of publicity.

Well, what was it like to be Plinther? The experience of being up there on a fine if blustery late afternoon, with a unique view of the heart of London, was a combination of excitement and calm. The excitement came from the opportunity to take part in Anthony Gormley's project and turn it into something personal to my own Quaker faith. The calmness came from knowing what I wanted to do, that is, to be part of a Quaker meeting for worship, and knowing that I had the support of many Friends in doing this. It would have been fun and unforgettable if I had done this on my own, but being part of the gathered meeting made it really special for all involved.

Up there, it was noisy with so much traffic, the wind, the leaves rustling, the fountains gushing, and the sounds of people walking and talking around the Square. The previous Sunday, a Friend in our meeting had talked about these background sounds being part of our normal silent worship, however faint; I thought about this, and instead of it being a distraction, it helped me to take all the noise part of the meeting.

The quite proper warnings about putting a Quaker on a pedestal were well heeded. Thanks to all the publicity efforts by Bridgend and London Quakers and in *The Friend*, approaching a hundred Friends turned up which switched the focus of the meeting to the ground around the plinth, and not onto the one person on it. Passers by stopped or slowed down in respect for the silent crowd; many leaflets were given out, and were not left lying on the ground afterwards. Many stopped and asked what was going on.



It is thanks to all this that the meeting was so gathered, and that there was so much good outreach. And I enjoyed bringing a bit of Welsh flavour to the occasion.

(Photos: Trish Carn)

If we stay in the light, we will find spiritual energy to help us create new relationships and renew existing ones. In our dialogue and connections we are challenged to be inclusive, nurturing and constructive.

~ from the epistle from Yearly Meeting Gathering, York 2009

Face to face and side by side

*Mary Cook reflects on the Christian and Interfaith Practitioners' Association Annual Consultation, entitled **Face to Face & Side by Side**.*

As the title indicates, CIPA is mono-faith, but each member is passionately working for greater understanding, and integration between all. Within the delegates resides a wealth of knowledge of faith traditions and cultures, and experience of work in this field both in Britain and abroad. Yet regret was expressed that more people were not aware of CIPA's worth, and that few of the church's hierarchy attend the consultations. We had with us to talk about the government document "Face to Face and Side by Side" Canon Guy Wilkinson, who was described as the Archbishop of Canterbury's interfaith advisor. He talked about how faith language has developed over the last ten to fifteen years. Before that time we did not hear the government mention:

- faith sector
- faith schools
- faith forum
- interfaith
- multifaith
- faith communities

In public culture, "religion" can equate with conflict; Islam is seen as a problem – *but should we say so?* All religions must be treated as equivalent. Multifaith is best – the more the better, no excluding.

I am very grateful to QCCIR [Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations] for sending me for the past four years. It has been truly inspiring.

Offer of speaker

Having recently obtained his PhD – llongyfarchiadau, Dr Evans! – our Friend **Gethin Evans** is offering to give talks, in English or Welsh, to any meeting which might be interested in the topics he has been researching: These are:

- London Yearly Meeting in Wales in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods: examining its understanding and sympathy to Wales and Welsh identity. [Editor: *The main title of the thesis –*

Benign Neglect – *probably gives a clue as to how far that understanding and sympathy extended!*]

- The curious tale of the group known as Llain y Delyn at Y Tymbl, Llanelli. The group was formed in 1928 when the local Presbytery expelled the majority of the congregation at Ebeneser Calvinistic Methodist Church for supporting their minister, the Rev. Tom Nefyn Williams. The group at Tymbl received a lot of support from the Quakers and came close to being assimilated into Quaker structures. That this never happened is probably due to that same 'benign neglect' of things Welsh by Friends

If you'd like to know more, contact Gethin on 01970 610056

gethine45@tiscali.co.uk

NOTICEBOARD

Opportunities for Service in Wales:

Liz Butler, Convenor of MFW Nominations Committee, writes:

There are three opportunities to serve Meeting of Friends in Wales available at the moment.

1. **Assistant Treasurer** - with a view to becoming Treasurer at the end of the year. Jon Bell has kindly offered to guide the new appointee ready for them to take over.
2. **South Wales Representative** on Arrangements Committee.
3. **Governor of the Retreat.** A representative from MFW is needed, possibly with experience in mental health, who would be able to attend meetings in York.

Nominations Committee would greatly appreciate your help in finding people for these posts. If you have any helpful suggestions please contact Liz Butler 01654 703969 /

otters@smartemail.co.uk

For your diary

**This year's National Quaker
Week is 3rd -10th October**

18 October Lampeter & Llanybydder Meeting warmly invites you to a dance event. Normal meeting for worship at 10.45, followed by a shared lunch, then from 2-5pm an afternoon of live music and dance. Free of charge but contributions to expenses would be welcome. Canolfan Steffan, Peterwell Terrace, Lampeter.
Contact: Helen Adam 01269 850297

24 October Meeting of Friends in Wales
Llanelwedd near Builth Wells 10.30am - 4.30pm
Speaker: Geraint Hopkins [Cytûn Policy Officer]
on the churches witness to the world in Wales.

Dates for 2010 Suggested dates and venues are: -

February 27: Glantwymyn (Cemmaes Road)

June 26: Newtown

October 30: Aberystwyth or Llanfarian.

- Arrangements committee would welcome suggestions for topics or themes in 2010.
- We would like to have a residential event in south Wales in 2010 and ask for volunteers to organise this.

Please feel free to contact [Frank Brown](#) about either of the above points. Tel. 01824 704 277

A peace institute for Wales?

CND Cymru, Cynefin y Werin and others are approaching the National Assembly with a proposal for a Peace Institute for Wales.

The institute would be academically independent and would engage in research, education, information provision and networking on peace, conflict resolution and human rights. Many such institutes exist in Europe, Asia and the USA.

A petition to the National Assembly is being organised - if a petition form hasn't reached your meeting, there is still *just* time to add your name by emailing petition@cndcymru.org (closing date 30 September).

Quakers call for Unarmed Forces Day

As the government prepares for its first 'Armed Forces Day', Quakers are busy preparing themselves for peace. In recognition of the essential work carried out by peace builders around the world, Quakers in Britain are calling for an Unarmed Forces Day.

Quakers advocate putting energies and resources into developing and training for non-military ways of solving conflicts and averting wars.

Kat Barton of Quaker Peace and Social Witness says "It is widely agreed that conflict prevention is more cost-effective than sending in the armed forces."

HOW TO CONTACT US

We are keen to receive any articles, news, events, poems, and pictures, as well as any feedback. Please send your contributions to:

Editor:

Stevie Kraye, 1 Dolfor, Ciliau Aeron,
Lampeter SA48 8DE
01570 470947 stevie.kraye@care4free.net

Pictures to

Design, picture editor & production:

Jules Montgomery, Pennant, Bontgoch,
Talybont SY24 5DP 01970 832055
quakersinwales.jm@btinternet.com

Requests for more – or fewer – copies to

Distribution:

Dave Butler, Nant y Gwenill, Aberhosan,
Machynlleth SY20 8SQ 01654 703969

THE DEADLINE FOR NEXT CALON: Monday 16 November 09

The theme will be:
SUSTAINABILITY

