



Home is where we all want to be

The Dickens bicentenary has prompted me to return to novels I first read when I was still little more than a child. As an adult I am even more bowled over by Dickens' gifts as a writer and by his passionate concern for the plight of the have-nots, especially children. Re-reading *Bleak House*, I was struck by the controlled rage with which he described the hounding of the young and destitute crossing-sweeper Jo from doorstep to doorstep, and the indifference of society to his plight. That's what first gave me the idea of choosing the theme of housing and homelessness for this number of *Calon*.

We never talk about 'houselessness'. The state of being without a home is not primarily about bricks and mortar. As Jennifer Kavanagh, in *The O of Home* (now being reissued under the title *The Journey Home*), points out:

"Home is a central and emotionally laden concept. Sometimes it is a present reality. Sometimes it is a yearning for a childhood experience, real or idealised; sometimes it is a dream of something that has never been. In children's games it is the place of safety where nothing can touch you; on a computer, it is the personalised place to which you can return. In dream interpretation, a house is often seen as a symbol of the self, and is a key to how we regard ourselves.

Home is where we all want to be."

Quakers don't tend to go in for rage, but there is certainly passionate concern in the contributions to *Calon* this time round. They seem to me exceptionally moving and thought-provoking. I hope they will seem so to you.

Stevie Krayner
Editor

P.S. In this edition of *Calon* all the images are from the aerial photography of Yann Arthus Bertrand.



Yann Arthus-Bertrand – Favelas in Rio de Janeiro

'Home'

Our ultimate home is, of course, the planet itself. Brian Jackson (St David's) has been watching the film Home by Yann Arthus-Bertrand on YouTube.

Taking the bigger picture, the planet is our home and the film by Yann Arthus-Bertrand takes just that perspective and holds back no punches. It's a film of truly stunning aerial shots and he takes us on a sensational journey above 50 countries.

The journey, filmed around 2009, takes us from the primeval cauldron of erupting volcanoes producing hot springs where life began, to today's massive metropolises. Some cities such as Shenzhen, which was a small fishing village in 1979, is now home to 10 million people. In my experience of travelling to China and India such cities house those who have great wealth; however, by far the largest numbers of people are incredibly poor. In Mumbai I have walked around the slums where thousands, probably millions, live in homes made from scraps, mostly cardboard and remnants from the large rubbish tips. A massive migration is taking place from the country to the cities and the film makes the point that the great shifts in population arise from the need to survive rather than to prosper. Half the world's wealth is in just 2% of the population and

1 billion people go hungry in a world population that has tripled in size since 1950.

The film shows the changes to the planet in deforestation, melting ice and desertification as humans unlock and release the carbon in the earth in their hunger for energy, demanding more and more resources for goods and services. *Home* predicts that by 2050 there will be 200 million climate refugees. This surely is the biggest threat to world peace as the 'rich' will protect what they consider to be their 'interests'. Many cities house huge populations which, if the sea rises as predicted, will have to migrate. The film shows the tar sands in Alberta, Canada which will produce catastrophic pollution if the extraction of oil continues; a powerful lobby in the USA wants to exploit the tar sands which will be an issue in the Presidential elections.



Yann Arthus-Bertrand – *Hot Spring*

Here are a couple of examples of the range of opinions which can be found by a quick search on Google:

“What Chevron Is Doing. Effectively retrieving oil from sand is a tough challenge. Chevron is using its vast resources of technology and expertise to bring this energy source to market.”

National Geographic Magazine describes this tough challenge: 'To extract each barrel of oil from a surface mine, the industry must first cut down the forest, then remove an average of two tons of peat and dirt that lie above the oil sands layer, then two tons of the sand itself. It must heat several barrels of water to strip the bitumen from the sand and upgrade it, and afterwards it discharges contaminated water into tailings ponds like the one near Mildred Lake. They now cover around 50 square miles ’”

Other websites describe tar sands as “the Most Destructive Project on Earth”.

Where do we stand on this issue? According to *The Guardian* the UK government has been giving secret support at the very highest levels to Canada's campaign against European penalties on its highly polluting tar sands fuel. At the same time, the UK government was being lobbied by Shell and BP, which both have major tar sands projects in Alberta, and opened a new consulate in the province to "support British commercial interests".

My view is that if this project goes ahead we will bring forward the most severe climate change predictions and our 'Home' will be irrevocably damaged.

The film starts with the words: 'Listen to me please, you who are like me, a homo sapiens, a wise human. Life, a miracle in the universe, appeared around 4 billion years ago and we humans only 200 thousand years ago, yet we have succeeded in disrupting the balance that is so essential to life. Listen carefully to this extraordinary story which is yours and decide what you want to do with it.'

The film ends saying that it's too late to be a pessimist. Views are shown of an impressive array of renewable and sustainable projects around the world; we have the knowledge. Then the challenge. It's time to come together. What's important is not what's gone but what remains. We all have the power to change, so what are we waiting for? It's up to us to write what happens next. Together.

In my view an excellent film. 'Home' has been produced for you and is free on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKa eCU>

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.

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Yann Arthus-Bertrand *Shenzhen*

Supporting asylum seekers

Joan Darbyshire (Swansea) has been volunteering for a scheme called Homestart which supports families with small children, who are seeking asylum.

I started several years ago when I felt sad because I knew I would never have a grandchild. I saw a letter in SAGA magazine headed “Frustrated Grandmother” extolling the joy and satisfaction of working for Homestart. I thought that’s a good idea and then forgot about it, as you do. But a few weeks later an article appeared in our local paper asking for more volunteers for the local Homestart scheme. I knew then I was being called to volunteer and I have never regretted it. As I have a background in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages to mothers in the community, I said I’d be happy to support asylum seeker families, quite a few of whom were on the scheme’s waiting list. I myself am the daughter of refugees from Nazi Germany, so I felt an affinity with them.

Imagine being far, far away from friends and family, waiting to hear whether you will be granted refugee status or be sent back to danger in the country from which you came. It is incredibly stressful. Mental health problems often result from the waiting, that and the stories about those who are taken away in the early hours of the morning to be held in detention centres and then forcibly deported.

I have promised confidentiality, so I won’t give any names or personal details about the families. When they came to the UK and claimed asylum, they started off living near friends or family or similar communities, but were then dispersed to other towns. The first family I visited was housed at the far edge of a small town up the valley, a bus ride from even the most simple shops and with no one

from an ethnic minority community anywhere near them. English classes were miles away, as were Asylum Seekers Support groups. They had no choice and the money they received was barely enough to feed the family, so bus fares to local amenities were a luxury. When their asylum application was turned down the mother had become very depressed and reluctant to leave the house. She couldn’t sleep for fear that the immigration police would take them all away, even though they were in the middle of an appeal. She had heard this had happened to others. Father felt helpless, he couldn’t support his family and this was a source of humiliation for him, even though he did voluntary work. Both tried to keep their feelings away from the children so as not to upset them and I admired how well they managed it.

Visiting regularly, I was able to take the mother and the littlest child to a playgroup or to places of interest in the city. I was around when the immigration police came one afternoon to deport the family. Fortunately I was with the father and older child at the bus stop waiting to go to town (I was given expenses for them if they travelled with me). We phoned the mother to warn her and told her not to open the door or make a sound. We prayed the little one wouldn’t cry. We watched as the immigration police knocked on the door and waited and then they left just as our bus arrived. Now the parents were really scared; others had been taken from that house previously without any belongings or even toys for the children. We put the phone number of a contact into the father’s mobile phone and said that if they came back again he should quickly ring to let us know before his phone was confiscated. All the confidence the mother had gained was lost again and I struggled to keep her on an even keel. Eventually after two years the family got leave to remain and are now trying to cope as refugees. I am still in contact with them although I don’t visit regularly any more.

Another family was housed in a Local Authority estate not far from the city. Again I was sent to the family because the mother was suffering from depression due to the uncertainty. It would have been really dangerous for them if they were sent back, but she missed her parents, siblings and extended family very badly. I took her and the youngest child out and helped her with her English, anything to distract her from the prolonged waiting and uncertainty. The children were lovely but remarks made by the older ones made me realise what a terrible situation they had left behind. I once

told them about having to use crutches when I broke my ankle and one of them said lots of children back home used crutches because their legs had been blown off.

We shared the anguish of their being turned down for asylum, appealing and being refused again and then trying once more with another solicitor. At least there was other support for the family in the city, such as counselling and an Asylum Seekers Support group where they could meet others in similar situations and enjoy themselves with socials and outings together. I was with the mother when at last the news came that the family had limited leave to remain. We both cried with joy.

It hasn't been easy for them, though, being refugees. The benefits system is complex, with lots of forms to fill in, and very slow, so that for a time they had very little money even though utilities etc had to be paid for. Getting work is very difficult too. The fathers of both families have been trying hard to find jobs. The first family's father did have work but that has dried up so he is now unemployed. At least that family has indefinite leave to remain, but my latest family will have to apply for a further visa in two years time. So there is still uncertainty. I pray they will be allowed to stay for good.

Living our Testimony to Equality and Social Justice in the field of Social Housing

Lynn Moseley (Penarth) shares her experience of work in the social housing field.

I became an architect because as a youngster I wanted to create beautiful and efficient buildings, but early in my career in the late sixties in industrial South East Wales I became conscious of the overwhelming importance of the social and political climate in which I worked. Two overriding priorities gripped society at that time; meeting housing need and providing employment opportunities. As politics were dominated by the Labour party these priorities were pursued exclusively through state capital investment regulated by a vast bureaucracy. I became closely involved in delivering these programmes through

consultancy work for local authorities and the Welsh Office.

Little thought was given in those days to the varied nature of housing needs and even less to the wider implications of concentrating provision on large housing estates in peripheral locations, often on steep marginal land. All too soon the consequences of gathering together the most deprived families in isolated communities with large ratios of young children to responsible adults began to be felt. These notorious estates are still with us, vast sums still being spent on seeking to overcome their basic flaws. One such estate in the Cynon Valley was in my time, for obvious reasons, known by the locals as 'Machu Pichu, the lost city of the Incas'. I felt that I was relatively powerless to develop a more holistic and humane approach to social housing. The decisions that mattered were to do with politics, finance and planning, over which such as I had little influence.

In 1974 however a new Housing Act was passed and although its provisions were still essentially state centred, it encouraged the involvement of communities in the way they were housed. A new voluntary sector emerged of charitable Housing Associations, some community based, run by imaginative professionals. The need for change had been highlighted by a BBC1 play about a homeless family by Ken Loach, 'Cathy Come Home', broadcast in 1966. Two major charities were launched at about the same time, Crisis and Shelter.

These developments had a major influence on my life and career as in 1975 I was asked to work as a consultant for a community run association in Cardiff formed in opposition to the City Council's proposals for wholesale demolition of a run-down inner city community to make way for a new road. Over a period of ten years I became a leading practitioner in the field of housing rehabilitation throughout South Wales. Through this work I made contact with others in the field, so that when the time came in 1986 for me to start a new life it was a large Inner London charitable Housing Association that I joined, first as Technical Services Manager and subsequently in 1989 as Development Director.

My arrival in London coincided with the passing into law of the 1988 Housing Act, which had an effect even more profound than the 1974 Act. This measure by the Thatcher government swept away the bureaucratic funding and control systems based on 100% capital government funding that had been built up by successive governments since the war and replaced them with a mixed funding regime

under which Housing Associations were expected to raise a significant proportion of funding from the private sector. The interest cost of this private finance would need to be met from rents.

Accordingly the concept of fair rents was abolished and replaced with that of affordable rents, which were of course significantly higher. To deal with the problem of affordability by the very poorest means tested housing benefit was significantly increased. This is the regime which pertains to this day.

Despite some of the more regressive effects of the 1988 Act however I think that its provisions were on the whole progressive. The charitable Housing Associations that took over the role of Local Authorities as the providers of social housing attracted idealistic and capable people both as voluntary board members and staff. Committed to equal opportunities and tenant participation, they became beacons of excellence not only in the voluntary sector but across industry.

When I returned to Wales on retirement in 1997 I was keen to continue my work in a voluntary capacity and so agreed to join the board of a group of similar charitable organisations in Newport which provides not only family housing for rent funded under the mixed funding regime of the Welsh Government but also low cost housing for sale, rent or shared ownership funded through innovative partnership arrangements with local authorities and house builders. The aim is to build a network of mixed communities integrated into the existing urban fabric where it is not possible to tell how individual homes are paid for. There are charitable companies in the group that provide care for the elderly and for people with particular difficulties, either in their own homes or in purpose designed communities. Tenants and clients are treated with respect and represented on our committees.

The current political and social policy context within which we seek to live out our Testimony to Equality and Social Justice has changed out of all recognition during my working life. I have been privileged to have been involved in devising and managing imaginative responses to these changes over the years.

What is the economy for? Finding and following a vision

Frances Voelcker (Porthmadog) reports on Meeting of Friends in Wales held at Cemmaes Road on 25 February 2012:

Question: *In a world full of wrongs clamouring to be put right while work, friends and family need attention, is a day of Quaker business the best use of your precious time?*

Answer: *Yes, when the business is the consideration of a central wrong, affecting work, friends and family.*

This was the case when Tony Weekes of South Belfast Meeting came to talk to us in Glantwymyn (Cemmaes Road) near Machynlleth. The ‘ordinary’ business that can eat up the day served instead to prepare us for his presentation and the discussion that followed. We were reminded by the reports from Meeting for Sufferings (December 2011 and February 2012) of our commitment to living more simply, so that the world can sustain others after us; that we must support BYM more generously if we want planned central work to continue; the need to discern when radical resistance to the state is right; the themes for Yearly Meeting 2012 – ***Economic Justice and Environmental Sustainability***, and ***What it means to be a Quaker***. We received the MFW Trustees annual report, covering activities and costs; we considered the bilingual posters and new Welsh leaflet, our participation in Cytûn (Churches Together) and in the great cultural festivals, the Urdd (youth) Eisteddfod, the National Eisteddfod, and the Royal Welsh Agricultural show; we saw a new DVD in Welsh about Friends in Wales (it will have English subtitles.)

So, by the time Tony spoke to us, we were well primed: at the top of our thoughts were identity, participation and sharing. Tony asked “*Do we believe that all that counts is what can be counted? What are our needs?*” He offered the list devised by the Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef¹ of nine basic human needs:

- **Subsistence**

- **Protection/security**
- **Affection**
- **Understanding**
- **Participation**
- **Leisure**
- **Creativity**
- **Identity/meaning**
- **Freedom**

Now, each of these covers a spectrum – for instance, participation is partly fulfilled by meaningful work, and partly by responsive democracy – but few of these needs are addressed adequately, if at all, by the current dominant economic models.

The real economy is social not scientific

Tony reminded us that the economy is a socio-political system, with a strong ethical element. If there are any economic “rules,” then these are ephemeral, reflecting the culture from which they spring. In an effort to be regarded instead as a scientific discipline, economics has developed elaborate mathematical models to describe how markets ‘should’ operate that unfortunately do not bear much relation to reality, because markets are about human behaviour.

Language

We are made to feel economically illiterate and helpless by the esoteric use of language by professional economists and marketers. Governments and media alike use economic language carelessly, using terms such as “growth” and “efficiency” that have specific meanings in economic theory distinct from the meanings in everyday parlance. For instance, strictly speaking, “economic competition” requires a dozen conditions that are rarely met in real life. The debate has become trivialised, confined to what can be measured, such as the volume of retail sales or the FTSE index of share prices. An increase in the amount of money in the system is presented as economic growth and seen as good, because money, which is only a means of exchange (and is actually almost all debt), has come to be regarded also as a store of worth, and then, to have a value in and of itself.

Various governments are working on “happiness” indexes. This at least tries to focus on quality not quantity, although it is highly debatable if the most important things in life can be measured. ²

Where is the Economic literacy?

Do we want “an economy”, or do we want “a society”? Look in any standard book on economics for the word “competition” and it will appear many times; look for the word “co-operation” and it will not appear at all. The proper task of an economy is to provide or enable what a society wants, long term. We need an effective public sector. ³ The talk in all government and all public realm circles is still, primitively, of “economic growth”, while the real crisis is less the financial (public) debt than the ECOLOGICAL debt. Good governance includes caring for the commons of the whole earth, for the whole earth. ⁴

The way forward

Inform ourselves on banking reform ⁵; on citizen’s income ⁶; on reducing waste (of energy, stuff, people’s abilities)⁷; look at the Positive Money Campaign ⁸

Action:

Move money from mainstream banks to The Charity Bank, Triodos or Ecological Building Society

Look for local social enterprises that offer Community Shares ⁹

Community Supported Agriculture – help farmers and other producers avoid the mainstream banks. ¹⁰

Tony would like to engage with others in developing a Quaker position on economic issues: his e-mail is tony.weekes@gn.apc.org Join the discussion on the Quakernomics website www.quakerweb.org.uk

Tony Weekes taught economics at York University until he resigned in 1993, unhappy with the direction in which the discipline was moving: passing of exams in jargon/dogma with no understanding of how the world really works. He was Ferguson Fellow at Woodbrooke 2007-2008. His first intention was to study sustainability issues but in discussion he found the greater need was to engage with the economy. He and others in South Belfast Meeting are currently working with TU members, academics and others in developing a Centre for Progressive Economics.

¹ Manfred Max-Neef & Philip Smith *Economics Unmasked – from power and greed to compassion and the common good* (Green Books, Totnes, 2011)

- 2 Joseph Rowntree Trust
www.jrf.org.uk/publications/minimum-income-standard-britain-what-people-think
- 3 For responsive government, see David Orr
www.ratical.org/globalize/4CofS.html Social justice and equality
www.socialjustice.ie/content/briefing-basic-income-2002
- 4 Development not Growth: Rocky Mountain Institute
www.rmi.org
- 5 Banking reform see work by New Economic Foundation and Compass's work
<http://goodbanking.org.uk>
See also Triodos Bank www.triodos.co.uk
And English pages of German GLS Bank
www.gls.de/die-gls-bank/ueber-uns/gls-bank/english-portrait.html
Dutch bank ASN www.asnbank.nl/index
- 6 Citizen's Income see
www.citizensincome.org/index.html
- 7 Reducing waste
www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org
- 8 Ben Dyson www.positivemoney.org.uk
- 9 Co-operative ventures
www.communityshares.uk.coop
- 10 Community Supported Agriculture
www.communityforestfarm.co.uk]

Not only the dark

Ever heard of WordAid? Me neither, until recently. But I'm very glad to learn of its existence. To quote its website, it is a 'collective of published poets working together to raise funds for charity'. The reason I'm telling you about it in this issue of *Calon* is to let you know about their latest anthology, called *Not only the dark*. Proceeds will go to the international diasaster-relief charity ShelterBox, which provides emergency shelter and lifesaving supplies for families around the world who are affected by disasters, at the time when they need it the most. In the 11 years of their existence they have responded to almost 200 natural or manmade disasters in 75 countries.

However, I commend this anthology to you on more than charitable grounds. If you love poetry, you'll

find 160 outstanding poems to savour in this book, some by unknowns, others by the likes of Pascale Petit, Michael Laskey, Mimi Khalvati and many more, including of course some Quaker poets. The theme is survival and the poems cover every possible aspect of the theme, in every conceivable way, from the chilling to the heartrending to the uplifting. One of my favourites is Patience Agbabi's *Wife of Bafa*, a hilarious Nigerian reincarnation of Chaucer's Wife of Bath.

To give you a flavour of the quality of this book, here is a poem by *Anne Cluysenaar* of Caerleon Meeting. This poem is taken from her fifth collection, a poem-diary to be called *From Seen to Unseen and Back*, from Cinnamon Press in 2014.

A Marsh Arab Returns To Eden

The net, so fine, so white, fans out
between the reeds, over shallows so clear,
when he was a boy - not now - that he
and his father could see the fish they would catch.

But still, he leans from his boat, full of joy,
as he throws the net, though a flush of snow-melt
no longer washes the silt, the salt,
from his marshes - but still, that wind in the reeds!

From seeds they grew, lived on like memories
in land that was drained to desert, and now
they've risen, and birds come back in their
thousands
as if coming back from another world.

For ever is not the point. Never can be.
It's all for now. To have been again.
The water, the nature, the fish and the birds.
It was the best feeling I have ever had.

To order a copy of *Not only the dark*, visit www.wordaid.org.uk or send a cheque for £12 to Categorical Books, 79 Margate Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7BH.

For more information on ShelterBox, go to www.shelterbox.org SLK

Y Ffordd Dawel? The Quiet Way?

Our newly created DVD is being circulated to all local meetings in Wales. It's a beautiful film following the conversations of 5 friends sharing their personal testimonies about what the Quaker Way means for them. It can also be seen through links on our websites and on our Youtube site:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/QuakersinWales>.

Spare copies of the DVD are available from our administrator: quakersinwales@quaker.org.uk

Celebrating the Quaker Way in Wales

We aim to publish two books, one in Welsh and the other in English. They will contain contributions from Friends which will inspire, encourage or offer comfort to others. Pieces can be in verse or prose, in either language and, because we want to encourage Friends to contribute freely, will be published anonymously. Alternatively, you may wish to share a favourite verse, refer to music or the visual arts which have helped you to be open to the Spirit or bring you inner peace.

Our theme is the spiritual journeys of friends, and particular crossroads along the way. In addition, we wish to hear of ways in which Friends live what they believe. We have taken a river's journey from its source, to the sea as our inspiration for the structure of the book, our images and design and as a metaphor for our spiritual lives.

For example: The journey starts in youth, in the high boggy hollows, where the steams erode channels through small trickles and gurglings. At times, the journey is slow but soon, picks up speed, avoiding rocks and overcoming barriers, passing under bridges and under mountain walls. It gathers speed, constantly, moving down slope over difficult outcrops. It passes through many challenging situations and obstacles to its path. Occasionally, sustaining wells used by early travellers are found nearby. These need regular maintenance if they are to nourish those who travel along the way. The river's flow is sometimes unexpectedly rapid and rough, then calm and peaceful, sometimes divided and put to other uses, such as a mill. The journey never stops, but continues until it reaches the lowlands where conditions change. Here the problem is protection from the sea and from floods. Occasionally defences are overcome by tides and unexpected conditions beyond our control. The river continues, becoming slow and sluggish, reflective and calm. Even here, at the end, the tiny grains eroded on the way become useful sediments, enriching and creating new salt marshes and new life.

We hope we have encouraged you to feel like contributing to the books. We will welcome short and longer pieces and will select pieces that best fit

in with our theme. Pieces which are not used may well find a home in Calon or on our website.

Friends are invited to send contributions in either language by 30th July to Rhian Parry, Tytandderwen, Pencefn, Dolgellau, LL40 2ER; barryg.allcott@btinternet.com

FOR YOUR DIARY

21 May Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta will speak about her book, *Refusing to be enemies: Palestinian and Israeli nonviolent resistance to the Israeli occupation* (an interview-based study which presents the voices of over 100 mostly Palestinian or Israeli practitioners and theorists of nonviolence) 7.30pm at Swansea FMH. All welcome.

23 June Meeting of Friends in Wales Paul Parker on 'The Future of Quakers in Britain' Meifod Village Hall

21 July Living the Quaker Way Woodbrooke-on-the-Road series. The Pales FMH 10.15am - 4pm. With Ben Pink Dandelion. £25, please book by 6 July

27 October Meeting of Friends in Wales Canolfan Steffan, Peterwell Terrace, Lampeter.

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THE DEADLINE FOR NEXT CALON:

11th July 2012

Open theme – all contributions welcome

We are keen to receive any articles, news, events, poems, pictures, and feedback.
