

Being a Friend in Wales

Some of you will know that, yet again, David and I have moved house – for the final time, we hope. After over twenty years in West Wales, we have settled in the East, to be nearer our family. The move has prompted a lot of reflection about belonging, identity and roots.

This is something I've always struggled with, as a descendant of immigrants. My 'home town' was London, an eccentric, sprawling, roaring jumble of a city which in my youth I loved with a passionate loyalty (until I fell out of love with its dirt and noise and unfriendliness). So a Londoner, perhaps, but I never quite felt English or British, and these days, much as I love my adopted country and despite the welcome that Wales has offered me, I can't quite feel I have the right to think of myself as Welsh.

Part of the reason for that is because I sensed that the people around me had deep roots in their particular locality; their milltir sgwar (square mile) – a phrase, according to Mike Parker who wrote the Rough Guide to Wales, 'much used in Welsh to define your patch of land, the place that created you, the location that tugs your heartstrings when hiraeth – another uniquely Welsh concept for a yearning that is tied to a particular place – kicks in.' I remember once, on a visit to my husband's cousin in the Rhondda, his young sons asserted vehemently that nothing would ever induce them to leave the Valleys. What a contrast to the migrants, wanderers and restless souls I grew up among in London!

Giving a poetry reading in Somerset recently, I was asked a question about living in Wales. I surprised myself not so much by the fervour of my thankfulness to be living here – where better for a poet? – as by the joy that bubbled up as I asserted that now I would never live anywhere else but Wales. And although Crickhowell is not the most Welsh part of Wales, it is Wales still. But I'd better be careful – I'm in danger of turning into the Reverend Eli Jenkins!

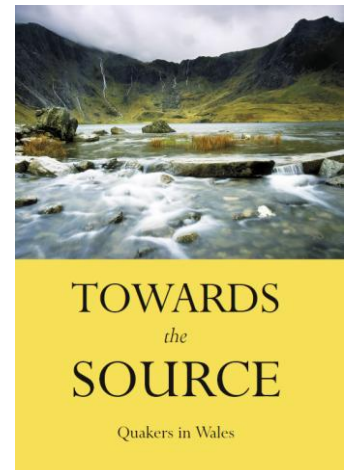
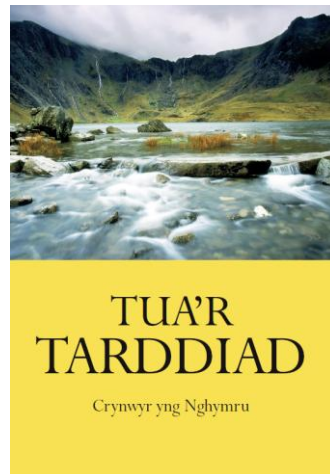
... But let me choose and oh! I should
Love all my life and longer

To stroll among our trees and stray
In Goosegog Lane, on Donkey Down,
And hear the Dewi sing all day,
And never, never leave the town.

SLK

Our spiritual journeys as Quakers in Wales

- Book review



Tua'r Tarddiad Towards the Source

(*Cyfarfod y Cyfeillion yng Nghymru/Meeting of Friends in Wales 2014; £8 each*)

The two latest books from Meeting of Friends in Wales were published in March and distributed to schools, local libraries and local meetings in Wales. They have already attracted a lot of favourable comment – including from some schools. More than £1000 worth were sold in the first three weeks and it was one of the Quaker Centre's books of the month for April. A launch event at Yearly Meeting Gathering is being planned. Your editor reviews the books below:

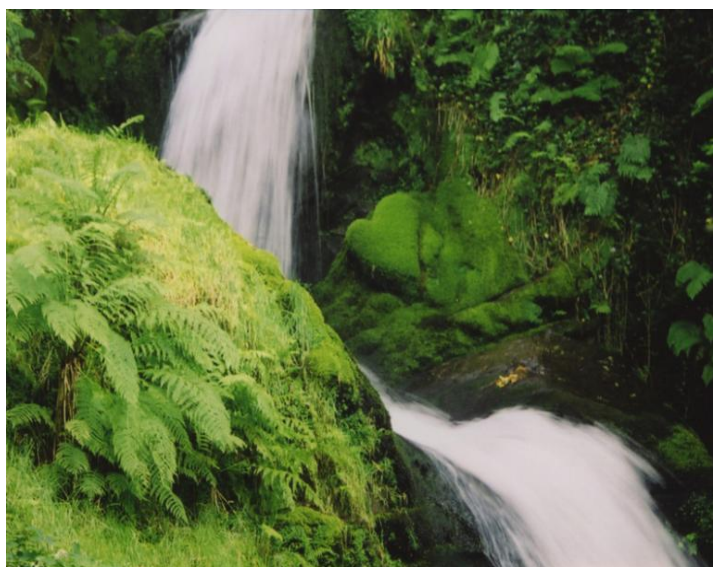
From the moment I picked up these beautiful anthologies and began to dip into them, I made up my mind not to hand them over to someone else to review. I get through so many books; it's always a temptation to gobble up each one quickly and move

on, like a taster menu where you forget the treats you had earlier in your enjoyment of the next course, and the next. The responsibility of reviewing made me slow down, re-read, mull over the words and the ideas. And what a profound and rewarding experience that was!

Philip Gross is quoted on the back cover as saying:

“... it is not in generalities and theories but through the specific, the different, the personal voices of many individuals that the heart of things speaks.”

Of course he is quite right. But to me, the striking thing about these two books is that – despite the very varied backgrounds, experiences and spiritual understandings expressed in these prose passages and poems, the two languages and the highly individual styles of expression – an extraordinary unity emerged, almost as if it were a single voice. (The fact that most contributions were anonymous may have fed that impression.)



Perhaps a better analogy would be the image of a river that runs through the books themselves, sometimes almost subliminally (not the least of its delights are the beautiful photos and illustrations that seem to enter into a sort of imaginative dialogue with the written material.) The sounds made by running water are infinitely varied; yet it is one song, from source to estuary.

So what is that song? I think Quakers anywhere whose worship is based in silence – and in service – will recognise it. There are chapters in these books that feel like a meeting for worship; the different contributions follow on from one another like spoken ministry. Even when apparently pursuing different tracks they come together to form a satisfying and uplifting conclusion. This of course is largely to the credit of the compilers, who chose so

well and interwove the contributions with such intelligence and care. But it is also intrinsic in the material.

However, the books are subtitled ‘Quakers in Wales/Crynwyr yng Nghymru’. Apart from the fact that one version is in Welsh, is there anything here which is distinctively Welsh as well as Quaker?

One of the contributors speaks of the residential weekends of MFW having a ‘subtle and sensitive nature of their own’ which is partly to do with the beauty of the surrounding landscape, but also to do with how Meeting of Friends in Wales warmly offers incomers as well as Welsh-born Quakers a way of being in Wales, of belonging here, a way to cross the threshold and enter sympathetically into the spirit of the people and the country. My own experience certainly bears that out. The same contributor continues:

I learned to stand and look out from the heart of Wales, to listen to Welsh Friends as they shared their nation’s treasures and its hurts, before I began to understand how it must feel to be invisible, to have one’s culture and history ignored and trashed....

Angela Arnold, who has recently moved from Scotland to Wales, suggests below that whereas for Scottish Friends there is a strong political element in their identity, Welsh Friends base theirs predominantly in the culture, including the language. I think she may have put her finger on the source of the almost indefinable distinctiveness of Quakers in Wales that gives their gatherings a subtly different character from other Quaker bodies. This difference is clearly reflected in these volumes, not least in the chapters ‘People in Wales who have inspired us/Pobl yng Nghymru sydd wedi ein hysbrydoli’. I was moved to find tributes to Friends I had known personally, as well as eminent figures from the past.

But these are not just books for the private enjoyment of familiar Friends. The emotional power, thoughtfulness, quiet passion, accessibility and honesty that characterise these offerings will undoubtedly reach out and touch the hearts of anyone who reads them. Here is a ‘feast of fat things full of marrow’ to enrich reflection and deepen spiritual life.

We reprint below two extracts, to give some of the flavour of these very special publications:

Arwyddocâd bod yn Grynwr yng Nghymru heddiw

Cofleidio noethni ysbrydol; chwilio am y gwir gynefin lle nad oes geryn i guddio ynddo. Chwilio am fod yn glos gydag eraill mewn hinsawdd oer, y byd ysbrydol dan warchae a 'llanw ffydd ar drai'. bod yn agored i wres y Goleuni, a'i weld mewn eraill, cydgerdded.

Tystiolaethu i ffyrdd y gallwn adnabod bodolaeth y Dwyfol drwy gymdeithas, mewn heddwch ac yn gyfiawn. Amcanwn at fyd heb ymerodraethau na chynni na chyffion.

Creu sydd yn codi o'r dwfn ac yn ein cydio at ein gilydd. Gweld yr haul 'sydd tu hwnt i'r haul'. Clywed cathl mewn bytheiriad a'i dynnu atom. Taenu'r rhwydwaith ddirgel, a rhoi cymorth i bobl adnabod eu gwir hunain, yn hyderus a chyfoethog.

Chwilio am y Gwir Ystyr ac nid dim ond mewn ffurfiau a geiriau, yn gweu drwy Ymchwil eraill sydd, o bosib, yn dod o gyfeiriadau gwahanol.

Come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared.

I've always thought I would love to walk to meeting as I imagine this is how most of our forebears went to meeting. I live about eight miles from where we meet on a Sunday morning and, whilst it is not impossible to walk there, it would be somewhat impractical and even dangerous because of the narrow, pavementless roads. Still, I might try it one day. Meanwhile, with no public transport, I drive. However, I stop on the way and I and my dog have a short walk along a narrow lane to a lake where I am able to stand and stare for a few moments, or even longer. Sunday morning is a good bet for solitude. Here I can contemplate spiritual matters, and watch the wild life, or just 'come down' from the week's work and stresses. Sometimes nature provides a cabaret, such as the time a barn owl swooped and floated above the lake in a heart-stopping display of grace. Or battles between the Canada geese and the swans for the best nesting place.

And sometimes, rarely, something provides more than mere entertainment: a deep affecting experience that I think of as spiritual but which is fundamentally difficult to put into words. It feels like there is some kind of connection that is both personal and universal. I am reminded how insignificant I am. This might come with an insight or a decision I might have to make, or a way forward that I had not previously considered. A vision of my own darkness

came to me once. It took me completely by surprise and baffled me just for a moment. Quakers believe there is 'that of God in everyone' and I believe there is also some darkness in everyone. I was privileged to see a vision of the darkness in my psyche. The Advice and Query from which the title of this piece is taken goes on to say:

Yield yourself and all your outward concerns to God's guidance so that you may find 'the evil weakening in you and the good raised up'.

Advices & Queries 9

Becoming a Quaker means I am supported and encouraged to find my own spirituality and ways of worship. My visits to the lake are not just about preparation for Sunday morning worship, they are worship.



A First-Timer at Meeting of Friends in Wales

Angela Arnold (*Oswestry LM*) *reflects on similarities and differences between Friends in Scotland and in Wales.*

Until I moved south last year, my 'big meeting' used to be General Meeting for Scotland, so at my first Meeting of Friends in Wales, held in Montgomery on 21 February, it was interesting to notice both obvious similarities and unexpected differences.

In terms of similarities I could name the strong links with, respectively, ACTS (Action for Churches Together in Scotland) and its Welsh equivalent CYTŪN. But the thing that probably struck me most was this: where Scottish Friends find their national identity expressed strongly in the political involvement in their country, for instance direct links with the Scottish parliament, Welsh Friends (at least so it appeared to this newcomer) predominantly

look to their cultural identity – something that is inevitably, intimately, bound up with the Welsh language.

And this is not something that sits in isolation from 'normal Quaker business'. To give an example: during our Meeting for Sufferings report, considering the possible revision of Qf&p, we had a contribution expressing just how important it is to include ongoing revelation, inspired new writing...some of which, it so happens, is being written in Welsh – and in an age of multiculturalism, should they not be welcomed? Surely contemporary voices from both Scotland and Wales need to be heard, to add their perspective and experience.

Later, taking its place on our agenda between items like Economic Justice in Europe, our local meetings' active engagement with Israel/Palestine, and a thought-provoking workshop with Jamie Wrench on Restorative Justice, there was the launch of a book produced by Friends in Wales. I say 'a book' but it is also 'two books': *Tua'r Tarddiad* and its English version *Towards the Source*. [see review below]

When the editors Catherine James, Rhian Parry and Deborah Rowlands first looked for funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, they were offered support for a translation into Welsh of Ben Pink Dandelion's *Celebrating the Quaker Way* – great book...but...translation is one thing; writing that comes out of a distinct culture/language is quite another. Fortunately the JRCT agreed and the search was on for contemporary contributions, in both English and Welsh, to be interspersed with writing from earlier times. 'It was quite a spiritual experience gathering the material' the editors told us.

Three years in the making, these books now emerged brand-new from their boxes. A copy of each will be given to every secondary school, county library and local Quaker meeting in Wales. Looking ahead, we are hoping Yearly Meeting Gathering will provide an opportunity to make this work more widely known. In fact, I sense we are hoping that Friends will more widely notice that Welsh culture – like Quakers! – didn't die out long ago, but is alive and doing fine work.

'Treasures of darkness' – Europe and Economic Justice

Peter Hussey (*Llandrindod & Pales LM*) reported to MFW on the 'Quaker Council for European Affairs/Quaker Peace and Social Witness' conference in Brussels in November 2013. This is the text of his report:

Four Friends from Wales participated - Angela Burton, Stevie Krayner, Harry Greaves and Peter Hussey. All of us were concerned about Economic Justice before we went, we returned burning with indignation!

Our country is one of the “developed” countries of the World. Once that indicated this country had a well developed industrial base, with an efficient, highly mechanised agricultural sector, an employed population who were healthy, with a sound social system that acted as a safety net for those needing it.

Since the 1980s, however, a new phase of capitalism has emerged based on neo-liberal economics. The idea of a developed nation now indicates an expanding financial sector, while the industrial base has been allowed to deteriorate and with it employment and social welfare conditions. The global economy has been developed and this has encouraged a movement from owner control to manager control, a change which appears to lower risk, but which changes its nature and “moves the goalposts”.

Within the global structure jobs and materials are sourced from wherever they are cheapest. As this change developed global assets grew rapidly, to the benefit of the management of the corporations involved, but this explosive growth was financed by “pretend” money created through debt.

The notes in your wallet or purse promise “to pay the bearer the sum of ...” a promise founded on little more than confidence; which in 2007/8 was shaken to the core, threatening to bring down the whole worldwide financial organisation. Money is created not as a representation of wealth but rather through the creation of debt, which then becomes an asset of the lender.

The movement of control of businesses from its owners to its managers has had dramatic effect. Growth, rather than profitability, became the measurement of success. Purchase of other businesses provided immediate growth, but without, necessarily increasing profitability. This growth financed huge bonus payments for the managers that had engineered it, even when the purchase may have threatened the survival of the expanded corporation.

Some of these corporations have even outgrown many countries but still have to find even more expansion, so they now propel their client governments toward expanding their markets even further. They are doing this by entering into trade agreements within which all obstructions to trade are removed. These “obstructions” may well include protections for employees, consumers or the

environment. Watch the news for mentions of these trade agreements which are happening throughout the world, mostly behind locked doors, and which are often hailed as “breakthroughs”.

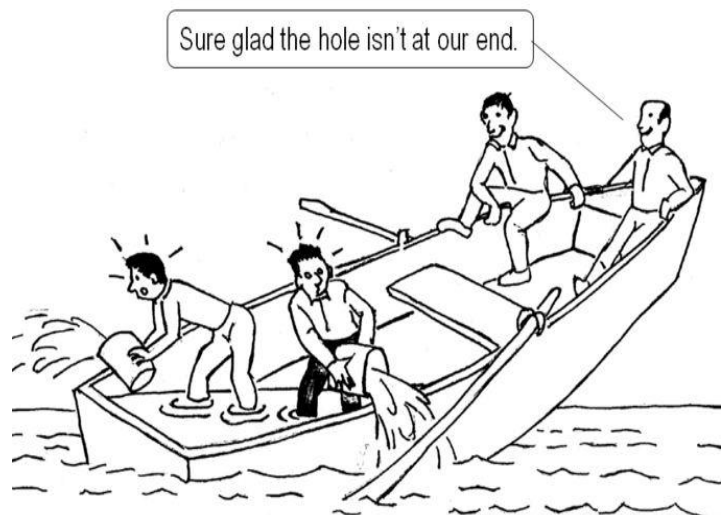
The latest obscenity is that many of these agreements now create “rights” for the corporations, so that companies can now sue governments if a nation tries to protect its interests at the cost of profit to the corporations.

What was astounding about this conference was that as we contemplated this huge, entrenched, edifice, rather than descending into frustration and despondency we came away determined to use those skills that are particularly Quakerly, to reach out, to listen respectfully as we answer “that of God in everyone”. Through ministry we remembered that we are frequently the ones in the lead with their thinking and spiritual calling to action. For Angela there were the “treasures of darkness” (Isaiah ch45, v3) providing insight into the good that might emerge from our greater exposure to the enormity of the problem underpinned by corruption on a vast scale. I had been negative when I heard one ministry looking forward to the conference weekend as something that would bring about change, but I came away ready to continue just that work.

Those of us who were fortunate to attend this conference came away with great enthusiasm and high regard for the tiny, but very effective Quaker office in Brussels. We encourage Friends in Wales to arrange for a speaker from QCEA to address us. The European Elections are in May, to prepare ourselves Friends should sign up for the QCEA briefings by subscribing at:

<http://www.qcea.org/home/about/qcea/>

Also look at <http://www.positivemoney.org>



The challenge of the War

Gethin Evans (*Aberystwyth LM*) has been researching the response of Quakers in Wales to the military call-up in the First World War.

In 1917 the Yearly Meeting reflected on the challenge of the war, especially since conscription was now a reality. Minute 69 of their proceedings read as follows:

“We have considered the problems of military service confronting young men of eighteen and boys approaching that age. We recognise the difficulty and complexity of the position and its great importance, and while desiring to take what helpful action is possible we feel the need of avoiding any action which might hamper our work at the close of the war, in case universal military training should be required in all schools.”

This caution was understandable given the militaristic atmosphere then prevailing, but behind it also must have been a concern that so many young Quaker men had enlisted. Indeed, the formation of the Friends Ambulance Unit in 1914 was a response to the need to show patriotic loyalty and patriotism which did not entail military service at a time when the whole country was thrilled by the prospect of war and quick victory. That position was to be challenged once conscription was introduced in 1916. The Meeting asked their Central Education Committee and the Service Committee to look fully into the issue and to take whatever action was deemed necessary.

Minute 114 of the same meeting reflected the same concerns:

“ A desire has been expressed for the preparation of statistics showing the respective numbers of Friends [Members and Attenders] working for or in connection with the Aliens Emergency Relief, the War Victims' Relief and the FAU Committees. In addition to this, information as to the position of members and attenders of military age has been desired. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to procure and tabulate these particulars.”

Sufferings inevitably set up a committee which prepared and distributed questionnaires to all the Monthly Meetings asking them to provide information on all members and attenders liable to military service. All but seven Monthly Meetings responded Hereford and Radnor Monthly Meeting being one of the seven. The committee then had to analyse 1,666 responses. In all probability not every male attached to the Yearly Meeting was counted, and the information would have been outdated by the time it was recorded and received. Timing of completion within the Monthly Meeting would also have affected the returns, but the results provide an interesting and important record of activity.

The committee realistically recognised that “to bring the record up to the time when all men were discharged would be a matter of considerable difficulty, and we doubt whether the results would be commensurate with the labour and expense involved.” They recorded that, as they put it, “out of 100 members on an average,” 40.2 applied for and were granted exemption as conscientious objectors, 17.3 applied for and were granted exemption on other grounds, 5.0 applied for and were refused exemption on conscientious grounds, 0.2 refused to recognise the tribunals, 33.6 enlisted in His Majesty's Forces, 3.4 were exempted as not ordinary residents in Great Britain and 0.3 were exempted as Ministers of Religion.

Using these statistics at least 766 were then granted exemption on grounds of conscience, whilst 498 enlisted. Those exempted had to satisfy the tribunals as to their activities, some of course joining the FAU or doing other work acceptable to the authorities. The number of absolutists i.e. those refusing to accept any work dictated by the authorities and thus subject to court-martial and imprisonment was relatively small.

The returns from South Wales Monthly Meeting provide information on 13 men, one of whom was an attender. Of these men two were absolutists: B. H. Cudbird, a Londoner, designer and draughtsman, who attended Cardiff meeting, and Samuel Blomfield of Caerleon, an accountant based in Newport. Both served periods of imprisonment. There is some uncertainty over Blomfield's name. In The Friend he is identified as Broomfield. Cudbird's brother Horace, a Congregationalist, was also an



Llandrindod War Memorial

absolutist and came into membership with Friends around 1940 but not in Wales. Of the remaining 11, one joined the FAU, nine enlisted and one was exempted. How these enlistments were categorised by the original committee may be open to interpretation. For the purposes of this article those joining the Non-Combatant Corps or the Royal Army Medical Corps or the Voluntary Aid Detachments have been included as enlistments since they were under authority of the military.

Not included in the South Wales returns was Llewelyn Elsemere, who also enlisted. His father, a recorded

minister, had been home mission worker in Llandrindod and Swansea; Llewelyn may have transferred his membership to another Monthly Meeting when the survey was done. He is added to the South Wales figures, thus ten enlisted. Of these three were killed. Alan Corder Cunningham enlisted while in South Africa and was killed in France but his body was never recovered, thus his name appears on the Menin Gate Memorial, one of the 54,896 killed in the Ypres salient who have no known grave, the 'missing'. Llewelyn Benjamin Elsemere died of his wounds after the Battle of Arras in 1917; he had wished to join the FAU ‘but fell in with wishes of his bank and joined unconditionally’; and John Herford Sessions, a lieutenant in the 3rd Welsh Regiment, died in September 1918, aged 25 years.

The Tregelles brothers from Penarth were also amongst the enlisted. The younger brother, David, never served overseas, whilst Roger, his older brother, was commissioned as a lieutenant in the London Regiment, and in October 1917 was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty.

There is one other name that can be added to the South Wales group, that of Harold Mostyn Watkins, originally from Llanfyllin, who had come into membership with Friends while working as a teacher in Cardiff. He then moved to Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting where he was working when the survey was taken. He was an absolutist

who was to be court-martialled and imprisoned four times.

Returns from Hereford and Radnor Monthly Meeting were for some reason never submitted but Hercules Davies Phillips, the home mission worker at Llandrindod, who was a journalist, wrote two articles in the Radnor Express in 1916 giving information about the local Quaker response to the war. He wrote probably because he wished to demonstrate Quaker loyalty to their country, following the introduction of conscription and the controversy surrounding the issue of conscientious objection. This is not perhaps the most accurate record but Phillips was a conscientious journalist, and would have made every effort to present a fair picture. He listed eleven members of the Society, five of whom had enlisted and the other six had joined the FAU, although the name of one does not appear in the printed list of those who served with the units. Phillips also named six associate members, i.e. those who were listed as members of their local meeting but not of the monthly meeting – a system that never proved popular across the Yearly Meeting. Seven former associates and scholars of the first-day school were also mentioned. Sadly, he had to record the death of four of these, two of whom were brothers, Gilbert and William Oliver, their mother most certainly a member of the monthly meeting. Another Gilbert brother was a prisoner of war and two other brothers were together in Salonika. Phillips was careful to show sympathy for all and after the war was made an honorary member of the local branch of the British Legion.



Quakers in North Wales then fell under the discipline of Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting. Their returns showed three names of Friends living in North Wales, out of 94 returns. Two of these joined the FAU, and the third, a farmer at Mochdre, Colwyn Bay served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

*Gethin Evans' book **Benign Neglect: Quakers and Wales circa 1860-1918** has just been published. Copies can be purchased directly from the author*
Contact Gethin Evans for further details:
gethine45@tiscali.co.uk

For me it was the powerful message that if we are to prepare for the future we need to build deep strong relationships within our community... 'the deeper we go into worship together the deeper we know each other in the things that are eternal'.

Laboratory of the Spirit

Cindylou Turner-Taylor (*Llandrindod & Pales LM*) attended the Kindlers event on 5 April at Pales Meeting House.

‘Imagine a Laboratory, what does that mean to you?’ On scraps of paper we did just that, followed by ‘Spirit’. The Kindlers team, Alec Davidson, Emma Roberts and Brian Holley, led us on an inspirational and exhausting tapas-like day. We experienced together a journey through a myriad little tasters of different forms of meditation/prayer; each of us resonating with one thing or another. In between periods of experimental gathered silence there were opportunities for paired and group talk/listening, filled with laughter and love.

Each Friend present appeared to take something rich from the day. For me it was the powerful message that if we are to prepare for the future we need to build deep strong relationships within our community... ‘the deeper we go into worship together the deeper we know each other in the things that are eternal’.

The day was intensive, rich and nurturing. It is not possible to faithfully convey what each of us experienced here in just a few lines; however, it is possible to share it through worship, kindness, mindfulness and prayer.

Y Gymru a garem The Wales we want

Back in February, Calon received the following letter from Peter Hussey:

Last Tuesday, my Birthday, Maggie and I went down to Cardiff and went at lunchtime to the launch of *The Wales We Want* conversation. The Sustainability Bill is to have input by the population, and this is being achieved by this "conversation".

Peter Davies (from Pembrokeshire) is the Commissioner for poverty and sustainability, and he spoke, along with the Minister. Michael Sheen, who was the definition of hwyl, told us that there are 24% of children in poverty in Port Talbot. Jonathan Porritt was very upbeat - there are tremendously exciting technological developments that will reduce global warming once we get rid of "that lot in Whitehall".

I feel that we Quakers should be having an input into the conversation, and that we should be trying to put forward concrete targets, so, for example, not just "a more equitable society" but more like a fixed maximum difference between the highest and lowest rewards of twenty times.

You can find the detail here:
<http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/>

FOR YOUR DIARY



Ganllwyd Village Hall one of Wales's few remaining mission halls, a classic example of the 'tin/sinc' small buildings of Wales. The hall is a listed building, 6 miles north of Dolgellau, on the A470 with a National Trust Car Park over the road and a large Lay-By for parking also.

21st June

Kindlers Workshop at Ganllwyd Village Hall near Dolgellau (LL40 2TF): "Fruits of the Spirit". How to nourish our Spirit and enjoy the fruits of Joy. Bring lunch. 10am (for 10.30) till tea at 4.30. Cost £5 Book with Sue Shreeve: sueshreeve28@gmail.com

28th June **Meeting of Friends in Wales, Abergavenny** Main topic the possible revision of Quaker faith and practice

"We hope that the process of revision will recognise the different voices of Quakerism throughout Britain. Welsh needs to be recognised as a living language, spoken by some 70% of people in some communities. For some Quakers, it is their spiritual language, a fact which is reflected in Tua'r Tarddiad and Towards the Source."

21st – 24th July **Royal Welsh Show**

1 - 9 Awst 2014 **Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru / National Eisteddfod of Wales, Llanelli.**

If you would be interested in helping out with Quaker activities whilst you are visiting the Eisteddfod please contact Carey Thomas or John Lewis of Swansea LM.

2nd – 9th August **Yearly Meeting Gathering 2014** at the University of Bath campus

4th – 12th October **Quaker Week 2014**
Theme: **'Let your life speak'**

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THE DEADLINE FOR NEXT CALON:

15th July 2014

Theme:

"A just and compassionate society"?
We are very keen to receive any articles, news, events, poems, pictures, and feedback.