

Report on Quaker presence at the Royal Welsh Show July 2017

Jeff Beatty's report

The Churches Together Tent was in its usual place again this year along spine D, set back from the telegraph pole, which marks its place at the show. Its unique place allows for visitors to sit outside, to converse and to enjoy the sun.

Inside there was as usual space for show visitors to sit and to chat and to have a drink, hot or cold, provided by a willing band of helpers, who welcomed all with a smile. Around the edges of the tent, tables were arranged for different organisations which provided free pamphlets by the Mothers' Union, Farmers' Rural Support, Quakers, Embrace (the Middle East) and others. Christian Aid was well represented, with items to sell and pictures of refugees hemmed in by barb wire and fences. Books were on sale from the bookshop and there was a very busy children's corner with games, colouring pens and electronics.

During each morning and afternoon there were prayer meetings in the tent at 8.00, 11.00 and 5.00 and an opportunity for silent worship in the Christian Centre at 4.00. Throughout the day, chaplains offered pastoral care to visitors, farmers, agricultural workers and stall holders by listening to and talking with them on any issues of concern. It was heartening to discover that all chaplains reported on their positive experiences.

What did we do as Quakers? We were well represented – five Friends in all, Hilary Beynon, Mary Hammond, Theresa Hayne, Catherine James and Jeff Beatty. Friends came from some considerable distances and not without some difficulty that required some considerable effort in surmounting. Those who represented us remained for much of the time in the tent conversing with visitors or with chaplains and occasionally speaking to visitors about some of our leaflets

at our 'stall'. We even met two younger Friends, though most of whom we spoke to remembered the Quakers from family connections, very often in the past, which was a continuing theme. We held silent worship on most days in the Christian Centre, usually with others, which is many more than last year in both opportunities and participants. Ynyr Roberts and his team are to be thanked for providing this increased outreach.

For those who might wish to represent us next year, it is an enjoyable experience, not just for the conversation, but also for the show itself. It is not for everyone of course, but we do show our support for faith groups and our presence is welcomed and acknowledged.

Everyone at the show from Tuesday heard the news that a young man, James Corfield, was missing. Show visitors and stall holders were asked to be vigilant and many local people and rescue organisations looked for him, including the fire brigade who searched the River Wye. Unfortunately his body was found in a deep pool in the river on Saturday 29 July. This was very sad news and devastating for his family. He was only 19.

Reflections on the four days include the view that we were more involved than last year, though engagement with the visitors was limited. Chaplains are more able to engage wearing their high visibility jackets around the show, so perhaps we could have a Quaker chaplain next year. Would this be possible?

Thanks to those who helped over the four days, to the Churches Together group and to Ynyr for keeping us all focused are given wholeheartedly. This was Ynyr's last year and we shall miss him.