Contents

Editorial

Pales Re-Thatching

Ludlow Spiritual Life Report

Lover of Souls

Being Friends Together

Meeting for Sufferings

Cutting Carbon Dioxide

Limerick 1

Peace Education Sub Group

Ross on Wye Spiritual Life Report

Limerick 2

Editorial

Dear Friends,

More or less at the beginning and more or less at the end of this newsletter are two Spiritual Life Reports. It is good to share the experiences of other meetings. More or less in between, is a vari- ety of contributions, including two limericks, to enliven the proceedings.

Friends have asked why we have set no deadlines for the receipt of contributions for publication. The answer is that we do not always have enough content by the due date so now we send the Newsletter to the printers when we have enough copy to justify publication.

John and Felicity Rogers, editors

Please send any material for publication in the Newsletter to:

newsletter@smquakers.org.uk

Or

john309rogers@btinternet.com

Or, by post to John and Felicity Rogers 26 Mortimer Road, Montgomery, SY15 6UP

Telephone: 01686 668478

Pales Re-Thatching

Autumn 2014

Last thatched in 1989, the roof had gradually been covered in moss and, although attractive in its own way, 25 years on, there was a concern that the straw was now retaining lots of water and breaking down.

Three master thatchers had visited; discussed the choices from heather to water reed and given quotes for the re-thatch. Phil Hallsworth from Shrewsbury was chosen as thatcher and Nick Salt was appointed as architect. The total cost for the project was estimated at £32,000. So in Summer 2013 the wardens began the process of fundraising. A large number of trusts were approached and approximately £14,000 was raised. It was a big blow when CADW (Welsh Heritage body who have always given 40% towards building projects at Pales as is a listed building) said they were unable to help due to their funding cuts.

So, in Spring 14, an appeal was launched and the wardens wrote to all 450 plus meetings in the UK. In July the appeal leaflet was included in "The Friend"... and then we waited with baited breath for responses. We needn't have worried. What a wonderful community the Religious Society of Friends is! What an affirmation of love, support and true concern for each other's meetings and needs. We received a flood of letters daily for 3 – 4 months, many included personal stories of their experience and love for, The Pales. We felt so humbled by the generosity as cheques from £5 to £1500 arrived each morning. It kept us busy but has been a real privilege to respond personally to all those wonderful givers. The good news is that we have now reached the financial target without costing Southern Marches Area Meeting a penny!

The work itself was due to start in August. Needless to say, there was a hold up. When the thatcher finally arrived he worked for one day and then went off with a back injury and then a summer holiday. We were worried about the weather closing in. However, by the beginning of September the work had begun and we were blessed with sunny weather.

The old thatch was stripped away; the timbers sprayed for furniture beetle; large amounts of insulation inserted as required by building regulations, to line the sloping roofs and a new fire alarms system was installed. Then finally the thatching began. The reed is water reed and has been sourced from Hungary (The thatcher tells us that its quality is superior to Norfolk reed which has been damaged by environmental deterioration). It looks so beautiful – thick and honey coloured. Meetings for Worship continued uninterrupted by the thatching which was finally finished in early November 2014.

So, do come and see your newly thatched historic meeting house in Radnorshire. It is hoped that despite all the wind and the rain thrown at Pales in its exposed spot at 1180 feet in the Welsh hills, that it will now be even cosier and keep a roof over Quakers' heads for another 40-50 years.

Lynda and Martin Williams

Ludlow Local Quaker Meeting
Spiritual Life Report to Area Meeting November 2014

In preparing for our Spiritual Life Report, Ludlow Elders circulated a questionnaire to everybody at the Local Meeting. We have drawn extensively on the responses in formulating the report, and shall read out some of the comments to illustrate and support the points made in it.

When Ludlow last presented its spiritual life report to Area Meeting, in 2011, we looked back to the previous 2008 report in which we had promised to 'do better', and to 'investigate ways in which we could be more outward-looking and fire up our lukewarmness'. That seems broadly to be the tenor of our present report too – we have made progress, but there is still much more that could be done: perhaps Friends must always be dissatisfied with their provisional achievements.

1. Meeting for Worship

One area of growth is in numbers. Ludlow Local Meeting now has 77 people on its books, and average attendance at Meeting for Worship on Sundays is 30-35. MfW is of course the pivot around which Local Meeting life revolves, and Friends and attenders overwhelmingly find it very valuable: here are some comments:

> *Very important to me. .... Meetings are often powerful.*
> *I still have a feeling of wonder and relief that I am not alone on the spiritual path.*
> *Meeting for worship is both stimulating and affirming.*
> *An important part of my week: a time of centring and reconnecting with the mystery of things and with our community.*
> *Invaluable in our ever-busy world.*
> *I find the variety of the Meetings stimulating, and helpful in giving each week a pattern and rhythm.*

Friends living around Leominster have now set up an additional monthly MfW there, and as part of a new Wednesday evening programme we are starting a mid- week meeting for worship in Ludlow as well. We have

been encouraged by an influx recently of several newcomers who have all found inspiration in our Quaker silent waiting.

2. Ministry

Friends' response to spoken ministry in meeting for worship is a bit more mixed. While many find it enriching, others are less positive:

> Ministry is nearly always helpful.
> I am interested in the ministry, even if I am critical of it.
> I like the silence, but I often find the ministry unhelpful.
> Occasionally the vocal offerings – as opposed to Ministries – might be more appropriately shared as Afterword.

We don't practice Afterword at present. Another issue concerning ministry which arose recently was the extent to which it may be pre-planned. Should coming to Meeting with heart and mind prepared include slipping that inspirational poem into your pocket, in case the leading is to read it as ministry? Or must ministry be exclusively Spirit-led on the day, and so entirely spontaneous? Is the prepared reading of Advices and Queries in MfW an appropriate contribution to ministry?

3. Growing in the Quaker Way

Friends come to Quakers with very varying degrees of knowledge and understanding about Quaker practice, faith and tradition. Friends at Ludlow, as elsewhere, learn about our faith and practice through worship and ministry, and reading, but primarily in observing and talking with others, by osmosis, or through shared events, activity groups and retreats. We have an active reading group, two discussion groups, two Light groups, and regular shared Sunday lunches with attendant speakers or activities; there is also an art group and a monthly 'worship in song' gathering which bring people together. We organise an annual and well-attended weekend retreat or quiet day. To nurture one's spiritual life, growing in things of the Spirit, is recognised as an essential task, requiring time and energy which are, however, sometimes in short supply:

> I was tempted to attend a session on death led by Roy Payne, but life got in the way.
> The rewards are great, but it requires discipline and constancy.

Last year Elders felt the time was right to organise Quaker Quest at Ludlow, both as an outreach exercise and to enrich the inner life and spiritual community of the Meeting. The Kindlers ran an introductory workshop for us. However, MfWfB discerned that such outreach was not appropriate at the time, and asked Elders instead to find forms of inreach which would support spiritual growth within the Meeting. We have consequently held several evening meetings in the Being Quaker Doing Quaker format, which have been well attended. These have also offered a means of addressing the needs of newcomers and recent attenders, though this is a subject of on-going discussion and trial within the Meeting. (Our new attenders may not yet know all they need to about Quakers, but they seem to feel welcome in their new environment.) The new experimental Wednesday evening programme is a drop-in session at the Meeting House for everyone to meet together, talk, eat and engage in joint activities, getting to know each other both in things that are eternal and in present concerns and amusements, before sharing mid-week worship.

4. The Meeting as community

Most Friends find our Meeting a context which nurtures spiritual growth.
> A positive nurturing throughout all my activities all week
> The MfW even if I can't get there is part of my daily thoughtfulness, so key, I think.

A few are less certain, suggesting there is room for greater focus and commitment here:
> It is helpful (though I don't know if I have a 'spiritual life').
> I think we could offer far more in the way of activities for deepening our spiritual lives.

Most Friends also find the Meeting a friendly and caring community, and feel they can rely on it for support:
> This is what I value most in some ways. On first attending I felt very much at home and truly blessed and amazed by the openness and caring

nature of the Meeting members.
> 100% caring – I know who to approach for a certain aspect – others are a delightful surprise & I learn from them too.
> A wonderful group of open-minded people.

> I think it is particularly supportive for those with long-term illnesses.

Another indicator of community feeling is Friends' willingness to contribute financially to Meeting and Quaker work: the annual appeal elicits a generous response. We also hold weekly appeals for local and national charities, and we have made on-going and game-changing contributions to Losengheli School which we support in Kenya, and to the STEP Centre for disabled children in Jamaica.

Once again, some voices dissent from the appreciation of Meeting as community:

> I am quite happy with my individual relationships with Friends, but I do not feel part of this group.
> I would describe the Friends I know at Meeting as acquaintances. *Seen rarely and known superficially*.

Some of these latter sentiments reflect a situation which Ludlow shares with other scattered Meetings – we are a town-based meeting, but with a large rural diaspora for whom attendance at town-centre activities may be difficult. This is a genuine problem. We hope the new meetings for worship may help, and Elders and Overseers have recently invited all members of the Meeting to meals in their homes in an attempt to facilitate social connections – people have enjoyed getting to know one another better, and this is something to be developed in the future.
Ludlow has two young families with 4 children (2 each). Parents and Children's Committee between them provide very good and creative activities every three or four weeks, and the children are always very welcome in MfW. We have not recently held all-age worship, though most Friends feel positive about the idea.

5. The wider community
Another aspect of community is our building. As Area Meeting Friends know, we have been discussing for many years the possibility of extending and/or upgrading the Meeting House in St Mary's Lane. AM has recently supported proposals for a complete rebuilding on the same site, and we are now awaiting the outcome of AM discussions on how to arrange this project in adventurous living.
The Meeting House is also important in our outreach into the Ludlow town community. We have a variety of regular hirers. We have taken part in successive Small Gardens Festivals: our back yard becomes a luxuriant patio flower-and-vegetable patch, while indoors there is an art exhibition or a book stall. We have joined in the new Ludlow Fringe Festival – a Pop In For Poetry day with local poets was packed, and a Family Fun day offering puppets, story-telling, cup- cakes and face-paint drew big crowds. We plan to do more – a BT phone-line is being installed and with phone and internet access we hope to be able to address various current needs among the Ludlow community. This is a project formulated by our Social Concerns group, presently in abeyance but which we expect to revive, especially in view of the radical austerity programme currently being followed by Shropshire Council.

Beyond the Meeting House we are active members of Churches Together Around Ludlow, and we organise our own events in the town, for instance speakers for National Quaker Week and our annual Olivier Memorial Peace Lecture. For Peace Lecture speakers we aim for national names – last year's was a controversial former Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO, this year David Boulton will speak on conscientious objection, next year we are expecting Rowan Williams.

Our Art Group mounts exhibitions in town, our Sustainability Group sets out its stall at the Green Fair. After much soul-searching we donated kitchen equipment to the new boys' boxing club, and a large group of Friends staged a mass joining of the local Credit Union. One Friend commented enthusiastically

> *Quakers are action in Ludlow!*

And another writes:

> *Quakers are a good leaven, especially our peace testimony.*

Nevertheless, some Friends feel that our profile as a group is not as high in Ludlow as it might be.

> *We have a spiritual treasure which many people who think they don't need religion might find helpful, but our low profile tends to keep the treasure hidden. As individuals we have a substantial input into local life, as a body we do very little.....*

> *Individuals seem to make a much greater impact than the Meeting as a whole. Need to work on this.*

> *Through the work and influence of individuals.*

> *We should be pushing out boundaries to other community initiatives.*

So there is perhaps work to be done here. This is also another area where the problem of town and country raises its head – those who live elsewhere naturally feel less engaged with the challenges of Ludlow life:

> *I can't say I've really noticed this one – I live over 12 miles from Ludlow anyway.*

In thinking about Quakers' relevance to the life of the Ludlow community, one Friend asked:

> *Do we need to be 'relevant' or do we need to be 'patterns and examples'? We could be both, but the 'patterns and examples' should be at the forefront.*

Perhaps for the moment we have to content ourselves with another Friend's sage reflection, that

> *If you can grow peace in your own heart through being accepted and nurtured you can be a positive force outside Friends. Ludlow Meeting cares about the community in the area, and people do what they can.*

Something similar may be said about our participation in the wider life of the Society of Friends. Meeting encourages Ludlow Friends to join in Quaker activities beyond Ludlow, and ten of us attended Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath. We are kept well informed of events elsewhere.

Woodbrooke attracts a number of participants to its courses and conferences, and three Friends have been heavily involved in aspects of central Quaker work. But the response for the most part is passive and reactive, acknowledging opportunities and actions 'out there', while showing rather little desire to participate.

> *Meeting certainly provides lots of opportunities, but local 'busyness' and my own 'busyness' get in the way.*

> *Meeting gave me some money for YMG. Otherwise I think we are a little parochial.*

> *Ludlow Meeting life doesn't encourage me to participate in the wider life of the Society simply because I don't give enough attention to it.*

So there is work to be done here too. Are we simply too busy? Is it the case, as one Ludlow Friend argues, that

>*Quakers spend too much energy and time in maintaining the organisation, almost as if it is an end in itself?*

Another Friend's reflection seems a good place at which to end:

> *Keeping the balance between the desire to be active in the community ..... and the spiritual fullness of eternity, is hard to do. How do we keep peace in our hearts but also commit to be active in an increasingly unfair world?*

Lover of Souls – Melville Theatre Sunday 16th November 2014

Looking at Hooton's life and suffering as an early Quaker casts a clear light into the tangled skein of seventeenth century religious belief, when the most important issue facing men and women was that of individual salvation. She and the early Quakers turned this issue on its head by advocating and embracing a radical, practical and socialist theology.

About 50 of us from our Quaker Meeting and beyond were treated to a powerful evening of theatre in this dramatic evocation of the life of Elizabeth Hooton. Devised, written and performed by Lynn Morris and directed by her husband David Morris, Friends from Stourbridge Meeting, the show is closely based on the writings of Elizabeth Hooton, sometimes known as the first Quaker woman. She was a confidante of George Fox and is credited with introducing silence to our form of worship.

We could have gone on but it was time for the time honoured tea, coffee and cakes. While these were enjoyed there was an opportunity to buy Zaytoun products from Palestine and we were told about the Seir Women's Co-operative on the West Bank in Palestine. Stourbridge Quaker Meeting have supported them in response to their concern about Palestinian communities following talks from people who have participated in the Ecumenical Accompaniers programme

But what we witnessed in the production seemed far removed from silence. Elizabeth Hooton was driven by her convictions to 'speak Truth to Power' – interrupting church services in her remote East Midlands village, personally confronting Cromwell and Charles 11, leaving her comfortable home to travel not just all over Britain as a Quaker minister but also crossing the Atlantic several times, ending her days in Jamaica. For her beliefs and actions, she endured persecution and imprisonment on many occasions - taking the opportunity when in prison to teach fellow prisoners to read and write.

Lynn and David visited Seir earlier in the year and told us how the money raised through donations from performances all over the UK of Lover of Souls is being used. The latest project to build and equip a room where secondary education can be delivered in the community was given a massive boost by the generous Melville Theatre audience, raising £1,387.30 on the night.

Following the 55 minute performance, Lynn and David facilitated a discussion on the issues raised – was she a feminist role model; a driven woman so forceful in her proselytizing zeal that she left no space for uncertainty; have Quakers survived through the centuries unlike contemporary 'Protestant sects' such as the Ranters and Seekers by compromising their radical heritage?

Penny Harding Abergavenny LM

BEING FRIENDS TOGETHER

I always find it almost impossible to report from these weekends. How to capture the excitement, commitment, spirituality and friendship that flows through them?
This time there was an extra buzz as we were given a preview of the new online resource 'Being Friends Together'. This is available for an annual subscription of £35 and can be bought by Meetings and then viewed by individuals using the shared meeting password.

The resource's aims are to help us:

- develop spiritually both as meetings and individually,
- learn about aspects of the Quaker and Christian traditions,
- develop and express our sense of Quaker identity,
- grow as communities,
- feel supported to live out Quaker Testimony in our lives and localities,
- integrate all generations into the life of meetings

To achieve this it is packed with activities and ideas from previous Quaker learning projects as well as newly written and recorded material, and contains suggestions for useful websites, courses and actions that meetings can engage with. Key words or catalogue numbers can be searched for, or there are pathways to follow, organised into four themes covering growing as community, deepening the life of the spirit, exploring our tradition and being in the world.

We were encouraged to bring a laptop or tablet if possible so we were able briefly to explore some of the resource for ourselves. An interesting introduction is available at http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk

I feel this is a really useful tool to help both meetings and individuals to journey, learn and grow. I hope our Meetings and as well as individuals will be able to benefit from using this exciting new resource.

This poem written during the weekend captures some of the essence of our exploration of Being Friends Together.

Being Friends Together

Come into the garden, Friend.

Take my hand.

Let's explore together

Pathways

That lead to

Unknown places:

Wet grass that cushions our feet;

Showers of golden leaves like snow;

And, through the trees,

The glint of sun on water.

And when we come

To a parting of the ways

We'll sit, and sift, and winnow –

Whether to take the well-worn path,

The easy walk by the lake,

Or branch off into difficult places,

Rough terrain and broken paths –

We'll discern

Together.

Together we'll emerge

Like oaks

Our roots firmer in the ground,

The landscape surer,

Horizons wider.

Dogged explorers,

Transformed,

We'll turn at the precipice

And say:

Come into the garden, Friend.'

This is my last report, as your new representative is Angela Ormrod. It has been a pleasure to go to QLRC so thank you for sending me.
Liz Butler Machynlleth LM

Quaker Life Representative Council 17th-19th October 2014.

Report on Meeting for Sufferings, held at Friends House, December 6th, 2014

This meeting was notable as the first MfS in the newly refurbished Large Meeting House, now known as The Light. It is an interesting and well-planned space, with the inspirational roof soaring upwards in the form of a ziggurat to the large, square roof light.

A major item for decision was whether to register with the new Lobbying Act. Its full name is 'The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning Groups and Trade Union Administration Act 2014." It requires organisations to register with the Electoral Commission if they are spending significant amounts on activities which fall under the remit of the Act. Organisations spending less than £25,300 between 19th September, 2014 and 7th May 2015 across England, Wales and Scotland do not have to register. Organisations are not legally permitted to spend more than £265,300 on activities covered by the Act in this seven month period. Quakers fall between these two figures, and are, therefore, required to register.

The dilemma was that we agree with a law which demonstrates respect for the principles of transparency and integrity, but were worried that, by registering, we might limit our freedom to speak on matters deemed to be political. The feeling of the meeting was that it would be right to register under the Act, but also to make it clear that we won't modify our work to fit in with the limits,and will continue to be led by conscience.

It was the Trustees who had to make the decision, and, having sought Sufferings advice, and accepted it, agreed to register, but also proposed to have material prepared which can be used to make public Quakers reservations and disquiet over the Act.

A minute from Cambridgeshire AM regarding tax justice was received. Work on this issue has already been done by Finance and Property Committee, and QPSW is considering signing up to a Christian Aid co-

ordinated campaign on tax justice. Sufferings supports this work and encourages AMs to consider how they can get involved, possibly through the Christian Aid campaign or with other groups as appropriate. Our own personal practices should also be examined, for instance in ways of tax avoidance in our wills.

Another minute, from Brighouse West Yorkshire AM was concerned with Islamophobia. Friends locally, regionally and nationally are urged to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Muslim community through the values we share.

A report was received about The Retreat, presented by the Clerk to Members, John Miles, the Chief Executive Officer, Jenny McAleese and the Medical Director, Dan Anderson. This was very comprehensive and included a short film. The breadth and range of service undertaken was inspiring, as was the way The Retreat is responding to the challenges of the current situation. As requested, MfS will recommence appointing new company members although the governance review is not yet completed.

We heard from Martin Pennock, QLCC clerk, and Richard Summers, QL General Secretary about the work of Quaker Life Central Committee and staff for their work in supporting and nourishing our worshipping communities, and also, from Jocelyn Burnell, QLCC assistant clerk designate, came an introduction to QLCC's consideration of end of life issues. We heard of Friends' experiences of dealing with end of life issues in their Meetings and at work, including ageing, preparing for death and medically assisted dying. Sufferings supports QLCC in its suggestion for Friends to share their stories.

Dave Butler Machynlleth LM

CUTTING CARBON DIOXIDE THROUGH OUR DIETS

After seeing the presentation by Alice Hooker-Stroud from the Centre for Alternative Technology on “Zero Carbon Britain” I became more interested in food. According to this plan, our diets would have to change fairly drastically, so that we would eat almost no animal products, and concentrate on plants. This would mean changes in land use, so that more land would be used for growing our own food and less for food for animals. There would also be more land for trees and for wild life.

Then I looked up the emissions of carbon dioxide caused by the whole process of growing and preparing food. It seems that in the UK the average production of greenhouse gases, which include methane, nitrous oxide, carbon dioxide and water vapour, is 14-15 tonnes per year for each individual. Of this just over 2 tonnes is due to the food we eat.

Nationally we produce 126 million tonnes of greenhouse gases per year from the food we eat, which could be reduced to 19.75 million tonnes by a drastic change in diet, or 41 million tonnes by moderate switches in shopping.

Most of us are at present reliant on fossil fuels for heating and transport, and find difficulty in reducing our carbon dioxide emission from these sources, but changing our diets is not so difficult, and would make a big difference to our carbon footprints.

The production of greenhouse gases due to food is from various sources, but nitrogenous fertilisers are a major contribution as nitrous oxide is about 300 times the power of carbon dioxide. Methane from livestock and slurry is about 20 times the power of carbon dioxide Intensive agriculture has, therefore, an important effect. Added to these sources are food and drink manufacture and packaging, operation of retail stores (transport and refrigeration), and landfill gas from rotting food and packaging.

Different writers differ in their estimates of greenhouses gases from food, but tables can be found giving lists of various foods, ranging from lamb and beef at the top, down through cheese, pork, fish, chicken, eggs, milk, rice, beans, nuts, vegetables, fruit, lentils. Generally speaking we should be eating local, seasonal, and organic, avoiding processed and packaged food, avoiding frozen food, and avoiding meat and dairy products.

Minute 36 asks us to become a low carbon sustainable society and we could make a start by changing our diets.

Further reading: How to live a low-carbon life by Chris Goodhall 2010
How bad are bananas by Mike Berners-Lee 2010
Websites: from putting in carbon footprint and food

AnneAdams LudlowLM

A Quaker from Newtown in Wales

Was inclined to go right off the rails,

Her ministry long

and always in song

Took the wind out of everyone's sails!

Angela Ormrod Montgomery L.M.

REPORT FROM PEACE EDUCATION SUB-GROUP JANUARY 2015

With regard to peace education work in schools:

The programme at Forden has now finished. We had good feedback from the head teacher and he also asked each pupil to give their feedback. My favourite comment is: "I liked Cath and Gwen coming in because they are peaceful and they are lovely." but Gwen will be including more of their comments in the following presentation.

This term we have started programmes at Montgomery and Machynlleth Schools. At Montgomery we are using the material produced by QPSW on WW1 and conscientious objection. This is producing interesting responses from an engaged year 6 class. When we give them options ('on what side of this decision would you put yourself?') they are coming up with reasons and also the readiness to move their position.

Machynlleth school needed a bit of persistence to get into but once the head teacher realised what we were offering she was very keen to get us in, and in fact has asked us to run programmes with two classes. One of us sits in with the Resolve facilitator on each programme. Because the Machynlleth programme would have involved a lot of travelling for current 'sitters-in' we have been really pleased that Machynlleth Meeting have been able to recruit a new volunteer. The hope is that they will build up their confidence to join the team of those of us potentially picking up on running these programmes ourselves; and we have heard that their first session has really enthused them.

We have received a further grant for this work, from the Southall Trust, so that is a total of £4100. And we have spent just over £1000. We've suspended grant application activity for the moment but we haven't exhausted all the possible

grant-funders and the Southall Trust have said they are open to a further application next year. In addition the sad demise of Resolve Cymru has meant they have some funds to disburse and we are at least under consideration for some of this. We are monitoring and reporting on each programme for the relevant funder.

We need now to be investigating further schools for the summer term and beyond. The facilitator I'm working with at Montgomery, Nic Knapton, has suggested we make the initial approach to schools via the Cluster Days, which would get to several schools at once and also be face-to-face. If anyone has knowledge of, and a link to, their local cluster, that would be useful.

With regard to WW1 commemoration:

Since film screenings in Montgomery and Machynlleth, showings of 'Joyeux Noel' have continued with the one in Llanidloes on 17th Oct and two showings at Aberystwyth Arts Centre in November, in the Sunday evening and Wednesday afternoon (Silver Screen) programmes. On 25th February it will be shown at the Morlan centre in Aberystwyth including a panel question and answer session.

I mentioned the Road to Peace exhibition last time, which Tavistock Peace Group have offered to loan us. It will be in Tavistock Museum plus various schools down there next year so we have been looking at bringing it up here in 2016. We have been offered the use of it from Jan 1st to latter part of March and we have now managed to secure bookings for it in Newtown library, for the month of January, and then Aberystwyth Arts Centre who are hosting it for 6 weeks from 6th February to 19th March.

Paul Parker in a recent 'Friend' talked about the 'ministry' of Quakers and their Area Meetings. "it's a rare Area Meeting which knows its ministry well and can live it out collectively in the world. But some can, and do. ... Many Meetings feel daunted by what they take on. Thinking of it as ministry brings God, and the rest of our community, into the equation and can lighten the load."

Helen Porter Montgomery LM

Ross-on-Wye
Spiritual Life of the Meeting 2014

We have had two meetings to discuss our spiritual life, attended by a good number. At the second meeting we wrote about our experience of our meeting and we would like to share some of the thoughts that were expressed. It was apparent that there was considerable difference in the understanding of the meaning of the word 'spiritual'.

Our newer attenders expressed appreciation of the warm welcome they had received – 'like a warm bath' was one comment.
Meeting for Worship is clearly central for us all. There are usually 10 to 15 of us present. The peace and calm is valued by all. One Friend wrote:

"For those of us (like myself) who have their own interests and ministries, the meeting is essentially a place to gain spiritual sustenance and I think it does this quite well. In addition the meeting provides challenges to preconceived ideas over a wide range of areas". It is generally felt to be an open and tolerant meeting.

Some who have been members for a longer time value, not only what we receive as individuals, but also the presence of the meeting. Comments included 'like an extended family' and 'feel part of a community and not an isolated individual', 'appreciate that there are enough people with the good will and commitment to keep the space alive and active'.

There is a sadness that we no longer have a children's group – they have grown up all too quickly. There is also sadness that we have a number in the members and attenders book– about 14 – whom we see rarely or never. They were given the opportunity to contribute to this report but did not, so the reasons for their non appearance are largely unknown.
An important part of the spiritual life of our Meeting is the way in which we use our historic Meeting House with its peaceful burial ground. A number of additions have been made to the garden including a Peace Rose and a tree planted in memory of Elizabeth Rackham. A couple of neighbours without gardens have small plots in our garden. We are pleased to welcome visitors both individually and on guided walks round the town. This often brings opportunities to talk about Quaker ways, and our teas are popular too! In 2013 the local Scout group spent an evening with us learning about the Quaker Testimonies to Simplicity, Truth, Equality, Peace and Sustainability.

We are engaged with the local community by letting our Meeting House to other groups. There are two AA groups, 2 meditation groups, Circle Dancing, Unitarians, Anthroposophists, English Language Class, and so on. Last year we welcomed the Muslim group who now hold their Friday prayers in the Meeting House. Members of the Meeting are involved in and help to run some of these groups and in an attempt to develop our contacts further, we invited all users of the building to a New Year celebration on the first Sunday of January. This was a happy occasion, appreciated by those who attended, though not all users were represented.
We have representation on Churches Together in Ross and District, Women's World Day of Prayer and we support the local Food Bank. We have a monthly appeal for Quaker, international and local charities. One highlight was an exhibition of the Forgiveness Project held in the library which we sponsored jointly with Churches Together.

As a Fair Trade Church, we hold a monthly coffee morning when Traidcraft products are available for sale. These regular events are important for those who attend – as much for the social contacts as for any sales - and numbers coming are increasing.
We look to the future.

And a warning to finish with.....

An ardent enquirer from Pool
Insisted she sat on a stool.
They warned her 'bout quaking
"Nasty fall in the making"-
Now she's bandaged
And feels such a fool!

Angela Ormrod Montgomery L.M.