We feel blessed to have such a valuable space as Hedd Wen (HW) which enhances the life of our meeting. HW Peace Project is ongoing – Friends find it spiritually inspiring and have referred to the *Sadako visit to HW* and *Hiroshima meeting at HW* making special impact on them. In keeping with Quaker peace testimony the commitment to peace work continues, in schools and recent links have been made with Abergavenny Community Centre with a view to peace education for young people and making paper peace cranes with the origami group.

Our hopes for the future are:

- That the meeting will continue to be a warm and vibrant community, welcoming and supportive to newcomers and indeed all of us, where people will actively want to participate and to take on responsibilities;
- That the meeting will grow, especially the children's meeting;
- That we will become more of a visible presence in our local community;
- That we will deepen our relationships within the meeting, getting to know one another's gifts;
- That we will continue evolving: deepening our spiritual life, and developing further our work on peace education, sustainability and outreach;
- That we will make even more use of Hedd Wen as a wonderful resource for outreach and 'in-reach'.

Mid - Wales and Southern Marches Area Meetings Newsletter March 2016

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and reflection sessions and we decided to use January's designated chapter in *Faith and Practice, Chapter Two: Approaches to God –worship and prayer* -as the basis for our Discussion Group in January 2016 to discover together how our book of discipline can speak to our condition and deepen our spiritual lives.
Discussion with individuals and monthly discussion groups have made a significant contribution and we have been inspired by a wide range of activities and events including engagement with Area Meeting Annual Quaker Camp and participation in Area Meeting Residential Weekend.

Our first Pilgrimage Walk (from Abergavenny to Brecon) during which we walked, talked and shared silence was organised in June 2013. We were joined by members from AM and were fortunate to have splendid weather which further enhanced our experience.

Shared lunches held on 5th Sundays help us get to know each other and learn about others needs and situations through guest speakers and presentations.

"Struggling with Business Meetings" has enhanced one Friend's development as has involvement in the running of meeting for another Friend who has appreciated:

"Doing Quaker jobs in meeting and going on training courses."

Abergavenny Friends have undertaken training to enable them to fulfil various roles e.g. Clerk, Nominations and all our Elders and Overseers attended *Woodbrooke & Quaker Life Eldership and Oversight Training 2015.*

Friends interested in exploring Buddhism have visited Palpung Changchub Dargyeling Karma Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Brynmawr and received guidance and teachings on compassion from resident teacher, Venerable Choje Lama Rabsan.

Since last October 2015 our newly introduced art group *Drawing in the Spirit* has enabled some of us to find the place that allows us to give visual expression to deep feelings whether joys, concerns or sadness – "*expression to things of the heart".*

uniqueness of each individual and the diversity of gifts they bring; for being supportive, nourishing and inspiring.

Weekly MfW is held on Sundays at Llanfoist Village Hall, we have also held mid-week MfW at Glaslyn Court Nursing Home, Maes y Ffynnon retirement/sheltered housing complex and Mardy Park Resource Centre Care Home.

In the words of one Friend, "*Meeting for Worship is central to us all*." and valued whatever the time, place or format in which it is held.

Since 2013 one of our members has undertaken the role of Quaker Prison Chaplain at Usk Prison which has greatly enriched our Quaker life. This Friend is supported by a rota of volunteers, seven of whom are from Abergavenny meeting. She writes:

"I am especially grateful for the increased support of my local Meeting this year. The Meeting at Usk [Prison] is a very positive experience for Friends …Abergavenny Elders and Overseers have offered to support me in my role as chaplain and it is comforting to know that I have the support of the local Meeting as well as AM."
In the past year we have established links with Park Street Community Centre which has twice served as an alternative venue for MfW and also for a Labyrinth and Light workshop in which we used the labyrinth as part of our worship and outreach.

Past activities which have contributed to Spiritual Development

Abergavenny Friends have learned through talking, reading and sharing.

Advices & Queries (A&Q) has been read regularly in MfW with individual copies recently made available to all those attending. Friends have observed that particularly helpful passages in A&Q vary according to life changes and life events, ably summed up by one:

"There is something in A&Q for all situations"
Some of our Friends responded individually to the recent invitation *Reading Quaker faith & practice Autumn/Winter 2015/16* to explore Quaker faith & practice through a programme of monthly reading

Editorial

Dear Friends,

If all goes according to plan, we shall very shortly be moving down to Bristol, to be close to our young grand-daughters as they are growing up. In this electronic age, it should be perfectly possible for us to continue producing your Newsletter, but we have been doing the job for a number of years now and feel that this is probably the right time for us to ask to be released from the post.. A number of Friends have expressed the view that an online version would meet today's needs and cut down on the use of paper, ink and postage, so this is another aspect that Friends might like to consider.

In the meantime, we are keeping on file contributions for the next issue, due in July.

Any Friends reading this, who might like to express an interest in taking over, would be warmly welcomed by Nominations Committee.

Yours in Friendship,

John and Felicity Rogers, editors

For the time being, please continue to send contributions for publication in the Newsletter to:

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Quaker Camp (QC) Report, Rhayader, 2015, Week 1.

QC arrived at a field of waist-high hay and imagine our surprise when it transpired that Janet Blann had booked the wrong field. The speed with which our host scythed and baled was a testament to modern farming. Though in all the confusion, Laurie Moyes pitched his tent in the middle of the designated car park. The field turned out to be perfect, flat with no thistles and a river running at one end. But oh, the bleating! We were woken with the bleating, we had bleating through the day and bleating as we went to bed. Charlie Nicholls would just not keep quiet. (It was the sheep really!)

With 67 eager campers (XX were children – Mikki do you know?), QC was bursting at the seams with optimism and enthusiasm. Whilst in theory we are opposed to slavery, the QC newbies were made to earn their stripes by working heroically from dawn 'til dusk, Linda even producing a miracle of focaccia loaves from the crumbling cook van. (One of the two ovens no longer works).

Energetic activities abounded – cycling, walking, swimming, early-morning bird watching as well as Quakerly non-competitive rounders plus competitive singing. (These were the other way around!). Creative juices also flowed with string globes, felting, henna tattooing, friendship bracelets, camp-pendant-making, crocheting and knitting. Everyone came together to produce squares for a blanket for our youngest camper Merryn. Obviously a more dangerous occupation than I realised, as beekeepers' helmets have to be worn. (To keep the insects away really).

Although no longer physically present at Camp, Jim Waterhouse's presence was enjoyed through a beeswax candle-making activity using materials from his house. One candle was lit for morning worship and a great (F)friend was remembered with humour and love.

Whilst remembering people and camps of the past, we lived in the present and celebrated the extraordinarily peaceful, equitable and tranquil nature of QC. This led some to reflect upon inequalities and injustices elsewhere in the world including the deliberate devaluation of our welfare state and the denigration of our environment. Ten 'not in our name' statements as well as 'in our name' statements are being taken forward under the slogan 'close the gap'. (A document is attached to this report).

QC's reputation for dealing with minor medical emergencies such as migraines, sore teeth, cuts and bruises is clearly spreading as cyclists passed by especially to fall off their bikes and give themselves over to our tender care. The unexpected visitors were patched up, taken to hospital, fed and given a place to stay and sent on their way.

There was a surplus of birthdays at this year's QC. Penny, poor dear, woke up on two mornings claiming it was her birthday. We had to celebrate with her twice to stop her getting any more confused. Okay, I must admit that most of

Abergavenny Local Quaker Meeting

Spiritual Life Report to Area Meeting February 2016

In preparing for this Spiritual Life Report Abergavenny Friends met in an atmosphere of worship after a shared lunch, to consider a series of questions which were circulated to everybody at Local Meeting. Responses have been drawn upon in writing this report and included.

Our last report to Area Meeting in April 2013 reflected on our history from humble beginnings in the 1990's as a Recognised Meeting and on our growth since 2001 when we became a Local Meeting. We are now well established yet aware that recent losses have brought changes to our membership.

Abergavenny Local Meeting

Abergavenny Meeting currently has 31 adults including 19 members. Average attendance at Meeting for Worship on Sundays is between 15 and 20. Until recently we held Children's meeting twice a month, but because we now have so few children interested in attending, this will drop to once a month in future. We hope to continue holding all-age worship and other all-age activities regularly, so that our children will continue to feel a connection to the meeting and the adults will continue to enjoy the young people's vital presence.

In common with many Meetings, we have members listed in 'the book' that no longer actively participate in our worshipping community. Our meeting is predominantly female and a significant number of members and attenders fall into the category of 'single Quaker in family'.

Meeting for Worship

Friends and attenders value Abergavenny Meeting for its Meeting for Worship (MfW) - the shared silence and ministry, the depth of worship; friendliness, caring, sharing and acceptance; for the

the Alps. In the event, the youngest and oldest participants were both Quakers. Churches all over the UK and worldwide held prayer services and workshops to draw the attention of their congregations to the urgency of the talks.

Indigenous groups were very active in the run up to the talks, holding prayer ceremonies and rituals
lasting days, and other religions made worldwide declarations in support of global climate justice – an Islamic Declaration was followed by a Hindu and then a Buddhist one

During the talks there was an Interfaith Service attended by many of the delegates in a church on the site, and Sarah Nightingale, a Friend from Almeley Meeting initiated 'The Wave' – sending Love and Light to the talks at 4.35pm daily.

I firmly believe that all the love, thoughts and prayers sent from all over the world made a huge difference. I was privileged to attend Meeting for Worship in Paris the day after the big demonstration when the talks ended, where Lindsay Fielder Cook, the QUNO representative who had attended the talks ministered movingly about how the focus of the talks shifted from economics to considering the moral issue of the need to protect the small island states from losing their land.We also learned that a last-minute phone call from the Pope had saved the day when a Latin American state had refused to sign up to the agreement on the last day. It seemed to me like a movement of the Spirit.

It is now up to us to push our politicians to keep their promises, as well as continuing to hold them in the Light that they will have the courage to stand up to vested interests and see it as a moral issue which demands courage and boldness.. We must keep alive Love, Faith and Hope.

Gwen Prince
Llanidloes LM

the extra birthdays were mine. You wait all year for your birthday to come round, and then two come at once!
This QC was a much welcome return to Rhayader where we camped in 2007. When Mike Williams asked the farmer whether it rained much in Rhayader, he was told ‘why do you think they built the dam here?’ And rain it did – but never when expected. So much so, the children developed a little rhyme:
Whether the weather be good,
Whether the weather be bad,
Whether the weather be good or bad,
Don’t ask Susannah! (Her daily reliance upon the weather forecast was misplaced!)
So, we lived in the present, remembered the past and thought about the future. As we look at the young people, the children, the babies and those yet to be born, we know the future is in good hands.

CAMP REPORT Week 2
RHAEDER 2015

This year Camp took place in a part of Wales called Rhaeader, (Rhayader). We had a very nice river in which we had a great time, the river is fed by the Élan valley dams. These dams provide great cycling and walking tracks to get to them, even so, a few people went up in cars.
On Saturday, of the second week, everyone arrived at Quaker Camp welcomed by an unstoppable shower of rain which was followed by strong winds.
On Sunday, the adults had a long Meeting for Worship, the children, as always had children's Meeting, but this time they didn't play games, instead, they put together 8 "Not in my name" statements to accompany the adult's "Not in my name". In the afternoon we went walking or biking to the dam's visitor centre. ¡¡Despite the rain everyone made it!! On the way back Inti, one of the kids who was riding a bike, had a dramatic but safe accident, he punctured one tyre so he borrowed Jim's bike and Jim had to walk 4 miles to get back to camp with Inti's bike.
Monday was very wet and windy. In the night the marquee fell down. Luckily Jim, a visitor from South Wales (who had cycled 5 hours to get here) pulled it back up early in the morning. Unfortunately, it wasn't a very nice day. So not many people went on outside excursions, it was mainly spent at the swimming pool.
On Tuesday most children went to Quackers, a covered amusement-barn that was nearby. Also, Veronica and Tim typed into the computer the "Not in my name" statements. A few people braved walking or cycling but the swimming pool still received a few campers.
On Wednesday the weather got better and the sun managed to beat the clouds and made its way through. At last, we got to have some proper cycle rides, walks and outdoor activity in general.
Thursday was also a very nice day although lots of kids went to the pool because there was a floating inflatable at the pool. Laurie and his family went to Quackers

and Laurie went down the "death slide"!! There was also an open tent evening in which everyone opened their tent for people to see, Mike judged the tents and gave the results at the Camp Concert on Friday.
Friday was a great day in which lots of people cycled, walked or took the car up to the third dam because the rangers made an open day in which we could go into the dam. The kids enjoyed singing loudly in the dark passageway. The Camp Concert, as always was great, we were visited by Abiyoyo, Sam Nichols and Riley performed a
spectacular surprise act dancing to "What does the fox say??" and not to mention the amazing camp report.
Saturday was a sad day because we had all the goodbyes, but, even so it was fun while we took the marquee and the rest of the tents down and filled in the toilet pits.
Sam Ruiz

Dolobran Quaker Meeting House

This chapel holds seasons of silences
In its brick hands cupped between trees and fields;
Outside, the plainsong of wind's cadences
And window panes which fleeting sunlight gilds.

We come to gather harvests of stillness
Where birdsong enters by an open door;
Together, we weave peace like a necklace
To wear against the world's deafening roar.

We listen to those whisperings within
Like footsteps muffled by tracks of deep snow;
Here, air between earth and heaven is thin
And prayers are thoughts which are free to flow.

Like dews of spring dawns when grass blades glisten,
We come here not to speak but to listen.

James Knox Whittet

Spiritual Activism and the Paris Climate Talks

George Monbiot described the outcome as 'both a miracle and a disaster'. A miracle because no one expected all nations to agree on a goal to limit global temperatures to 1.5 degrees of warming. A disaster as there are no means of ensuring that promises will be kept.

Civil society played a major part in making sure politicians knew the eyes of the world was upon them, and hoped they would deliver a significant agreement, but before the talks expectations were not high, and predictions were that negotiations would result in an agreement which would put us on a path towards a catastrophic 2.7 degrees temperature rise. But I believe that faith communities played a significant role in the unexpected outcome.

Quakers have been involved in the climate talks for some years: QUNO, the Quaker United Nations Office has been engaged in researching The Human Impact of Climate Change, and has been concerned with including the issue of human rights into the talks. QUNO has particularly focused on supporting poorer nations who cannot afford the big delegations and the many researchers which the rich countries bring with them. It also crucially provides a quiet space away from the media spotlight where negotiators can sit and talk to each other.

Other faith groups have played a crucial part in different ways. After the hurricane which devastated the Philippines, climate negotiator Yeb Sano called for people worldwide in 2013 to 'Pray and Fast for the Climate', which was supported on the first day of each month in Britain by diverse groups including CAFOD, St Martins in the Fields and Finsbury Park Mosque. Pope Francis produced an Encyclical which was subtitled 'On Care for our Common Home' in which he berated the rich nations for greed and for doing little to tackle the environmental crisis which disproportionately impacts the poor and leads to the tragic rise of migrants. Quakers in Devon produced a leaflet calling on Friends to hold world leaders in the Light at 9pm every evening, and The World Council of Churches proposed a 'Pilgrimage to Paris' from Rome walking 1,500 km over

In early November Susanna Grunsell [Hereford Meeting] and I attended a pilot Regional Meeting for Quaker Prison chaplains and volunteers at Redland Meeting House in Bristol. I feel very grateful to the QPM committee and to Marlene Schepers at Friends House for providing another more intimate setting to discuss common issues and possibly to work together more closely on a regional level. Workshops on welcoming ex offenders into local meetings or introducing AVP into prisons are possibilities for more local collaboration.

Perhaps the highlight for me as well as for the attenders at Usk was the performance on a Saturday afternoon in the prison chapel of *Red Flag over Bermondsey* -The Ada Salter Story, written and performed by Lynn Morris. *She tells the story of a woman described as "a true radical, campaigner for equal rights, socialist, republican, pacifist, environmentalist, trade union activist and a leading light in the transformation of the Bermondsey slums in the early part of the twentieth century".*
The 65 minute performance was followed by interesting discussion and was good Quaker outreach within the prison.
With the help of volunteers, I plan to hold further sessions, *Finding out about Quakers* at about six week intervals on Saturday afternoons in 2016.

Contact with other members of the Usk chaplaincy team has been non existent this year and there have been only two meetings for prison chaplains in the South Wales Area. This has been due to a radical changeover in staff at Usk and Cardiff. I will attend the next team meeting scheduled for 6th December at HMP Swansea.
In all this has been an interesting year and I continue to learn so much from the professional teams and from the men who attend Meeting. I am sure that all our Quaker volunteers feel privileged to share the silence of the prison on a Wednesday afternoon.
Hilary Beynon Abergavenny LM

Report on Meeting for Sufferings
4 – 6 December 2015

This meeting was held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre over the first weekend in December. It was the second ever residential Meeting for Sufferings and the first time our new group had met together residentially. The idea had been to provide opportunities for us to get to know each other better, deepening our sense of fellowship and building a worshipping community together.
It worked. There must have been over 150 of us living together in the same space for the weekend. The first thing about a Quaker gathering of this size (or larger in the case of Yearly Meeting) is the excitement (and sometimes relief) of living and participating in a friendly community of like-minded and like-spirited people. The notion that most of your fundamental thoughts and ideas will speak to the condition of nearly everyone present (and vice versa) is enormously gratifying and uplifting.
It was a good meeting which covered a lot of ground and generated a lot of words, papers and reports. The main theme addressed was the health (or otherwise) of Britain's Area Meetings, about which more in a minute. Other topics included:

- Book of Discipline Revision Preparation. The group leading this is encouraging us all to read Quaker Faith & Practice more and all Friends and attenders are encouraged to pursue this. Supporting material is available on the Being Friends Together website and a conference is planned for later this year.
- Reports from other European Yearly Meetings. These shed light on what it's like to be a Quaker in another European country, where Quaker life is on a much smaller scale but still perfectly formed. I was struck by the plea for more activism and speaking out expressed in the Ireland Young Friends Epistle which simply said "Too much silence: where is the Quaker voice?"

- A minute was received expressing grave concern about the provisions contained within the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) which many Friends believe to be contrary to the Quaker testimonies of truth and integrity, equality and justice, in that corporations and multinationals are able to operate outside national judicial systems, and force through trade decisions which take precedence over national judiciaries and the will of national governments.
- Another minute was received from a Britain Yearly Meeting Housing threshing event which put forward a number of positive suggestions to counter the current housing crisis including positive investment in sustainable housing, supporting Quaker Housing Trust, funding pilot schemes, downsizing our houses and sharing our homes with others.

Our focus on Area Meetings was prompted by the Meeting for Sufferings Roadshows held in 2014 and 2015 which discovered a wide gulf between some lively and energetic AMs and others which are barely operational. To consider the implications of this and discuss ways forward we were divided into home groups which met three times over the weekend. My group comprised all the representatives from Wales, the Welsh borders and Scotland, and we formed a close-knit group with many shared issues and ideas.

But first, a snapshot of the 71 AMs in Britain:

- **People** – the smallest AM has just over 70 members and attenders (Wensleydale and Swaledale) and the largest over 800 (Central England).
- **Meetings** – there are two local meetings in Wensleydale & Swaledale AM, while Central England has 16.
- **Geographic area** – North London AM covers a relatively tiny area, whereas North Scotland AM covers more than half of Scotland,

Frequency of meetings – some AMs meet every month while others only meet four times a year.

provides an opportunity for listening.

Early in 2015 Jane Harries of AVP Wales made a very detailed presentation to prison staff, to the managing chaplain and to the prison psychologists on the value of AVP within a prison. I had hoped to introduce workshops into the prison following the visit of the Bolivian Friend last year and the interest of one of our attenders who had already trained as a facilitator in another prison. Unfortunately, the idea was rejected for the time being on grounds of cost and the suitability for the prison population at Usk, but Jane and I have not given up on the idea! At the very least it has led to my training to become a facilitator for AVP.

I now have a rota of volunteer supporters, each one of whom attends with me at approximately 5 week intervals: three from Caerleon Meeting, seven from Abergavenny, one from Hereford, two from Ross and one from Gloucester.

I am especially grateful for the increased support of my local Meeting this year. The Meeting at Usk is a very positive experience for Friends and is, I suspect, enriching our Quaker life at Abergavenny. Elders and Overseers have offered to support me in my role as chaplain and it is comforting to know that I have the support of the local Meeting as well as AM.

One of our attenders at Usk has become a talented embroiderer during his time there. His work was recently exhibited at Cardiff Millennium Centre following an award from The Koestler Trust for Prison Art. We have also exhibited his work at Area Meeting in Almley, in Hedd Wen, Abergavenny, and at Hereford and Gloucester Meeting Houses.

Again in October 2015 the annual Conference for Quaker Prison Chaplains at Woodbrooke was of great relevance and help. It is always an opportunity to share ideas and experiences and to learn more about the prison service. The theme this year was *Mental Health in Prisons* and the main speaker was Juliet Lyon from *The Prison Reform Trust*.

took the trouble to get to know others, including her carers. Shopping in town with Jeannie always took a long time as so many people would recognise her and come up to chat.

Jeannie was given lifts to Meeting for Worship for a time, but when her back became too painful when sitting still she gave up coming. Post-polio syndrome hit her very badly, and she became progressively worse. This resulted in depression and more of a focus on her pain. Visiting became difficult and visitors tended to drop off, so apart from her carers, medical/social practitioners, and family she saw few people.

Jeannie struggled bravely with her disabilities, but in some ways her personality changed as she suffered more and more from increasing pain. Possibly the epilepsy also had an effect. She tried to show an interest in local affairs and in the Quaker meeting, but it was obviously an effort. However she was still very hospitable, and flashes of humour came out occasionally.

Quaker Chaplain's Report
December 2015

This is my second report as QPM at HMP Usk.

Meeting for Worship is held at HMP Usk every Wednesday afternoon at 3.00 pm and attendance is now regularly about 8 men with one or two often appearing after Meeting to join us for tea and biscuits. There is a core of attenders who regularly encourage others to come and find out about Quakers. It has been particularly heartening that the group has held their own Meeting when I have been on holiday. The men come from a variety of religious backgrounds and none, but all seem to appreciate the silent worship and the time spent in contemplation away from noisy prison life. Only one man is registered as a Quaker. Everyone seems to enjoy the conversation over tea and biscuits; this often

- **Constituency** – many AMs are centred on one or two larger inner city meetings surrounded by smaller meetings, while others are primarily rural.
- **Resources** – while some AMs have significant investment portfolios and beautiful, well kept buildings, others have extremely limited resources; many own buildings which have become a burden.

The challenges confronted by struggling AMs are not hard to imagine and some are not new. They include: difficulty in appointing clerks; low attendance with some members never present; heavy workloads falling on the shoulders of too few Friends; AMs in the wrong place and at the wrong time; Friends who believe that AM is for others and not for them; Friends who find the business process too technical, archaic or complicated, and describe it as boring.
Participants at the roadshows said it was hard to engage people for whom the local meeting is all that matters. Yet our religious structures will struggle to survive if the majority favour congregationalism. Other problems raised include the distance to travel to AM (a two-hour drive for some); lack of public transport; lack of a children's meeting; difficulty finding competent people to undertake key roles; an ageing membership.
However we also heard signs of hope and encouragement where Friends are successfully building vibrant communities within their area meetings. An example often cited is that of Northumbria AM which used to be attended only by the "hardy perennials", rarely saw new faces and "focussed too much on business and not enough on raising the spirits of Friends." Following a wide consultation they implemented many changes including an AM Working Group which meets four times a year to discharge all routine business matters, leaving the AM free to focus more on learning and spiritual development.
Other examples of good practice, opportunities to consider, and visions to aspire to invited us to:

- Introduce special events, themes and gatherings to AM
- Include more spiritual stimulation and learning

- Let it be known that attenders are just as welcome at AM as members
- Make AM a place for fun, food and fellowship
- Leave more routine business items for trustees to deal with
- Share roles where necessary
- Use IT as much as possible
- Consider AM as an event participated in by a caring community
- Give thought to what would make AM unmissable
- Why not include music, singing or dancing from time to time?
- Be imaginative about the kind of speakers invited to talk to AM
- What can be done to make AM feel more like a community in its own right?
- What more can be done to value and cherish those who attend AM already?

So what does any of this mean for our own AM? Well the first thing to say is that the health and wellbeing of Mid Wales AM is up there in the top echelon of Britain's AMs, based on the high proportion of members attending our AM compared with most others. We can also point to the hard work, skill and dedication of our clerk, assistant clerk, treasurer and nominations team who ensure that our business is attended to with great efficiency. And whilst we are not immune to many of the challenges cited earlier, we have managed to find ways round many of them.

Moreover, the fact that, at the instigation of our clerks, we are trying new arrangements for our AMs during 2016, demonstrates that we are actively seeking to make our meetings for business more manageable, with more scope for spiritual input, learning and who knows what else. Maybe fun, food and fellowship is more achievable than we might imagine.

David Jones, Llanidloes LM

Jeannie was a very sociable friendly person who enjoyed meeting others and social gatherings She and the boys attended the regular Area Meeting Quaker camps on four occasions (1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993) when the boys were young, and they attended by themselves at two later camps. Jeannie was secretary of the local Polio Society for a time and organised outings. She participated in all the activities of which she was able, including Ludlow U3A, a painting group in the Assembly Rooms, and outings arranged by a group for people with disabilities, which included riding, carriage driving and other activities. Jeannie helped for a time at a centre run by the Shropshire Mental Health Day Service on Sunday afternoons. She worked for a few months at the Four Rivers Nursing Home as an art therapist even when she was quite badly disabled. She went to Woodbrooke on several occasions and greatly enjoyed the company. She enjoyed social gatherings at the Meeting House and participated by reading poetry.

Jeannie was a very practical, down-to-earth, and meticulous person. She knew where all her things were, and they had to be put back in the same place if one had got them out for her. She paid someone to do her filing and check her bank statements with her. Though she only had a small gravel garden, she paid someone to cut the hedge and do general tidying up.

Jeannie was very fond of animals, and she owned a cat for a time. She was a vegetarian.

Jeannie had a sense of humour and could laugh at herself. She was very honest about her feelings and a comfortable person to be with as she was natural and uninhibited. When in a group she was quick to notice anyone on their own or who seemed to need help. She was very interested in people and

Testimony to the grace of God in the life of
Jean (Jeannie) Winifred Brookes (27.10.48 – 25.6.15)

Jeannie was one of the very few Ludlovians associated with Ludlow Meeting. She was born shortly after her parents, Frank and Winifred Burlingham, moved to Ludlow in 1946 when Frank, a craftsman in wood, joined the furniture business set up by Arthur Reynolds, also a Quaker. Together the Burlinghams, Reynolds and another Quaker craftsman, Frank Gregory and his family, founded Ludlow Meeting in 1947. Thus, Jeannie, with her younger brother Paul, was one of the first children of the meeting.

Jeannie had polio when she was about six months old, which resulted in a permanent handicap in her back and legs, which grew worse as she became older. She also suffered from a minor form of epilepsy which developed later. However, she trained as an art therapist and worked in hospitals in London. Her mother was a good artist and Jeannie inherited much of this talent and did very impressive paintings herself. She composed a particularly striking one of angels, in which she was interested at the time.

Jeannie was a birthright Friend, as both her parents were Friends. She resigned in adulthood, but kept contact with Ludlow Meeting and came to worship when she felt able. She married Robin Brookes and had two boys with him, Nicholas and Joseph. When her marriage broke down Jeannie had care of the boys. Sadly, Nick died aged 18, causing Jeannie much distress. His passing had a massive affect on her life, but she faced her loss with courage and focussed on ways to manage her feelings and find peace, finding strength in helping others.

Joe is a studio-based professional photographer, and with his wife owns a guest house in Ludlow to which long- and short-stay guests are welcome.

Leominster Friends' report

Meeting for Worship in Leominster started in May 2014 and is held every last Friday of the month, from 10.30 to 11.00, at the Community Centre in School Road. At the time of writing we usually have five people attending, all of whom of whom are members of Ludlow Meeting. We have had the occasional visitor, but they have not returned. A member of Almeley Meeting came once, as we are known to other Quaker meetings in the Area. We all enjoy the time for quiet reflection. We go to the old Forbury Chapel for coffee and chat afterwards, which is a pleasant social occasion.

We are represented by John Nurse on the Churches Together in Leominster committee which meets five times a year. Help was given at the Christmas lunch for people on their own, which is organised by CTiL. We took part in county-wide planning meetings about poverty in Herefordshire and about how the county can respond to refugees from Syria, and were asked for advice about the DBS process by the local food bank organisers. Help is also given at some of the Priory Church activities, including arrangements for sending relief for the recent influx of refugees from the Middle East.

We have a poster in the Community Centre, but we have not actively publicised our Meeting so far. We should probably discuss this shortly. As we meet on a Friday it does not clash with other church services, some members of which might be interested, as well as those who do not regularly attend any place of worship. We would also welcome other members of Ludlow Meeting, and the Area Meeting.

Margot Sutton, John Nurse, Helen Green, Annie Wood, Anne Adams
January 2016

Joan Thwaites 31.10.1943 to 20.5.2015

Joan seems to have come into contact with Quakers when she was searching for some kind of faith. Her twin daughters were already born by then. She joined Quakers at the Ludlow Meeting and was a member by 1978.
She became involved in the Quaker camps which are held regularly in Herefordshire and started going to them with her daughters, Miriam and Isobelle in 1978. Joan was described as “a fiercely independent person with some health problems who did sterling work as camp treasurer in the late 80s“. She was also a great help with the the cooking, at which she was an expert. The family stopped going to Camp in 1988, but for a time the girls were taken to Ludlow Quaker meeting by others. Joan did not attend regularly or at all, perhaps because she was a care worker and worked at weekends. Joan lived in Leominster most of her adult life, and became very much involved in local activities and organisations. She was an expert on the computer and a great help with voluntary organisations, for example, digitising early photos of Leominster for the library. When the tourist information office was to be closed she ran a campaign to keep it open and collected 3000 signatures. She then helped to set up Leominster Country Tourist Association under local control and was treasurer for 4 years. She took on the role of costume mistress for the local theatre company and became the driving force for what became the Playhouse Theatre. She campaigned against out of town superstores and the closure of the post office. She was also a great campaigner for wildlife and a member of the Badger Group. She was a member of Leominster in Bloom and instrumental in it receiving a gold medal award. She was also a member of the Green Party, and managed the cooking for the annual Apple Fair. She was a town councillor for a year. Where ever there was a good cause needing support Joan was there. She was always cheerful and would never give up, however hard the struggle seemed.

Joan died after a long illness which she fought hard.

in designing and illustrating programmes for the Aldeburgh Festival, and had the added delight of being invited to attend.

In 1969 Roger accepted a post as Information Officer with Brecon Beacons National Park, and they moved to Llanfrynach village just outside Brecon. Here he became a loved and respected member of Brecon Meeting, being at various times an Elder and very conscientious Treasurer where his calligraphic skills were evident in his meticulous book-keeping. Some of the beautifully designed notices he produced are still used by by Brecon Meeting.

Roger was fully involved in the local community, designing and making, along with Meg, sets for the Brecon Little Theatre. He was active in Brecon Wildlife Trust; Council for the Protection of Rural Wales; Friends of the Museum and Christian Aid.
He was a Voluntary Warden for the National Park and a member of the Mountain Rescue Team as well as supporting the Liberal Party; CND; Greenpeace; Amnesty International and the Welsh Refugee Council.

In later years when Meg developed Alzheimerss, Roger devoted himself to caring for her; a task he carried out with incredible love and forbearance.

In Brecon Meeting Roger was respected for his quiet wisdom and absolute reliability. Although a man of few words, those words were always a result of careful and deep consideration. If conflict arose, Roger would find the right words to resolvethe situation. He is greatly missed.

who my person was and I found a solution of asking other people to give the gifts to my secret friend.
Over all, we both had an absolutely amazing experience and have made a group of lovely, long lasting friends who we still keep in contact with.
We can keep thinking about our friends through reading our "cosy glows" which were little books that we made that our friends wrote in and vice versa.

Thank you very much.

Eleanor and Hannah Rowland Montgomery LM

Testimony to the life of John Roger Stevens

11th February 1933 - 27th July 2015

Roger was a birthright Friend whose father taught Arts and Crafts at Leighton Park Quaker School where Roger and his elder brother Michael attended.

He went on to study Fine Art and Typography at Reading University where he met his future wife Margaret Rowe. (Meg). Upon graduation Roger was called up for National Service and as he was a conscientious objector he worked at The Retreat, the Quaker home for the mentally ill, in York.

Following marriage, he became a Typographer and Designer with Benhamsprint company and they moved to a cottage in Tiptree where their daughters, Bridget and Hannah were born. The next move saw them living in Suffolk in a house that Roger had had built. As part of his work at Benhams, Roger and Meg were involved

Peace Education report Jan 2016

The project is growing faster than we envisaged. We have now completed 18 programmes and have 9 more running this term. We have run a second batch of training and are now anxious to make use of these keen and committed volunteers. There continue to be new volunteers approaching us, either as a result of talks or word of mouth.

Two major bits of progress since the last report - one of our volunteers, Alma Whitten, is now helping me with some of the admin; and we have finally managed to recruit a Welsh-speaking tutor. So we have been able to start making use of our Welsh-speaking volunteers and have started two programmes at Talybont primary. I am interviewing another Welsh-speaking tutor at the beginning of Feb.

Speaking to the primary heads cluster group meetings seems to be the best way to recruit schools – they phone up the next day. There have been three of these talks completed or arranged since the last report.

I have contacted the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project, who are the nearest equivalent to what we do (geographically but also in what they do). They are a bigger organisation – office and paid staff etc. and run courses of 20 hours over 10 weeks as opposed to our 6 hours over 6 weeks, but they are very interested to come and see what we do and their co-ordinator is coming to observe a session shortly.

I have also suggested to Woodbrooke that we run a weekend course, in co-operation with the West Midlands group and with the Peace Education bit of QPSW, specifically on the subject of peace education and we are talking about that for 2017. The aim of this would be to encourage the spread of the idea across the Quaker community.

The Challenging Road to Peace exhibition that I mentioned last time is currently in Newtown library, till 30th Jan, and then we are transferring it to Aberystwyth Arts Centre on 3rd Feb to run till 16th March. Go and see it. It was put together by Tavistock Peace Action Group, (and very largely funded by Devon Quakers). They, principally Rupert Gude, have put an enormous amount of work into it and it is very impressive.

When Rupert brought it up he gave a talk at Llanidloes specifically about the First World War bit of the subject, which gave rise to lots of discussion and also resulted in three more volunteers for the peace education project. There is the possibility that he will also give a talk, at the National Library in Aberystwyth, when he comes to fetch the exhibition.

I recently sent a report on our progress to the trustees of the former Resolve Cymru, who gave us our major grant. Their Treasurer responded "it is wonderful to see what you have achieved to date. We obviously made the right decision in selecting The Friends to be the recipient of our funds and I hope that you will go from strength to strength. Before reading the email I had written to one of our former Resolve Cymru Team leaders saying how sad it was that we no longer had the organisation but you have cheered me up!"

Helen Porter Montgomery LM

made of glass. In here we would sit or lie down in silence for half an hour so we could reflect on the day. People had the opportunity to thank anyone who they had found helpful or to say what they had enjoyed about the day. After the half an hour we would sing a funny song that's lyrics briefly summed up what had happened that day. Funnily enough as the week went on, the song got longer and longer with the addition of new verses.
On Wednesday morning, we walked into Dunbar and were allowed to visit the town's shops, and then we had the chance to go swimming in the local swimming pool which even had a wave machine. That evening we settled down to watch a movie or play card and board games.
A highlight for me was the walk down to the beach on the last full day there because it was fun visiting the beach and paddling in the cold Scottish sea. However, my favourite part was Friday evening. Everyone stayed up until 2am. Earlier on we had chosen our own groups and were sent around the grounds to hear 6 different stories. The stories included Goldie Locks, Cinderella, Snow White, Red Riding Hood, the 3 Little Pigs and finally Jack and the Beanstalk. The stories were the Roald Dahl versions and the people telling them had dressed up in costumes to resemble the story they were telling.
My favourite part was the YPT -Young Peoples Team- wake up. At 6:30am we were woken up by water pistols and high pitched laughs and screams followed by a day of fun games and challenges.
Another highlight was the "secret friend" scheme. This was set up on the first day and carried on until the last. We were given a random name out of a hat; this name was now your secret friend. Throughout the week we could write notes, make crafts or purchase little gifts to give to our secret friend… without them knowing it was you! The first problem I came to was actually knowing whose name it was on the piece of paper. The next was finding a way of getting the gifts to them. However it soon became clear

Quaker Summer School

First of all, we'd like to thank you for providing us with the bursary that allowed us to take part in last year's Quaker Summer School.

We stayed in a private boarding school just a 20 minute walk from the centre of Dunbar. As soon as we arrived we instantly started playing bonding games such as walking into a tight circle and hold hands with 2 random people around you. The aim of the game was to untangle the knot of people without letting go of anyone's hands.

The days all had the same structure which was breakfast to start the day followed by gathering into our "family groups".

The family groups were the groups of about 12 people that were grouped together for the week. We became good friends with the people in our groups.

Family group time lasted from 9:30 to 10:15, and then everyone went for a half hour meeting for worship. A visitor would come in every day after the meeting. For example, on Monday a talented story teller came in.

We had free time after the gorgeous lunches at 12:30 each day. A family group challenge was arranged after that. My favourite challenge was the marshmallow and noodle challenge. The aim was to make the highest, free standing tower out of only marshmallows and raw noodles. These challenges were great as it got everyone to work together as a team and we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

We were never hungry as we were constantly served delicious dinners such as the evening dinner before the evening entertainment.

On Tuesday the entertainment was the Quaker Olympics. We had such fun taking part in the jelly throwing game as well as the obstacle course and the laser obstacle challenge… also known as trying to fit through the gaps in the string spider web without touching the sides!

To finish the day we would gather in the rosy room which was a comfy, circular, warm room with part of the wall

Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Marta Lombard circa 1936-39 - !5th March 2015

Marta was born to Jaime Jaramillio Arango and Anna Rosa de Rocha. They were both Colombians and part of the Colombian aristocracy. Jaime had been an eminent surgeon and then became a diplomat - the Colombian ambassador to Great Britain but more relevantly for those times in a Catholic country, they were not married.

Marta's childhood was spent mainly in London and France being raised by a variety of people. She did not know who her parents were and until she was 18 years old, believed her father to be her uncle.

As a young adult, Marta went to the Central School of Art and Design in London and it was here that she met Geoffrey Kiss, they married in 1959 and had two children. Marta then obtained a teaching diploma at Goldsmiths College. In 1967 the marriage failed; Marta remained in London, looking after her children, supplementing her teaching income by doing cleaning work.

Marta then moved to the Devon countryside to run a smallholding with her new partner Chris Reynolds. She became very involved in country life, making jams, wine, looking after the animals etc. However, a move to set up a dairy farm in Yorkshire was not successful and the relationship failed when Chris had an affair with a female student staying on the farm. Marta meanwhile had returned to her painting and was part of a group of artists meeting weekly. She was also teaching both French and Art at the adjoining private school.

Marta then had a number of moves to Colne in Lancashire, Weston Super Mare and then in the late 1980s to Bristol. In Bristol, Marta re-immersed herself in studying and set up an art studio to do more

work. Through her many evening classes she met Arthur Chatters, a Mathematics lecturer at Bristol University; they were married in 1990.

At this time Marta was on a spiritual search and attended a variety of churches until coming to Redland Quaker Meeting. Here she found her 'home' and remained for some 20 years, until she and Arthur moved to Crickhowell in December 2011.

Bristol Friends write: "Marta was a regular contributor to and supporter of the Children & Young Peoples meetings at Redland over many years. She inspired groups with her love of painting, collage and food, encouraging everyone to get involved. Behind the scenes she helped maintain the smooth running of the children's meetings and was a regular volunteer in organising arts and crafts activities at our bi-annual Redland retreats. Marta also provided the artwork for our monthly newsletter, always finding something new – usually inspired by nature - to welcome us in. Her creativity included tapestry and she coordinated designing and making embroidery panels for the Q350 celebrations.

In our small sharing groups Marta was a breath of fresh air; regularly posing a question, challenging a view or commenting on an established idea with a new, often intuitive response, though always with love and absence of ego. Marta was a generous and hospitable person and her home was opened to our series of 'eightsome meals' gatherings.

Marta could be somewhat anarchic and chaotic at times, a reflection of her creative character. She was loving, kind, warm and generous, had many friends and was devoted to her family."

Marta's health was failing by the time she joined Abergavenny Meeting in 2012. Although we perhaps only saw echoes of the woman she had been, Marta was very much a part of the life of the Meeting, sharing her creative energy and enquiring mind. One of her abiding qualities that we still miss was her wonderfully wry, self-deprecating sense of humour, which never failed her despite all the health problems she grappled with.

At Marta's Memorial Meeting, held at Hedd Wen in July 2015, many people shared memories from her time locally and from further afield. We learnt from her son and daughter of a courageous woman who had overcome a very difficult childhood to become the generous loving person who had touched so many people's lives. Her daughter told us that when asked how she knew what sort of person to be, having had no role model because of her messed up childhood, Marta just laughed and said "Oh that's easy. I was just the antithesis of everyone I disliked". This recipe seemed to work for Marta – she was a very special person and we give thanks for her life.