promote the process. It is, therefore, with great regret that my absence from this meeting rather defeats this aim, but our holiday in Greece, which prevents my presence, was booked months ago, long before I was offered the opportunity to attend the conference, and before I was aware of the date of this meeting.
However, it became increasingly clear over the various subsequent sessions, of the amount of wisdom and experience, spanning several centuries, in this book and how it should be constantly adapted to meet the needs of our rapidly changing society and culture to ensure it still speaks truth to present and future generations of Quakers.
May I finally express my profound thanks for the opportunity to attend this conference, and my gratitude for the experience I had in doing so.

Ray Griffiths, May 2016

Dolobran Late Summer Gathering

A date for your diary-Sunday ***September 4th***

You are warmly invited to join Dolobran Friends, bringing your own picnic lunch to eat from 1p.m.

Followed by Meeting for Worship at 2.30

And tea afterwards.

You will be able to see all the improvements since John Lloyd gifted the Meeting house and its surrounding land to Mid Wales AM.

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Angie Polkey, Permaculture tutor, and she has kindly given me permission to share it with you.
To see photos from the weekend please visit my Twitter account https://twitter.com/Heathery_Wales
We were asked to make a personal commitment following the gathering & I have undertaken to find out more about opening an ethical savings account that is divested of fossil fuels and to subscribe to Ethical Consumer.

'Reading Quaker Faith and Practice'
Woodbrooke Study Centre, 22-24 April 2016.

About 40 or so representatives attended this conference. They came from all over the U.K. There was a wide age spectrum and we were all of very different experience. Some, like me, were very new, others had been Quakers all their lives. I was very impressed by the kindness and understanding of everyone there, including the facilitators, whom I found particularly helpful.
I do not intend to give a 'blow by blow' account of every session of the conference, save to say that the 'Welcome, Introductions and Scene Setting' session on the Friday evening emphasised that the reading programme was NOT part of a consultation process for revising QF&P. One of the issues appeared to be that QF&P was perceived not to be read as widely as it deserved to be, and members were not as familiar with it as might be the case.
The aims of the reading programme were to encourage the reading and discussion of the book on a systematic basis. The reading calendar had commenced in October 2015, and took the form of carefully chosen chapters (not in numerical order) allocated on a monthly basis.
I was quite surprised how patchy the take up of the programme was reported by the representatives present. Most were running well behind schedule; some had not even started! Practically everyone thought there was some sort of failure somewhere in the communication processes, despite the material available in flyers, periodicals and on various web sites.

The conference (I thought) was an attempt to deal with the communication gap so that representatives could return to their AMs full of enthusiasm to

We need to trust the corporate discipline of Minute 36 but how we will express it will vary with each individual; some may change their diet, their energy supplier, their mode of transport etc and some will be in a position to do more than others, but whatever we do we must support each other with compassion.

I attended the Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry workshop with Liz Burch and Laurie Michaelis and we discussed how we would benefit from sharing experiences, knowledge, skills and perhaps introducing the occasional celebratory ritual / event.

Later that day I went to the Design your Own Direct Action workshop and we had a playful and creative time planning how we would raise awareness of fossil fuel subsidies by protesting outside an open-cast coal mine with rolls of turf, daffodils, kites and mock solar panels.

The Saturday plenary session focused on how BYMSG could develop the following themes:

- Strengthening our community
- Political actions and climate change
- Changing the way we live
- Quaker core activity and property

There was a shared sense that sustainability should be at the core of all our activities because it is a cross cutting theme that underpins all out testimonies. However, many felt that we are struggling to achieve this aim because the wider Quaker community has not fully embraced it.

I think we are very fortunate in the mid Wales Area Meeting to have so many Quakers who are already leading the way by example. They have stories which could be beneficially shared amongst us to act as inspiration for change and as a source of advice and guidance. I would like us to question how we might do this and not only reap the benefits of a low carbon future but how these acts of transformation could also strengthen the bindings of our faith community.

The carbon footprint of my travel to The Hayes conference centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire was 25 kg carbon dioxide because I travelled by a combination of car, coach & train compared to a cost of 34 kg CO_2 if I had travelled alone in my diesel car. I hope that you feel it was carbon well spent!

If you would like to receive a copy of a simple carbon footprint calculator, please get in touch heather@sundaydance.co.uk. It was created by

Editorial

Dear Friends,

Felicity and I have very much enjoyed putting together this Newsletter over the past 10 years. We certainly feel that we have been enabled to keep in touch with Friends from both Mid-Wales and Southern Marches Area Meetings and we hope that many of our readers feel the same way too. As I write this, two Friends, having been on a fact finding mission, are considering whether they might be able to take over from us as Newsletter editors. We would have every confidence in their ability to keep the Newsletter going and would be only too happy to give any help that might be needed in the early stages. We would very much like to take this opportunity to thank The Catford Print Cemtre and Marina in particular for the professional service they have given us in printing the Newsletter over the years and would warmly recommend them to our successors.

In the hope that the Newsletter will continue, for the time being, please send material for publication to

John and Felicity Rogers
26 Mortimer Road, Montgomery, SY15 6UP
Telephone: 01686 668478

Or

john309rogers@btinternet.com

And we will forward contributions to the new editors

Area Meeting Weekend
At Cleobury Mortimer
February 12th - 14th 2016

Two reports of this weekend give us a really good flavour of the event

I attended this, my second, Area Weekend with a mix of apprehension and eager anticipation - apprehension because I always find meeting new people, especially in a large group, quite daunting (my social anxiety kicks in), eager anticipation because I was keen to learn more about "how to let my life speak" not one in seven but seven days a week.

On arrival I was welcomed warmly. The initial 'icebreaker' session on Friday evening helped me settle in amongst Friends and provided a helpful introduction to others. On Saturday we got 'down to work' addressing more serious issues. I was assigned to the group looking at Quaker Social Action on Funeral Poverty – very apt as I'm a member of the Funeral Arrangers Group and hadn't previously heard of the 'Down to Earth' project. Hopefully we will be able to progress this within AM at our meeting in March.

Stevie Krayer's presentation on *Spiritual Hospitality* was engaging. Not only did she provide a useful background to the project but also clearly spelled out what the term means – welcoming, openness, sensitivity, sharing, acceptance of diversity, being open to the needs of others. In essence *"seeking to know each other in the things that are eternal"*.

A brief after lunch practice session with Morag, Tim and Ruth in readiness for the evenings' entertainment, a gentle afternoon stroll (a welcome relief from sitting) and a rest before the evening meal helped prepare me, relax and then enjoy the many and varied talents within the assembly. It was wonderful to share music, dance, poetry etc. and have such an uplifting 'fun' time.

The Sunday morning sessions were stimulating – I learnt about the 'global' involvement of AM Friends – in Nepal, Russia, Belarus, Kenya … hearing, somewhat in awe, about what Friends who choose to travel outside the UK achieve. And then the shared Meeting for Worship – uniting us all through the children's puppetry and ministry – was so inspiring.

I greatly appreciated the experience and the opportunity to build

We've got the whole world in our hands

Heather Garrett reports back on her inspiring experiences of the Quaker Sustainability Gathering in Derbyshire in March

Responding positively to our commitment to becoming a low carbon community involves numerous adaptations in our habits both as a faith community and as individuals; at the first session of Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Gathering (BYMSG) we heard from Lis Burch how Quakers had grappled with the issues surrounding what is now called "sustainability" at many points in time dating back to 1669, when William Penn wrote in "No cross, no crown"; "*That the sweat and tedious labour of the farmer, early and late, cold and hot, wet and dry, should be converted into the pleasure of a small number of men – that continued severity should be laid on nineteen parts of the land to feed the inordinate lusts and delicate appetites of the twentieth, is so far from the will of the great Governor of the world, … [it] is wretched and blasphemous."*

The current call for change is much more urgent and requires a broad and deep commitment from us all. Facing this commitment causes anxiety and fear because the threat from the impact of climate change can sometimes seem overwhelming and inevitable. So the Gathering set out to explore how we might challenge and support each other to overcome the isolation, fear and inadequacy that many reported, in order to become a truly low carbon community.

The Gathering opened with three speakers: Gregory Normington, author, who used the story of Parsifal to show how creative metaphors can engage people's attention in a way that perhaps facts and figures do not.

Siobhan Grimes, Christian Climate Action, explained how direct action can convey the sense of urgency for change and act as a public theology.

Rachel Howell, drew on her professional social research to encourage us by saying how the weight of change in social norms can be under estimated and how adopting life style changes can be a powerful inspiration for others. This may mean living differently from those around us as the early Christians and Quakers were required to do. This "difference" means that it is very important to have a deep sense of community to offer support and nurture each other in our steps towards committed change.

exploring what God wants us to do in the last part of our lives; whether Quakers have become more reluctant to speak out against the misuse of power; being a 'pacifist in progress' and balancing protest and conciliation. I chose to attend the 'Being a pacifist in progress' discussion, which I found extremely useful, especially because of the group's honesty. We started with the questions 'Is it ok to be a 'pacifist in progress' or do we need to be unilateralists if we are Quakers? Are there gradations of unilateralism?' Some felt that they were certain about the need to dismantle our nuclear weaponry, but not so sure about not having an armed force without other countries doing the same. We heard some important and moving stories from the group about the difficulties and challenges experienced in following – or trying to follow- the peace testimony. We were all concerned about not being perfect in this area and explored thinking which might support us in this. Attenders in the group felt that it was a factor which had stopped them from becoming Members, as maintaining a pure pacifist stance instantly was difficult for some. We came away from the discussion feeling reassured that we were all struggling with this issue at some level, that we are trying to 'become' pacifist and that we would continue to move forward with the Testimony as our guide.
Some of the key points which emerged from talking together were:

- that being a pacifist is not an easy position to maintain in a complex world

- that peace making is messy - we need to take it one step / one decision at a time

- that becoming a pacifist is a personal transformational journey which we all want to embrace

The following day there was extended time to meet the staff of the QPSW team and ask further questions. During the final plenary, we were asked to take thanks back to our Meetings for the funding provided for this important work and given a list of ten ways to get involved at an individual, local meeting and Area Meeting level [see document for more details]. One of the main ways suggested was to uphold the work of QPSW – to share information and help others to become aware of the work – hopefully this report will help to do that.
Carol Satterthwaite Machynlleth LM

Ffriendships with others presented by this valuable weekend. My thanks are due to the organisers, those Friends who transported me to and fro (you know who you are) thus saving me the task of driving, and for sharing the journey. *Spiritual Hospitality* is now on our Local Meeting Overseers Agenda and we hope to continue to explore and further integrate it within our own Local Meeting.

Glenys Phelpstead, Abergavenny LM

On Friday February 12th, fifty-five Friends ventured up and over Clee Hill, gaining incidentally a panoramic view of almost the entire Southern Marches Area, to reach *The Pioneer Centre* at Cleobury Mortimer. This was the third time the Area had come here for a week-end away, after similar events in 2012 and 2014. As before, we appreciated the comfortable accommodation, plentiful food and variety of spaces available for meeting together in formal and informal settings. While our ten young people made good use of the recreational opportunities the centre offers, the rest of us faced up to the challenges of the theme for the week-end: **Let Your Life Speak – It's a Seven Day a Week Thing!**
The Steering Group appointed to plan the event decided that we could find leaders from within our Area to provide the stimulus for discussion. So we found ourselves in small groups at our social concerns, following a revelatory account of the work of Quaker Social Action. Then we considered our local meeting's image and outreach. Another session focused on our role as a consumer / shopper. (The youngsters joined us for this one – shopping tends to be on their list of priorities!) By contrast we also looked at our concern for communities abroad – and the personal involvement that Friends could describe to us. In this context it was good to have a brief visit fro Jan Arriens who had just returned from Florida and told us of the current situation regarding Mike Lambrix (under sentence of death in prison there).
The Saturday afternoon walk was enlivened by an encounter with very sociable rare-breed pigs and the chance discovery of more badger setts than most of us had seen in a lifetime! The evening, as always on these occasions, revealed unexpected

talents among older Friends as well as precocious ones in the Young Friends.
All the events of the week-end, whether planned or informal, were intended to give opportunities for making new friendships and deepening the experience of being Friends together within our Area Meeting. Additionally there was general agreement that we must let our lives speak – being Quakers in the Southern Marches is “a seven-days-a-week thing”.

Clive Prior Ludlow LM

Report on Friends in Wales Meeting 27th February 2016

The first meeting of Friends in Wales in 2016 was held in the old school, now a health centre in the very beautiful hamlet of Glantwymen near Cemmaes Road. The journey north from Rhayader is one that I enjoy immensely, and it is a delight to be warmly welcomed into the venue by friends. There were 36 of us on this occasion.

Simultaneous translation was provided, as in most cases by D. Bryn Jones. Bryn has been providing this service to Friends in Wales for many years, without ever making any charge. Friends standing to make comments or to provide introductions to agenda items are free to do so in either Welsh or English. Nowadays the bulk of the business is carried out in English but, when a Welsh language contribution is made, Bryn springs into action quietly providing translation into the ear phones that all Friends are supplied with. Of course like so many of the rest of us, Bryn does not get younger as time goes by and while it is relatively easy for him to provide his service in North Wales venues, it is getting much more difficult in the mid Wales, or South Wales venues. The next meeting of Friends in Wales will be in our Area, at the Pales, and, although this presents Bryn with problems he is assisting me, as convenor of Arrangements Committee, to ensure that the service is available, for which I am truly grateful!

We then explored the barriers to climate justice, which included: our perceptions and values as societies; denial, complacency, a sense of hopelessness that the problem is insurmountable and our unwillingness as human beings to accept difficult and personal changes; the vested interests of power companies, governments, countries and individuals; the fact that our economic systems are based on profit; the elevated and central status of consumerism and the political control and short-termism of governments.
After further exploration into why power companies had become so powerful, we considered what else we could do to tackle the huge issue of achieving climate justice. The following suggestions were made:

- become more familiar with the QPSW work on Economic Justice and the leaflet ‘ Principals for a New Economy’ [what an economy would look like if it was based on Quaker principles and Testimonies];
- invest in national and local renewables schemes and make every personal effort to move from fossil fuels
- encourage the allotment movement
- investigate the Divestment movement [website: moveyourmoney.org – for a list of banks / finance companies who don’t invest in fossil fuels]
- get involved in Quaker Action campaigns e.g. divesting Meeting Houses finance if not done this already)

Workshop 2: ‘Quaker conciliation: how we do it’ [Leader – Judith Baker]
This workshop included information about highly confidential ongoing Quaker conciliation work and, whilst we were given permission to provide oral feedback, we were asked not to send a written report to Area Meetings. Written information about how to volunteer to serve on the QPSW Conciliation Group will be provided.
The final part of the programmed day was an ‘Open Space’ session, where individuals were asked to suggest themes for small group discussion. The process led to a number of interesting themes including the Palestine-Israel situation; how to sustain ourselves in our activism;

teaching us now – in this moment. Images from the protest at the British Museum by young Quakers who sat in Meeting in the foyer, as a way of protesting against BP sponsorship of the museum were shared. This was a spontaneous protest in the middle of a conference- a reminder for me that we need to continually challenge ourselves to become active.

Workshops

I attended two workshops during the day: 'Climate Justice and what does money have to do with it?' and 'Quaker conciliation: how we do it'.

Workshop 1: Climate Justice and what does money have to do with it? [Leader - Ellie Roberts]

After sharing our own individual stories of when and how we became aware of climate change and of our individual concerns, we then explored why climate change is a concern for Quakers as a group. The responses included living out the testimonies - of taking care of the Earth's resources; that many have a passionate care for all Creation; that we are aware as Quakers that the people who will suffer most will be the poor.

We then finished the following statement:

If we were to have climate justice we would have:

- agreement of how to use energy more effectively
- fair land and resources distribution
- lower CO2 emissions
- adequate investment and value of technology to combat climate change
- effective education programmes for developing countries [on use of renewables rather than fossil fuels]
- political manifestos which prioritised climate justice
- co-operatively / community owned and managed energy supplies
- a less consumeristic society

Deborah Rowlands of Lampeter Meeting, will be Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting this year, a service for which we all wish her well, but at MFW she was reporting on Cytun (Churches together in Wales) who organise the quiet space at the Eisteddfod and at the Royal Welsh Show. Quakers will be supporting the Cytun tent in both places again this year, and, as, this year, both events take place in "maes" in our Area (Abergavenny and near Builth), our membership will be supporting. Deborah and Frances Voelecker, who reported on Meeting for Sufferings, both touched on areas of ministry where British Quakers have made corporate undertakings, for example BYM Minute 09/36 on sustainability, but where there is not, apparently, full commitment. Our afternoon speakers would be telling us of their experience of developing the concept of Cities (or even Wales, as a Nation) of Sanctuary, while Jane Harries (Bridgend Meeting) and a Minute from South Wales AM drew our attention to the various pieces of work related to peace that are being undertaken by individual Friends. All these cry out for Friends' action. Our current outreach posters point out that Prayer is Action. Silent waiting can demand action, or be action. We each have to reach our own conclusions.

Gethin Evans (Aberystwyth Meeting) will be providing the first of the proposed three lectures at the National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny, organised by Friends in Wales. The lecture will be in Welsh, the language of the Eisteddfod, but simultaneous translation will be available. The talk will be on the Quaker publisher John Edward Southall of Newport (1855-1928). The Southall family were, of course, based in Leominster and were very active in developing what has become our Area Meeting.

I have just been nominated to join Meeting of Friends in Wales' focus group, a service which I find very exciting. The Focus Group have drafted a pre-election statement in advance of the Wales Assembly elections and this was approved at this meeting. It will be sent to all candidates for election to the Assembly; published on our website; sent to Cytûn for distribution through its own networks; copied to Meeting for Sufferings, BYM's parliamentary liaison officer, the clerk of General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) and otherwise circulated to

media. This document is available to Meetings or individual Friends to use in discussions with Assembly candidates or more generally. There is a growing recognition among Friends' House staff that political devolution has present and potential significance for BYM structures and business. This needs more consideration as also does the language used in Quaker documents to describe Scotland and Wales in a Quaker context, so as to avoid an Anglo-centric understanding and presentation of Quakerism. At a future date the impact of increasing devolution is likely to figure on Yearly Meeting agenda. This has been a subject for discussion between our Clerks and BYM staff, and will be a major agenda item for the focus group.

The guest speakers in the afternoon were Alan and Marilyn Thomas from Swansea Meeting. Both of our speakers have been very involved in the creation and development of the City of Sanctuary movement in Swansea and elsewhere. Refugees make a significant contribution to society, but the treatment of Asylum Seekers is often neither generous, just or fair. There is a detailed report of this talk in the Minutes of this meeting available on the MFW website, and distributed through our AM. Subsequently we received the report of a respite weekend provided by Milford Haven Friends for a group of Refugees, this is very heart-warming and provides a really good idea of what even the most rural of Meetings, could do to provide a feeling of welcome and friendship to people in desperate need of those things.

Almost a Haiku

In that Quiet Room
Where we were quiet before,
The Spring sunshine warmed the potted plant.
Red and perky
It thrust upwards
As we meditated and pondered
The world's mysteries and problems.

Elizabeth Darlington Aberystwyth LM

Keynote Speaker: Hannah Brock from the organisation War Resisters' International

This was the highlight of the conference for me. Hannah is an inspirational speaker and Quaker activist, driven by her faith and vision. Starting with the question - 'How has your Quakerism led you to become active in the world?' she shared her own personal journey and thoughts, reminding us that some people in the world have no choice to be active in their protest and statement of their rights – those who live in war zones or who are refugee, for example. For those of us who have privilege and who may need prompts to become active, she shared a number of ideas and examples from her own activism for us to consider….

Loving your enemy – day on day. Using images and retellings of events from her time as an EAPPI volunteer in Palestine, Hannah reminded us about how all participants in a conflict can become dehumanised by 'the machine' of the government and organisational violence and control. She gave a moving example of a border crossing point when, through her simple act of observing and witnessing, she was able to make contact with the soldiers at a deep human level.

She quoted Martin Luther King: 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that' and 'I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.'

Confrontation creates change. The idea of 'interrupting the cogs of the machine' was explored at this point. That we should seek to shift public opinion about war and the weapons of war through non-violent action in a variety of ways; that we need to actively 'discomfort' people to effect change.

Coming alive. Having shared her experience of a blockade of a nuclear arms plant and how the connectivity with others and committing an act of 'good' for the world also brought joy and freedom to those involved, the group were asked to describe what initiates this feeling in us.

All our gifts are going to be needed. This was a reminder that we not only need to learn to recognise our own gifts, but we also need to see gifts in others – to get to know our community of Friends and not let our privilege and lack of confidence get in the way of our duty.

Investing in each other, because we need to change. Following on from this, we were reminded about ways we could 'invest' – through the EAPPI programme, the Young Adults' Leadership Programme and the Turning the Tide programme. This wasn't just a plea for donations - it was about becoming more involved – supporting through networking, informing and attending events. One statement that stayed with me from this was 'Leadership is about taking the initiative in a relationship – any relationship'.

Quaker processes. Finally we were taken back to the understanding that all of our activism is concerned with how we, as Quakers, create the world we want to see. That 'there is no way to peace – peace is the way'. That some of what we do needs little planning – it is about how we listen to what the Spirit is

Please see 'Quaker Peace and Social Witness: A Summary of action under the care of Britain Yearly Meeting' leaflet for more details on each of the above. Members of the QPSW team gave brief summaries of their work during the last year which included:

- co-sponsoring the No Trident march and joint leadership of the No Trident campaign;
- ongoing blockading of the Faslane submarine base;
- the establishment of an inter-church discussion and lobbying group;
- the convergence of 10,000 people on London for the Climate Lobby Group;
- 60,000 people in London at November's Climate March;
- supporting local meetings by providing information about divestment;
- working on the boycott of settlement goods campaign;
- training groups of EAPPI volunteers.

Suzanne then continued by identifying the four main unifying aspects of all QPSW work:

- that the work is led by the Spirit, is rooted in the Quaker Testimonies and areas of work identified from BYM tested concerns
- that it is governed by the QPSW Committee through prayerful discernment. The question is always asked 'Is this the right work to be engaged in as Quakers?'
- that it arises from our long tradition of dissent
- that QPSW work belongs to all Quakers because it is embedded in Testimony

Mid Wales Area Meeting
Report on Eldership and Oversight Conference
Abundant Life: Resourcing our Meetings
Friday 4th - Sunday 6th March 2016

I had an enjoyable weekend at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre where in joining about sixty other Friends from all over Britain, our every need was provided for including comfortable rooms, delicious food, competent and caring staff and volunteers (who couldn't have been more helpful) and an expert and experienced conference team who facilitated the event.

Initial Presentations

Personal and poignant presentations at the beginning of the weekend led us into our theme of considering our own spiritual and personal lives in relation to those of others and our Meetings. Initially Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke, talked of the inspiration that fed and sourced her work. She used the analogy of the life of a pond and the patience needed to allow for growth, development and diversity in that pond to highlight what nourished her life and work. This included the inspiration that she drew from her family, from people working together, from prayer but also the need for resilience to protect and bound her life and those of others in her charge. The following day two friends talked of their spiritual journeys and what sustained their lives. Janet Scott, a tutor at Woodbrooke, reminded us of the importance of spiritual discipline, of allowing a sense of presence and of being present and that we didn't have to be good to be loved! Mark Russ, the Nurturing Friends and Meetings Tutor, at Woodbrooke, spoke of the importance of commitment on his spiritual journey and of diversity, acceptance and grace. As a gay man and despite challenges, he had felt accepted and welcomed by Friends.

Small Groups

These presentations led into sharing both within the larger and smaller groups. In small groups of three our sharing was rich and varied. However, I found the themed groups that we attended slightly less inspiring as time did not often allow for fruitful discussions once everyone had introduced themselves and their Meetings. I attended sessions on Small Meetings, Diverse Theologies, Eldership and Oversight and Being Friends Together (this turned out to be a discussion about the internet training resource that some of us have bought into). What I discovered was that our Meetings mainly seem to

manage our limited resources well even if we may often feel stretched for time. However, the following useful points/reminders stand out for me from these discussions:

- The importance of flexibility and creativity when managing a small meeting.
- "Teach the rules from the pulpit and then treat every one as an exception" (Lionel Blue).
- Put trust in processes and practices - Quaker Faith and Practice can often help when we are struggling with how to proceed with an issue.
- The importance of silence - words can get in the way and can create conflict.
- The importance of remembering the difference in the roles of Eldership (spiritual life and welfare of the Meeting) and Oversight (considering the personal welfare of Members and Attenders) even if we have Pastoral Care Groups.
- The importance of openness, honesty, acceptance of others, transparency and appropriate confidentiality, e.g. Do we tell our Meetings about the smaller meetings that we've held and decisions made as appropriate?
- Making sure that new Attenders (and Members new to our Meetings) have the information that they require as they require it (welcome packs, companions, an identified person for new Attenders to consult?)
- The importance of sharing resources within the Area Meeting e.g. Being Friends Together (£35.00 per year) could be bought and shared (Alistair Fuller from Friends House also said that he would come out to talk with groups of Friends about using this resource without charging a separate fee).

Support and Resources for Eldership and Oversight/for our Meetings was the focus of the last two sessions prior to the last session when we shared our responses to the conference and worshipped together:-

1. A useful fact sheet highlights helpful:
    - People and organisations
    - Courses and events (info re Quaker Roles training on a poster)
    - Books and Study Packs (a book 'With a tender hand: A resource book for eldership and oversight' by Zelie Gross was given to us to take back to our Meetings/Area

Mid Wales Area Meeting
Report on Quaker Peace and Social Witness Conference
Being Change, Making Change
1st - 3rd April 2016

The overall aim of this annual conference is to explore the current work of the QPSW Team in order for Local and Area Meetings to feel more informed and to provide information for new Attenders and Members. By the end of the conference, I certainly felt that this aim had been achieved for me personally. I do hope that I can convey some of the information through this report.

Introduction to the work of QPSW: presentation by Suzanne Ismail and members of the QPSW team

A very useful overview of the work of the thirty national and international members of the QPSW team was provided by Suzanne Ismail, Programme Manager for Economic Issues. Suzanne gave an outline of the team's work which includes campaign management, for example the anti -Trident campaign; running international projects such as the EAPPI [Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel] programme and preparing national resources. Suzanne described the main objective of QPSW work as supporting the Quaker community in living out our faith in the world. A breakdown of each element of QPSW work was provided, which is summarised below:

- Peace work focused outside Britain
    - work in East Africa
    - work in Israel and Palestine
    - Naga conciliation

- Peace work focused in Britain
    - Peace Education
    - Peace campaigning and disarmament
    - One year peace workers
    - Turning the Tide

- Justice work focused mainly in Britain
    - Economic Justice
    - Sustainability
    - Criminal Justice
    - Housing

- Quaker United Nations Office [QUNO], Geneva

bereavement, afterlife, etc. It seems clear that there are many different ideas and beliefs among Quakers, and it is very important that we are able to freely speak about our individual experiences and beliefs and about some very emotional subjects in a supportive atmosphere in our Meetings.

Saturday evening was lightened by a showing of the film **"What we did on our Holiday".** An amusing but telling story of children who could treat the death of their granddad in a practical, loving, matter of fact way (giving him a home-made version of the traditional Viking send off with his treasured possessions on a burning raft sent out to sea that he had told them he wanted) while the grown- ups argued and fussed about relationships and business.

This occasioned much laughter but also left much to think about!

In summing up on the Sunday morning we were given copies of a newly published **Britain Yearly Meeting leaflet "Love and loss,** which summarises most of the topics covered. I have some copies and more can be obtained from Friends House. This asks "are we able to contemplate our own death and the death of those closest to us?" "What are our concerns?" "What might help us in this exploration?" "How can meetings support this?" There are brief sections on "telling our stories", "when someone dies", "beyond bearing", "some practical issues", "we are resources for each other". As Quakers we are encouraged to prepare for the end of our lives by making a will, making our wishes known to family and/ or friends, discussing funeral arrangements, etc., and to support one another in doing so. In some Meetings, Friends are encouraged to write an account of their lives and lodge this with the Meeting, keeping it updated so that it may be used at a future funeral/memorial meeting.

To conclude my report, I quote again from the leaflet:

"*The views of Quakers, and society as a whole, vary on a number of end of life topics including: medically assisted dying, suicide, what happens after death…*

We welcome the work of Friends already engaged with these questions; they are subjects we could all well explore. We may not yet be in unity, but we can start the conversations with respect and trust, no matter how searching we might find them."

"Doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is in us all" (Advices and Queries 5)

Angela Ormrod Montgomery LM**Mid Wales Area Meeting**

Meetings). The Eldership and Oversight handbook series could be helpful to us all.

- Other Resources and Publications (including free resources that can be downloaded from Britain Yearly Meeting's website for supporting work with adults and children).
- Boundaries Game (we tried out various games - info available separately).

2. Woodbrooke brochures and various other leaflets are available for perusal (more will be available through Woodbrooke and Friends House Book Centre).
3. A leaflet re 'Reading Quaker Faith and Practice' (as an aid or maybe prompt for this process!).
4. .Opportunities for service within the wider family of Friends were highlighted as opportunities with which Friends could become involved (see Quaker Life website).

<u>In Summary</u>

Before I attended the conference I had been asked to highlight what the Area Meeting might need to do. Whilst the conference highlighted all sorts of things that we could do and might do, what I am left with is a sense that our Local Meetings/Area Meeting are already doing much and that we manage our affairs in as efficient and supportive way as a possible given the number our numbers. What I was reminded of is our need to be welcoming, friendly and supportive of our newcomers, to provide information as required, to listen and watch within our communities, to support others as needed, "doing what love requires of us", and to keep going back to our source for help and sustenance. As one Quaker said "God will always find you even if you're overwhelmed with business" and another who had been studying at Pendle Hill:

"Start where you're at,
Step out in faith,
Do what you can,
Not what you can't,
Expect God to help"

Jenny Jones Llanidloes LM March 2016

Peace Education report for March AM '16

We have now completed 27 programmes and have 7 confirmed for next term. I envisage that this will reduce down to about 5 per term but we are still at the stage of making sure each volunteer has the experience of a programme with a tutor before they start working in pairs. I'm not actively recruiting volunteers at the moment as I want to make use of those I have (but never turn them away!) so we will shortly run a training session for the new volunteers who have come in via word of mouth.

One of the programmes we ran this term was delivered by the first volunteer partnership and the feedback from the school was hugely positive. 3 of next term's programmes will be delivered by volunteer partnerships.

The director of the West Midlands Peace Education project has spent a day with us including observing a programme and talking to the tutors and was very positive about the project. As I said last time they have paid staff and office etc and I realised that this is because they charge schools to deliver the programme (for their 20-hour programme over 10 weeks they charge £2,500). There is no way we could charge schools for our basic programme but we have thought before about offering inset days for teachers, in order to create a 'whole school approach' and I have asked two of our tutors to cost this.

QPSW also want to come and observe a programme next term and I hope this will be part of disseminating the idea further.

The Challenging Road to Peace exhibition has just finished its run at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre and Rupert Gude gave a talk this week at the Morlan in Aberystwyth, related to the WW1 section of the exhibition. Gallery staff said the exhibition had prompted a lot of interest. Rupert has now taken the exhibition back to Tavistock but we are investigating the possibility of other venues, outside this area. There is scope for reproducing copies of the panels. It

Quaker Life Representative Council 15th – 17th April 2016
"Sharing our end of life stories – discovering Quaker understandings of dying and death"

There was so much interest in the subject of this Rep Council that it was oversubscribed with a waiting list! Almost 100 attended. Some were accommodated outside Woodbrooke, but everyone had meals in the dining room which was filled to capacity. As usual the hospitality and catering were superb, and the whole weekend was very well planned making a difficult subject interesting, informative, and thought provoking.

Three keynote speakers set the scene on Saturday morning:

Diana Lampen spoke on "What is living, dying, in the light?" She spoke about embracing the uncertainty – how will we die? We tend to be more afraid of this than of death itself. We need to be able to speak about it, to share our fears.

Iain Law's talk on "The messiness of life", was a very emotional account of his life as a gay man with aids whose partner had died of aids. The difficulty of coming to terms with all the negative attitudes, all the disapproval, all the horror of an unpleasant death of someone very close.

Barbara Davey spoke about the death of a child. A baby born full term but with terrible and completely unexpected problems at birth that meant she lived only a few months in hospital. The feelings of shock, guilt, grief, exhaustion. The need to recognise what can't be known. The need to" live with unknowing".

These three addresses were received in silence, with time for reflection in "home groups" afterwards. The most important issue seemed to be that death is a part of life and needs to be recognised as such and talked about much more openly. It's something that less "developed" societies do much better. We have tended to push the need to grieve into the background. Some spoke about the "wakes" that they remembered from their childhood but have now been lost, and the value of these in communities sharing the grief.

We heard about several Meetings (among them Machynlleth) which have held **"Death Cafes**". These have been very well attended, demonstrating a clear need for a forum where it's ok to talk and express feelings about death and dying.

On Saturday afternoon we were offered a choice of workshops covering a wide range of aspects of death/dying. Theological, spiritual, emotional, practicalities, medically assisted dying, childhood

which helps its weaker citizens. Area Meetings are asked to consider this issue carefully.

Another major issue was a concern from Cornwall AM, first received in April 2014, regarding the decriminalisation of the possession, for personal use, of all drugs. I have a copy of their briefing paper, which again is very long (32 sides of A4), so I have not reproduced it here. Portugal decriminalised personal drug use in July 2001, and the resultant patterns from there provides much evidence in support of this policy. So many devastating effects ensue on the users, their families and society when people are criminalised for personal drug use. Many bodies, from the United Nations down support the decriminalisation of personal drug use and Cornwall AM asks that Quakers should consider this issue and add an informed, discerning, constructive and compassionate voice, guided by Quaker principles, to the debate about the way our society responds to the issues of drugs, drug users and those affected by their use. There is such a polarisation of views about this subject, and misinformation, that the voice of Quakers could add reason and weight to the debate.

Finally, Quaker World Relations Committee is now working under its new terms of reference and is acting as a conduit between BYM and Quakers worldwide. The FWCC World Plenary Session Meeting was in Peru this January, and key messages from it to all Yearly Meetings were; to commit to, and promote concrete sustainability actions during this year; to be called to deep and loving listening and sharing with Quakers of different traditions to meet the Spirit in one another; and that continuing our mutual engagement with world Quakerism demands creative thinking and solutions.

Dave Butler Machynlleth LM

has been suggested that it should also be in the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, in translation of course.

The Gungrog programme (which we showed you the clip of last time), is to be repeated with their current Year 2, again to prepare them for their transition up to the primary school. I was told by the head teacher that the School Liaison Officer, who works in both her infants school and primary that her pupils went up to, had said that she could identify the pupils from Gungrog school because they had strategies in place, to deal with their own responses and their responses to other pupils. Justine felt that was at least 50% due to the input of the programme.

Helen Porter Montgomery LM March 2016

Peace Education Report for May 2016 AM

We continue to be running programmes at a higher rate than originally envisaged – there will be a total of 25 this academic year, but certain areas are proving really hard to get into so I think we may have more of a gap for the autumn term. If I can get to speak to a cluster group of primary school heads I always get bookings but some cluster groups are hard to get into e.g. Machynlleth, Towyn, Llanfyllin so I need to do more work on that. Our Welsh-speaking volunteers in particular are keen to promote the project within the Welsh-speaking schools in the west of our area and I am shortly to do a promotion to the 19 individual schools in the Aberystwyth cluster.

I have sufficient volunteers, except for full Welsh-speakers so we are speaking at two events this term – Tim Wallis is doing a talk at Aberystwyth next Tuesday, May 24th, on his excellent book 'The Truth about Trident' (Aberystwyth University Main Hall 7pm, hosted by David Davies Memorial Institute) and we have arranged for one of our volunteers to promote the project there; and I am speaking to the Mach-speak group on June 22nd at The Plas.

We are also working on the idea of preceding the standard programme in a school with an offer to run a session for all the staff of that school at an inset day. The idea being that

the whole school ‘gets it’, which should result not only in the programme being given space and peace to operate but more likelihood that the effects will continue and spread through the school.

The volunteers running programmes this term have been doing excellent work and showing real initiative, confirming my belief that our role is to give them confidence and a range of resources and then they will run with it. Some have requested to extend their skills with regard to peer mediation and QPSW have very generously offered to run a two-day peer mediation training, here, in Newtown, with no charge for the training or their travel. This will happen in July and is already fully booked.

Although we are spending our grant faster than expected, because of the number of programmes being run, the cost of each programme is reducing as I use more pairs of volunteers rather than tutor and volunteer. However I am starting to think about sourcing another large grant in order to employ a paid administrator (not me!) to take the project forward. Any thoughts or advice towards this would be much appreciated.

In terms of spreading the project wider we have now had confirmation that we can run a Woodbrooke weekend (October 2017) so we will be planning that in co-operation with QPSW and West Midlands Peacemakers.

Helen Porter Montgomery LM May 2106

REPORT ON MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS, APRIL 2nd, 2016, AT FRIENDS HOUSE

A major item on the agenda stemmed from minute 36 from Yearly Meeting 2015. In particular this minute asks '.....Meeting for Sufferings to take the work on social and economic justice forward, co-ordinating the work of local and area meetings who might wish to become more deeply involved, and encouraging the deep spiritual and intellectual searching that could underpin a 'true social order' for our age.'
Sufferings has received, and examined, all the feedback of actions taking place in LMs and AMs, a table prepared by QPSWCC's Economics, Sustainability and Peace Sub-committee, and a table of AM minutes received by MfS over the past two years. It is obviously a complex subject and there is a great deal of information. Sufferings sees its role as encouraging and providing networking among Friends, rather than trying to co-ordinate the whole thing.

AMs and LMs are encouraged to use the 'Our Stories' area on the website to give details of any actions they are taking in the field of social and economic justice, or to consider whether they feel called to develop any work in this area.

It seems that many Meetings don't have experience of testing concerns, or even of understanding what a concern is, so if this is the case for any of our Meetings, the process and its importance needs to be clearly explained. Listening to the Spirit in Meeting for Worship, and being tender with Friends are the starting points.

A minute and a copy of the revised paper 'Vision for a criminal justice system' were received from Quaker Peace and Social Witness Crime, Community and Justice Sub-committee. I have a copy of this paper. It is long and you would not want it printed here, but it deals with the treatment of victims, offenders, vulnerable adults, prisoners and their families, prison staff, women offenders and drug users, and considers punishment, sentencing, the use of prison and the prison experience, as well as rehabilitation, restorative justice, community justice and the ethics of privatisation. In summary, it restates that there is that of God in everyone and calls for a compassionate, positive, caring and non-judgmental society

present for the children to feel they are meeting their friends. For the purposes of this report, some of the children were asked to write down things they liked best about meeting [Results attached – readers may note that food plays quite a prominent role].
Our Spiritual Nourishment group, open to all, has grown in strength; another smaller group has formed round a concern to offer comfort to those suffering from Dementia. Our 'Preparation for Worship' sessions, held on the third Sunday in the month, are sparsely attended, but much appreciated by those who participate. We have been able to maintain our mid-week Meeting for Worship, which supports and sustains a small group, largely composed of attenders. We have changed the seating in the Meeting House in a way that, we hope, reflects a smaller but potentially more intimate community. We still greatly miss the presence of a number of Friends suffering from long-term illness, but we have been blessed by quite a number of new attenders who have contributed greatly to our fellowship. Two relative newcomers took up leadership of Education and Outreach – and subsequently entered into membership themselves. Several of us have become more actively involved with local politics and we continue to sustain our membership of Churches Together in Hereford and, now, the more recently formed Inter-Faith group. We have decided, temporarily, to lay down the annual Meeting weekend at Trefeca, but benefitted from a day with Kindlers in the Spring of 2015, exploring Quaker Spiritual practices and a second visit ('Jesus the man: Christ within us) is due to take place on May 7th. In an effort to meet the needs of the many newcomers, over the autumn and winter a number of 'attenders evenings' were hosted by Friends in their homes at which various aspects of Quakerism were explored. Lessons learnt from this were fed into the planning of the Area Meeting Attenders Day which was organised in March, and this, in turn, seems to have had benefits for the quality of ministry in recent meetings.

All in all, it may be the case that, having been somewhat pre-occupied with our own problems for a while, we are now experiencing a sense of expansion and turning outwards.

Dolobran Spiritual Life Report

At Dolobran we hold Meeting with the door open. The background noise is birds or the baaing of sheep. In the Winter we average 7 plus sometimes 1 or 2 dogs. Despite the muddy walk down the lane in pouring rain and blinding wind Friends' need for the marvellous peace and silence found in Dolobran Meeting is enough to ensure we come. Instead of trying to heat the Meeting House we wrap ourselves up in blankets. It's funny and lovely. Spring and Summer are just a complete joy and attendances rise.

We benefit enormously when Montgomery Meeting joins us on the 3rd Sunday, also with the opportunity to sometimes join them in discussion groups.

The most important change has been the gift to Quakers by John Lloyd of Dolobran Meeting House, its surroundings of garden and wood and a generous sum to cover major repairs when needed. We have had an oak plaque, made to commemorate his gift, which now hangs in the Meeting House. We plan to have one in Welsh as well. Owning the Meeting House means that we have been able to redecorate the cottage and have visitors to stay. The Eisteddfod produced several friends who loved it and later provided a great bundle of plants to add to the garden. Later visitors have been very appreciative and one lot is coming for the third time. Of course it does mean more work but it adds to the richness of Meetings with the inclusion of Friends from other Meetings bringing their thoughts and ministry.

During the years we have had visits from many groups including the Sarn History Society.

Last year we held a marvellous evening of poetry which brought a large number of people and the poet, James Knox Whittet, who wrote a brilliant poem on the Meeting House which has been framed and is hanging in the Meeting House. He is coming again this July.

Further contributions are from one of our members and one of our attenders.

During the time my husband was very ill in hospital I would visit him most days. He frequently seemed outwardly unaware of my presence but I felt he sensed my being there. Whilst sitting at his bedside sometimes I would close my eyes and Imagine I was in Dolobran Meeting House with the sunlight streaming in though the open doorway. At such times when the outlook seemed bleak, I often gained great comfort and spiritual support from these thoughts and I knew that Dolobran Friends were with me and holding me in the Light.

We found Dolobran spring last year when Helen spoke to the W.I. and it was a breath of fresh air. I resolved to attend but it took until September to make this happen. But once I arrived I knew I had come home and have stayed, joined by my husband who has found the same, slowly unpicking our lives so that we can come most weeks. It is a place of deep refreshment and spiritual grace in very active and busy lives. We have so much gratitude for this gift we now have.

Spiritual Life Report from Hereford Friends Meeting, May 2016

Hereford meeting went through unsettling times in the not-too-distant past: a number of very experienced Friends departed this life or, by reason of ill-health, became unable to attend regularly. Although we don't like to think of Quakers as having leaders, with the benefit of hindsight, it seems that the core friendships between long-term members formed the heart of our community, and that heart was weakened by that process of attrition. Maybe it would also be appropriate to speak of guiding lights lost, leading to a much greater demand on those few who remained. The period of uncertainty that followed created, for some, a sense of strain and questioning which gave rise to further departures. Although initially a cause for sadness, the humility that comes with a loss of self-assurance, can itself be a source of spiritual value; we can recognise that times of upheaval are also times of opportunity – and, for some, a chance to move in new directions. We have tried to make the most of those opportunities Coinciding with this period of change, it was also the case that the children at Hereford had reached their mid-teens and no longer came on Sunday mornings. We decided to try to start a new group, with younger children. We contacted people with young children in the Hereford area who had association with Quakers and invited them to come on the last Sunday of January 2015. The meeting had already decided, as a way of building fellowship, to simplify the arrangements for shared lunches, by holding one on the last Sunday of every month. So, at that January meeting, parents decided to have children's meeting also on the last Sunday of each month, with the intention that most would also, when able, stay for the lunch. As well as strengthening bonds between our families, this practice has also helped to draw in newcomers. We continue to enjoy our Annual Winter Social – another draw for families, and, thanks to the faithfulness of one Friend in particular, we still offer Children's Meeting every Sunday. We are delighted and excited by the way the children's group is developing. We now have 12 children, and although they have never all been at once, there are usually enough

Jill Ward, died April 1st 2015

Jill, with her husband, Eric, have been part of our Area Meeting for twenty years. Having attended Malvern, Newent and Ledbury Meetings, they finally settled in Ross. Like many Friends, they attended Meeting for some time before applying for membership.

Jill was born in 1931 on the North Downs. Her father, Reginald Rogers was the head teacher of the local primary school where her mother also taught. She was the 3rd of 4 children and the whole family enjoyed the nearby sea at Dymchurch. When she was 5 she was desperately ill with measles and typhoid. She recovered but with damage to her eyesight.

!941 was a dangerous time to be on the North Downs. Biggin Hill fighter aerodrome had been established there and it was decided to send the Rogers children away, first to west London and then Oxfordshire. Tragedy struck when her parents returned to Biggin Hill and were both killed in an air raid. Jill was sent to live with an aunt.

On leaving school Jill was keen to .follow her parents to Goldsmiths college but she was turned down because of her eyesight. She was, however, determined to become a teacher and gained a place at Exmouth. She loved being in Devon and followed on to spend 2 years at Dartington Hall on a music course where she particularly enjoyed folk music and dancing. It was then that she first encountered Quakers, lodging with a couple who were Friends and whom she greatly admired. There she met Eric and in the next years her life was full with marriage, family, teaching infants music and later remedial teaching. Jill's eyesight began to deteriorate and she took early retirement, coming to live in Much Marcle in 1998.

In Ross Meeting Jill was quiet in her contribution. She regularly made delicious cakes and quiches for shared lunches or other events. She supported the children's group with her teaching skills – particularly telling about the difficulties of poor eyesight. When we gathered for fun the singing and dancing came into play as we spiralled hilariously round one another in her snail dance. Latterly with her sight steadily worsening, she was an active member of the Macular Degeneration society and made us aware of the problems that people with partial sight and blindness have and the ways in which everyone should care for their sight.

In autumn 2014 she was taken ill while on holiday and when she got home, a series of scans showed cancer. Following an operation there were complications and she died on April 1st.

Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Ronald Watts 1930 – 2015

Ronald was born into a Quaker family in Bournville, Birmingham, closely associated with the Cadbury family and their business. In 1939, to avoid the expected bombing of Birmingham, he was sent to Sidcot, a Quaker School in Somerset, to join his two elder brothers. Objecting to National Service, Ronald became a Conscientious Objector and was directed to Forest Lodge Sheep Farm, near Brecon. In 1950 he went to Reading University to study Agriculture where he formed a friendship with a group of Nigerian students. This may have influenced his decision to enter the Colonial Service when he finished university. His first posting to Nigeria was the start of a lifelong passion and commitment to Africa shared by his wife Theresa Piper, whom he met at London Yearly Meeting (Britain Yearly Meeting as it is now known) at Friends House in 1958. Ronald and Theresa married at Jordans Meeting House in 1959. They returned to Africa where their varied careers spanned a period of some thirty three years. Their daughter Marguerite was born in Botswana and Kageha was adopted in Kenya while Ronald was working at Kaimosi, The Quaker Missionary College; following time in Uganda their son Jeremy was adopted back in Britain.

Ronald and Theresa shared ideals and Quaker values, specifically simplicity and equality; they valued living simply 'that others may simply live' in the many and various communities in which they lived. Ronald was always interested in learning African beliefs, cultures and customs alongside sharing his own knowledge and experience. His respect for African people was profound and a reflection of his belief in equality.

Following the problems in Uganda in 1972, the family returned to live in South Wales at their Farm, Maes yr Eglwys, previously bought in 1968. Ronald developed his journalistic skills over the next five years, championing the cause of Africa in various journals and newspapers. He also made available to the press his extensive collection of slides illustrating life and places in Africa.

Ronald and Theresa returned to Africa in 1977 spending nine years in Zambia and three in Zimbabwe, continuing to work in the agricultural sector but also building on his journalistic experience to broadcast on television and radio. In Harare Ronald and Theresa contributed a Quaker view to religious programmes on Zimbabwe radio in Harare; excerpts from these broadcasts were played at Ronald's funeral. During this time Ronald was Clerk for the Central and Southern African Yearly Meeting.

Throughout his time in Africa Ronald retained a vision of the importance of Quaker values, particularly stewardship of the earth and its resources and his emphasis on the importance of appropriate agriculture to the newly independent countries of Africa. Looking for that of God in everyone was central to all his interactions both in Africa and back in the UK.

In retirement back in the UK on their farm and later near Abergavenny Ronald continued his interest in Africa and agriculture as a member of the Royal Africa Society and he particularly loved attending the Quaker Africa Interest group at Woodbrooke, back in Birmingham. The newly established Aberavenny Local Meeting benefited from Ronald's kindness and experience. He helped many new Friends to appreciate the value of Advices and Queries through his weekly readings. He was a greatly loved and respected Elder of our Meeting. Ronald was an intensely kind person. He was an attentive listener, able to rapidly establish a friendly rapport with the myriad of people he met through the Religious Society of Friends and in his long working life at home and abroad. His ability to recall personal details made individuals feel warmly valued.

Following his stroke he much appreciated local Friends holding meeting for worship at Glaslyn Nursing home. He behaved with dignity and generosity of spirit to the end of his life.

Ralph Wadge. 1928-2015

Ralph was a great character. He took a long time to become a member of the Society of Friends but even before this he made considerable contribution.

He was born in 1928. He came from Cornish Methodist farming origins. He also had a relative who sounds as though he was a sea salt and influenced Ralph to become enthusiastic about the sea, sea cadets and nautical training. But after 5 or6 years in the Merchant Navy and getting his Mate's certificate, he came ashore. In 1950 he married Jean and together they had 4 children. He enjoyed his family. He was always a man of principle and definite views but able to talk to people, whether the boss or the cleaner, and generous with helping whenever he saw a need.

Ralph worked in factories, developing skills in making things happen and later taught management to adults who were already experienced in factory and practical skills. He had his own style of teaching which involved getting everyone in the class to use their experience and say how things should be done.

When the children were older, he went for 2 years to Bahrein, and later, with Jean to Lebanon and Palestine. They were asked by the middle east department at Friends House to set up a management committee locally for Bumanna school as it was difficult to manage from the UK. They were there for nearly two years and then moved to the West Bank. During their time in Palestine, Ralph worked in a local factory and also arranged exports with the Jewish authorities. Although there was considerable tension, his humour made him popular. He got on well with the Arabs, with whom he had an affinity.

Ralph attended several Meetings including Winchmore Hill, and more recently Ross-on-Wye. He contributed on committees, mainly Finance and Property. He was clear about what he thought and did not hesitate to say so, often with humour. A practical man, he would come to Meeting with screw driver and pliers because something needed attention. What stands out most, though, was his kindness and generosity. While he had difficulty in expressing his own needs, he was always so willing to help others experiencing difficulty or hardship. Sometimes he was outrageous, sometimes we wondered what he was "getting at" but he always had a smile and a twinkle in his eye.