

# Hedyn

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*South Wales Area Meeting*

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Late Spring Newsletter 2021



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## From the Editors

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I have often heard Quakers talk about certain situations in terms of looking at what we can change and looking at what is beyond our control. No wonder things have been so hard since March 2020, when so many of the changes in our lives have been beyond our control.

Even now, whether I can go to the swimming pool this week is not down to me and my inclination/fitness, but a government announcement due the day after I am writing this editorial (I assume that by the time you read this, I will have swum!).

This, of course, applies to our Meetings too as we face the task of trying to bring people together after a year in which some people have been able to continue to attend worship, others have moved to Zoom and some have not attended at all. We have a great task ahead of us and in my own meeting in Cardiff, we now face the prospect of being next to a building site for several years and possibly needing a new location. That is yet another change brought on us unexpectedly and out of our control.

In times of change, what we need is faith, I think. In a Quaker discussion group, a Friend once described God as 'the great improviser'. Whatever situation we find ourselves in (be it the kind that we bring on ourselves or the kind that arrives unexpectedly), God will find a way out of it for us and we just need to recognise and follow that way.

Our Quaker quotation for this edition comes from a publication by early Quaker William Shewen in 1683 :

*"The want of faith in the word and power of God within, and the neglect of hearing the still, small voice thereof, is the ground and cause of all ignorance, errors, darkness, and confusion among men, of all sects and sorts of religion upon the face of the whole earth."*

David Heald

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## News from Meetings

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### *Milford Haven*

These are strange times indeed, but adapt we must, and indeed that is what Milford Haven Friends have done. Overall, we have grown slightly during these peculiar times. We have had new faces appear at our Meetings, and even have a list of people who want to come once things return to 'normal' – whatever that might be.

We were fortunate that due to the opening of our Wellbeing Centre in November 2019, we had created a website in support (<http://www.milfordhavenquakers.org>).

The Wellbeing Centre was beginning to grow with three regular users, and others showing interest: then came Covid19.

Since March 2020, the Meeting House and the Wellbeing Centre in the annexe attached have been closed, first by order of the Welsh Government, then by a combination of ongoing regulations – different regulations applying to the use of the buildings depending on whether they were to be used for worship, for other activities, or by other agencies – and by building work. For some months we could not even enter the front of the building without traipsing across a work site.

The website, however, has provided a means of still being present. It has even allowed us to continue our annual cycle of collections. Now, instead of the collection box on the table in the Meeting Room, we have a short piece about the month's charity on the website, with a link to its donations page. It has also allowed us to keep Friends informed of upcoming events and news about the meeting. We even post one of the Advices and Queries each week and have sold copies of Stephen Griffith's book about the History of Quakers in Pembrokeshire via the site.

The website has not been our only adventure into cyberspace, we have also been holding Meeting each Sunday via Zoom and having a Midweek Forum during which a range of topics has been shared. This has included being led through Experiment with Light meditations by Katy. She had just attended the Experiment with Light weekend course at Woodbrooke before the first lockdown.

Our quinquennial review in 2018 had highlighted a number of issues with the Meeting House, plans for dealing with which had been worked out during 2019 and quotations sought. Work began on improving the land drainage at the front of the Meeting House in the autumn of 2020 and was completed before Christmas. Similar work at the rear should be carried out this year. Already improvement can be seen. Hopefully, the rest of the issues highlighted in the review can be addressed this year.

We may not have been able to use the Meeting House, but we have met in person at Green Apple, John Hargraves eco smallholding. The Trustees agreed to our holding Meeting there, initially in the orchard, and then in the large polytunnel as the autumn advanced. We were joined there by a number of new people.

We have also joined hands with the other West Wales Meetings in cyberspace, forming QWWAC – Quakers in West Wales Asylum Concern – an issue that shot to the fore with the opening of Penally Army Camp as a detention centre for Asylum Seekers. QWWAC were able to welcome a group of men from the camp to a respite day at Green Apple, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

We are grateful that the camp has now ceased to be used for Asylum Seekers, as it was manifestly unfit, however, QWWAC will continue its work in helping to ensure that the region remains welcoming to those needing refuge.

Our attentions have also turned to another burning issue, that of sustainability. We are proud to say that we received a certificate from Bulb, our power supplier, confirming that all our energy needs for the Meeting house come from renewable sources. We have also been joining with the other West Wales Meetings in considering the implications of the Doughnut Economy.

One thing that Covid19 did not defeat was Milford's Winter Party. It simply relocated online. Not having our usual bring-and-share meal was missed – there is no online equivalent – but music, poetry and fun were all shared; much of which was then put together in a scrapbook by Anne Gregson, copies of which are even now circulating among Friends.

We look forward to the re-opening of the Meeting House during 2021 so that we can enjoy meeting there once more and so that it can continue to be of service to the community.

## *Penarth Meeting*

By Christmas last year, Penarth had established a pattern of Sunday worship that has continued during the months of lock-down since then: two Meetings for Worship (MfW) run concurrently on a Sunday morning, one a virtual meeting using Zoom, the other a 'synchronised meeting' of Friends worshipping in their own home. Friends can choose which Meeting to 'join.' In order to help maintain a sense of connection between the two Meetings, an Elder writes a weekly email to everyone, sharing some thoughts and reflections on current events, and repeating that week's section from Advice and Queries that will be read at the Zoom meeting – and which was included in the clerk's weekly notices. The email ends with a reminder to Friends that our two Meetings are taking place simultaneously and encourages us, as individuals either at home or on Zoom, to hold the whole Meeting in the Light during our silent worship.

About 15 minutes after the end of the formal Meeting, there is a 'space for sharing:' an opportunity for Friends, from both 'halves' of the Meeting, to meet informally on Zoom, to enjoy some social time together, over a coffee, sharing news and, inevitably, helpful advice and observations on coping during this strangest of strange times. Once a month this space for sharing is taken over for a Meeting for Worship for Business.

Most of our older-generation Friends have met regularly as above, and some have also regularly attended the SWAM weekly Zoom MfW. It has been disappointing, however, that we have not managed to organize a children's meeting for worship, either running in parallel with the adult meeting or being organized as a separate meeting at another time. The absence of most of the children and their families from our meetings is a grievous loss which has been felt keenly by many of us 'oldies'.

During February and March, a series of 6 mid-week meetings took place, by Zoom. These took the form of a 'Getting to Know You' session, when an individual friend talked about him/herself – their background, career, and their 'Quaker journey' – and answered questions. These sessions proved to be informative, light-hearted, and entertaining and were much appreciated by both the Friends in the hot-seat and the audience. Particular thanks to 13-year-old Rowan, our youngest hot-seat guest, who coped admirably with the pressures of being in the spot-light.

Another recent activity that helped to maintain a sense of togetherness within the Meeting, was a month-long project related to signs of Spring. So, Friends were asked to send in either photographs, drawings, pieces of writing, poetry, and so on, relating to the onset of Spring. At the end of February, these were put together into a

slideshow video, combining all the different contributions from friends about their musings and observations of signs of spring. There were photos of newly emerging primroses, of lambs in fields near Dinas Powys, of white blossom blooming, and hazel catkins dangling...with Beethoven's Spring Sonata and birdsong playing in the background...and much more. It was an exercise that prompted everyone to look around and be cheered by the natural world awakening. A reminder that, however locked down we may be, nature is in full flow. (The link to the slideshow is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UagyZj7Yq9>)

And the signs are that covid restrictions could well be easing soon. When West House, our meeting venue, will become available is not at all clear, at present. However, once the chill easterly wind that has kept temperatures down for the past week or so decides to leave us, allowing warmer air to take its place, out-door meetings in the West House Garden can be planned and organized. Hopefully, we shall be Meeting, all together, before too long.

Alan Armstrong

## *Cardiff Meeting*

A few months ago, I was telling my mother that Quakers were re-examining the use of the word 'Overseers' in the title 'Elders & Overseers'. My mother is an Anglican churchgoer, but she has always been interested in what Quakers do. However, this time, she reacted with, 'Anglicans did that thirty years ago, what's taking Quakers so long?'



To be fair, it was only in the wake of Black Lives Matter campaigns in 2020 that I first heard of the connection between 'overseers' and slavery. However, I do now know that the discussion on what to replace that word with has been had by Quakers since the 1990s. Perhaps with wider recognition of the need for a new word among Quakers, we could change?

If only it were that easy! Elders & Overseers - or as we temporarily referred to ourselves 'Es & Os' - discussed the matter and came up with an alternative which did not appeal to Meeting for Worship for Business. Es & Os went back to the drawing board and discussed other options. We looked at what happened in other Meetings, we looked at the Books of Discipline for other Yearly Meetings and we looked at secular and Anglican terms that cover the same kind of idea. Eventually, we returned to MfWfB with six options and one other that had really come about as an addition to the discussion - what about if we used a Welsh language word?

It seemed a simple idea. Cardiff Meeting is based in a part of Wales with a large and growing number of Welsh speakers and a little while ago, Area Meeting Es & Os (now Es & PC) had discussed how to make sure that Welsh speakers are welcome in our worship. Newcomers will ask what Elders do anyway, so why not give their 'oversight' role a name in Welsh that could be explained as well?

However, when I came to present our ideas to MfWfB, I felt rather guilty that none of the name suggestions had led to Es and Os being guided in a particular direction. I mentioned the possibility of a Welsh language name as an additional option, but not really expecting what happened next. MfWfB was very much taken with the idea of something in Welsh and when someone suggested 'Bugeiliad', there was a real feeling that we had found something that people wanted to try out.

The word 'Bugeiliad' is roughly translated as 'shepherds' but has a meaning that incorporates tending and watching (there is a Welsh folk song 'Watching the White Wheat' - Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn - that you can find on YouTube or described on Wikipedia). We were grateful for a wonderful rough guide on the pronunciation - 'there is a big aisle in the supermarket that is wide enough for all of us'. Bugeilio is the verb form.

For the next six months, Cardiff Meeting will trial having an 'Es & Bs' team, a phrase that trips off the tongue easily, even if 'Bs' is putting an English plural on a Welsh plural word - no-one said that it was perfect! However, after a lot of discussion and debate, we have found something that has caused real excitement and interest among us and which we hope may be something that we accept and use in future.

David Heald  
Convenor of Es & B for Cardiff Meeting



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## "Do We Have to Keep Changing Things?"

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It has often struck me that there is a contradiction at the heart of Quakerism. We were a movement borne out of religious upheaval and radicalism and yet sometimes now it seems that we are very much part of the status quo. Once at a Business Meeting, I suggested a particular course of action and was told that it would be 'risky'. I am not sure where I would read in George Fox's or John Woolman's diaries a preference for avoiding things that are 'risky'.

The title of this article is a question asked by a Friend at a Business Meeting. Yet change has been a constant in the life of the Religious Society of Friends. Sometimes through bravery and taking a stand such as our acceptance of homosexual relationships when they were still illegal in the UK and sometimes almost by accident such as how Hedyn has become a mostly online document as the pandemic prevented us distributing paper copies as before (some of us had argued for that on environmental grounds long before there was a pandemic).

Yet, I have a lot of sympathy for those who resist change. What we are used to is comforting and change challenges that comfort. I have always felt that one of the advantages of our business method is that we cannot be carried along by one convert, we have to wait for the Spirit to inspire us all.

Unfortunately, this can lead to a certain loneliness for Quakers who see the need for change. I am saddened when I see that Quakers are gaining a reputation for transphobia online and I know that not all Meetings have embraced the idea that our understanding of gender has changed.

The example I like to give, be it about gender or any development in our society, is about Albert Einstein and tectonic plates. When Einstein died in 1955, he maintained that the idea that the earth sat on tectonic plates and the shifting of these plates caused earthquakes was nonsense. Now we teach that theory in primary schools and it is universally accepted. Our understanding of the earth moved on and people accepted it.

If that sounds like an odd comparison, I recommend looking at the struggles that Australia Yearly Meeting had in the 1980s to get Australian Quakers to accept same sex relationships as equal to opposite sex relationships. From the point of view of

2021, it looks like another age. I do believe that someday Quakers will think that some of the comments made by today's Quakers about transgender people seem out of date too.

I started by saying that we were borne of revolutionary fervour, but I suspect that we have never been quite as pioneering as we like to remember. I was struck by a history of Quakers from 1860 to 1920 that I found in the library in Cardiff Meeting. It was written by a non-Quaker, so she was not distracted by the stories of the Friends Ambulance Unit or conscientious objection in 1914 that we talk about regularly. Instead, she analysed the membership records for 1914 and found that 25% of those in membership went to fight on the front line in 1914. There are fascinating arguments made by Quakers at the time claiming that fighting for your country was more important than the Peace testimony which might seem odd to us now.

In other words, I suspect that Quakers have always changed slowly and always had a balance between those who wish to pull in a particular direction and those who want to keep a cautious status quo. In truth, this balance probably helps to keep Quaker views refined and considered, but it can be frustrating, especially to younger Friends. I think of those who will go to every demonstration about Climate Change but find Business Meetings too slow to embrace the need for action about the environment.

Our Friend in Business Meeting was not talking about any of the topics mentioned in this article, but I did think that the question deserved an answer. I believe that the world is changing whether Quakers want to be part of it or not. We could opt to embrace the status quo and resist change, but that will not stop it happening. The question for us is not really whether things have to change, but how do we adapt to the changes in society that will happen with or without us?

David Heald

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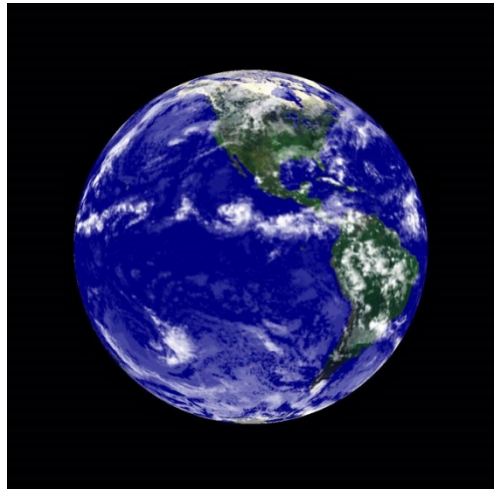
## SWAM Environment and Sustainability Cluster is LIVE

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South Wales Area Meeting (SWAM)'s 2020 annual report included a draft Sustainability and Environment report. Although it is not a legal requirement for such a report to be produced, it is well understood that a commitment to a sustainable and just environment is part of our Quaker life, our Canterbury Commitment. It was agreed by SWAM that an Environment and Sustainability Cluster be established, and Local Meetings asked to nominate members.

We are very aware that this is an emergency, and we need to act now, as communities and networks with others, with open eyes, imagination, and creativity. We need to be brave. Or the opportunity to secure a future for our life with other species who inhabit this beautiful earth will be lost to future generations.

With this in mind, the cluster has now had its first meeting (Robin Attfield (Cardiff/Penarth LM), Alan Armstrong (Penarth LM), Annie Delahunty (Lampeter/Narberth LM) and is supported by and in liaison with Brian Jackson (Trustees) and Deborah Rowlands (Co-clerks).



The requirements laid upon us in the SWAM minute are to:

- Take forward the Environment and Sustainability Policy
- Produce an annual report which covers action on sustainability and also identifies 'to what degree we are fulfilling our religious and charitable aspirations across the area meeting' However, a report cannot be written in isolation from commitment and activity. This is a climate emergency. What is already happening across the area meeting, and within our Local Meetings and what further corporate action might we wish to engage in?

- Develop any action which is discerned as necessary i.e., the Terms of Reference (ToRs) will be what turns out to be necessary as our specific contribution

This is the first such group set up in our Area Meeting and gives us the opportunity to work flexibly to move this urgent commitment forward. For example, we can develop our own ToR in line with what emerges as the most pressing (provided that we deliver on those laid upon us and provided don't make commitments on behalf of SWAM).

We welcome others to join us in the cluster, without the requirement of proceeding through the Nominations Committee process. We know that there are many Friends who are deeply involved in environment and sustainability work already, and we want to maximise our impact by learning from each other. This must be a dynamic group, committed to action as well as to understanding and growing our commitment.

We are sharing the SWAM Environment and Sustainability policy, seeking your feedback along with information about what members and attenders of your meeting are doing for the environment and sustainability, whether this be within a Quaker/Quaker Meeting context or otherwise. Please let us know – either via your LM clerk or, better still, directly via our blog <https://swameandspolicy.wordpress.com>

Please visit and contribute to the blog – let's build a network of action and sharing of information through it.

We also request that all Friends and Local Meetings consider signing the Climate Cymru pledge <https://climate.cymru/> which has already been signed on behalf of SWAM.

Annie Delahunty  
SWAM Environment & Sustainability Cluster

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## Remaking The World Each Day

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A new planet created from things I had to hand paper, arrowroot, glue, ink and paint - photographed then cropped and shadowed digitally. Then taken apart and made afresh ...

We have everything we need here on our planet; we don't need to search for a new planet, but refresh how we think and feel and act in terms of our consumption and how we might share in.

[Here's a link](#) to online images of the process.

Made during Voices of the Earth in the late summer of 2020, an online creative course with Woodbrooke Study Centre with Zélie & Philip Gross.

It worked well as outreach, as I told lots of people, I was doing a Quaker creative course! Having Woodbrooke courses available online (even with rural internet) has been so supportive to my spiritual life and in this case my artistic life, but then they overlap each other.

From [Minute 36](#) our Canterbury Commitment (2011):

“We need to arrive at a place in which we all take personal responsibility to make whatever changes we are called to. At the same time, we need to pledge ourselves to corporate action. The environmental crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice, and we must face our responsibility as one of the nations which has unfairly benefited at others' expense, to redress inequalities which, in William Penn's words, are 'wretched and blasphemous.'”

Maura Hazelden

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## Life, Death and Crumpets

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I can't remember how we started, and I think that's one of my favourite things about it. There was no great decision-making process, no formal consultation, not even any process of discernment. At some point, probably during a general conversation after MfW (Meeting for Worship), death, dying, end of life care, the writing of wills or the drawing up of Lasting Power of Attorney documentation was probably mentioned, in passing, by one of us, and the others pricked up their ears. I suspect that what happened then was that A said to B, something along the lines of "D'you fancy chatting about this some more?" and then B said something like "Yes and why don't we ask C if they'd like to join in?" and off we went.

The three of us have now met, via Zoom, three, or perhaps four, times and it is feeling increasingly easy and natural. We were Friends from the beginning and, as we go on, I am understanding what that means in greater depth. We are also becoming friends.

We are becoming friends and are re-discovering the value and the importance of conversation about "Difficult" subjects. This isn't the place to explore the very different reasons why we are interested in talking about the end of life. What is important to note, however, is that the more we do talk about it, the more it is possible to talk about it. The normalising of what is, in our culture at this time, an abnormal subject, is precious.

We are mindful, by the way, of Advices & Queries number 30. Not one that gets read out that often -

*"Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement, give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them."*

The title of this piece says it all really. It wasn't long, in our conversations about death and dying, before food and living crept in. I'm not sure how we came to focus particularly on our favourite things to put on crumpets, but we did and that's fine by me. We're still divided, by the way, about whether brandy butter – yes, left-over

brandy butter on a toasted crumpet – or marmite and cheese, equally radical, gets the prize.

The second most important thing to say about our conversations, is simply that we are having them. I don't for a minute want to diminish the significance, the relevance or the importance of our Quaker decision-making, of consultation or the process of discernment. In fact, it seems to me that our governance and processes are one of our greatest offerings to the world outside the Society. But it is important to remember that things can happen alongside all that. If you want to talk, talk. You don't need a rubber stamp, official validation or committee approval. You just have to talk.

The three of us will be meeting again at the end of January so, excuse me if I finish this now. I need to de-frost some crumpets and raid my kitchen cupboards for new things to put on them.

Thomas Williams



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## Making a Journey

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Our Newport Meeting suffered with COVID19 restrictions and tried Zooming MfW (Meeting for Worship) with limited satisfaction. Some did not use or enjoy computer communications and social media, so our meetings were five or six of us. We had degrees of success sitting in silence with various audio and video settings. Finally, we settled on Zoom for afterword's, announcements, and a chat. The numbers grew until we were up to 10. We had the additional challenge of saying goodbye to our long-standing friends Andrew and Kay Wood and struggled on how to give them a loving send-off in a virtual world. We settled on making a craft tapestry using Zoom sessions outside of worship times (see article elsewhere in Hedyn).

An article in the last issue of Hedyn tells of that start to our journey. Everyone in our meeting contributed to that craft even if the gift was an idea or a piece of cloth. Engagement expanded to 18 people plus Kay and Andrew. We used the phone to communicate to loving Luddites and drove to pick up items to be crafted by others. Little did we know that experience would pull us together and lead us on to more joyful creations.

Along came Oonagh Ryder's article in Quake about the Journey to COP26 project. Kay Flatten wanted her place in nature to be near the top of Fan y Big in the Brecon Beacons. She offered to lead others and to take our Newport Quaker banner plus Cardiff Extinction Rebellion's "All Roads Lead to COP26" banner.



Others wanted our banner to have a climate change message as well. That was questioned because we would undoubtedly use the banner for other social causes. We kept our craft Zooms going and came upon the idea of making a mini banner which



attached to the bottom of the main banner and could be removed and hung in our place of worship, Maindee Library. We brought the idea to our Sunday chat and agreed on Brian Selby's suggestion to send a message about the GDP costs to the natural world. The craft Zoom discussed ideas and came up with a seesaw balanced on the Earth with one side weighted by money and the other by nature. Again, the phone kept others involved. Everyone was encouraged to give or make an item for the image of the natural world. At first there was blank silence, but over weeks people found things in drawers and along beaches and tiny items were shown on Sunday chats or craft Zooms. These were all gathered and taken to Chris Sleiman. Chrissie Hagger made the lettering for the message suggested by Val Evans. Kay made the money bag and GDP tag. Here is the result:

On the 10th of April three from our meeting and two guests started up Fan y Big from Llanfrynach to join other Quakers all over the UK on the Journey to COP26. Near the summit we unfurled the banner, sat under beautiful clouds, and looked out over our green Welsh valleys.

In a time of silence, we took in the light from the world around us and sent it to our leaders who can make a difference in Glasgow this November. Our readings were from Quaker Faith and Practice 26.08. and 25.04. As we were about to leave, we noticed two groups of walkers coming towards us from opposite directions – the first people we'd met all day – so we were able to share the message with them, before packing up our banners. Despite the chilly weather it had been an uplifting experience. Not simply 'lifting our eyes to the hills' but feeling at one with the natural world.



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## Saying Goodbye

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### *Our Leaving Present from Newport Quakers*

We had been planning to move to Manchester to be with our daughter Ruth and family for some time. We had finally managed to arrange everything, and you can imagine our surprise and joy when we were presented with a beautiful wall hanging from the people in our Meeting to celebrate our time in Newport!

The backdrop shows a map of Gwent with the river Usk and key places on the journey of our local meeting from homes to Caerleon and now to Newport. Around the edge are little handmade pockets containing individual contributions – a reading, craft item, memory stick or even a packet of seeds.

Each pocket spoke about its contributor and we have something to remind us of all their gifts that contributed to making the meeting such a special one to belong to

We shall treasure this and display it as a reminder of the love and thoughts of all those at Newport Quaker Meeting.

Andrew and Kay Wood

### *How It Came to Be*

Kay and Andy Wood were founding members of Caerleon Newport Quaker Meeting back in 1984. Our meeting understood their decision to move, and we supported them; however, their absence from our way of meeting and worship was a struggle for us to imagine. We wanted them to understand how much they gave to our community. Our thoughts were filtered by the restrictions of COVID-19.



We settled on making a craft to which all could contribute. Once we agreed on making a wall or door hanging, we hosted craft Zoom sessions on Tuesday evenings. It became apparent we had some incredibly talented people in our meeting. Chris Haggart painted the estuary and Severn river around Andy and Kay's house in Goldcliff on calico fabric and extended the view to include Maindee Library, our current Meeting House, and our original Meeting House in Caerleon Town Hall. Chris Sleiman made bees and arranged photographs to be printed on fabric and sewn into places on the painted map. Kay Flatten hiked along the Coastal Path to find a driftwood stick to hold the hanging.

To engage everyone, we asked if they could find fabric of meaning from their rag pile and make a small pouch. If they could not sew their pouches, then someone would pick up their material and make the pouches for them. We asked each person to place a small item and/or message in the pouch which would show Andy and Kay who the pouch was from.

It took phone calls to explain the project and encourage involvement. In that communication phase it became evident that people wanted to talk and feel our energy and enthusiasm. A few members did not use Zoom so could not join our Sunday Afterword's and Chat sessions. They may have been shielding and not going out of their houses for months. This was asking them to do something, to be a part of something. That was a welcome change and they rose to the challenge with great rejoicing. Jo New was ill with COVID and yet she wanted to contribute to our memories for Kay and Andy. Jo passed away this Spring. We are so happy she will be remembered on this artwork.

The meeting felt so positive about the experiences of joining together and making something using virtual tools of communication and planning that members and attendees decided to resurrect their old Quaker banner and make it ready for their planned Journey to COP26 project on 10th of April. It may be, there is craftivism in our future.

### *Janet Harris Tells Her Experience*

I do not sew. An enforced 'needlework' class at school ended any enthusiasm I had for the subject, although my mother was a skilled dressmaker and made all her own clothes and those for my sister and me when we were children. Therefore, when we were asked to provide a pocket for Kay and Andrew's door hanging, I was completely stumped. I had no material, no needle, and no idea. I do have a Wilcox & Gibbs (1871)

sewing machine that belonged to my grandmother, but no cotton, and no needle for that, and you need a degree in engineering to work out how to thread it, even if you had both. I dug the machine out of its box to see if the sight of it would bring enlightenment, but it just looked very abandoned and sad, reminding me that hoarding things in the hope that they might be useful 'one day' was probably some sort of procrastination for getting on with life.

It was lockdown, so no shops were open in Cardiff, but I thought I might find some squares of material in the pound shop that was open, and I had seen knitting needles in there, so I grabbed my mask and was about to set out when I looked again at what was in my hand. It was a face mask made by my sister from material that I had found and sent to her which was illustrated with the characters from Roald Dahl's "The Witches".

My sister makes the masks for friends and family and asks for donations to Alzheimer's Society. Our father had dementia, and we try to raise funds for them by various methods, and she has so far raised nearly £500, whereas I have been procrastinating and waiting for lockdown to end before signing up for a dementia walk. It struck me that the mask might be a worthy pocket for the door hanging; a reminder of lockdown which hopefully (?!) would be a distant memory when Kay and Andrew moved up North, but if not, and we spend all future winters in masks, they could unpick it from the hanging and make use of it.

Roald Dahl also has a connection to Wales as he was born and spent his early childhood in Cardiff. I also thought the idea of the witches having faces as masks was good synchronicity. I loved the book as a child, and to me witches, like ghosts, didn't have a specific gender, but I hope the recent debate over the anti-Semitism and misogyny of Dahl would not put Kay and Andrew off this particular pocket. If so, perhaps they could paint chocolate over the mask, an action I think Dahl would have approved of.

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# Testimony to the Grace of God shown in our Friend Rebecca Garnault

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## ***Hardshaw and Mann Area Meeting***

*Minute 71/2020 Testimony to the Grace of God shown in the Life  
of Rebecca Garnault*

*We have received and heard the testimony to the grace of God shown through our Friend Rebecca Garnault. The testimony is appended to these minutes. We approve the testimony and ask our Clerk to forward it, with this minute, to Friends House for publication in the Yearly Meeting Epistles and Testimonies. We ask our clerk to also forward it to Cardiff Local Meeting.*

18 May 1991 – 21 August 2018

Fierce and gentle in equal measure, Rebecca let her life speak through her activism and applying her considerable talents to Quaker work. Whilst her complex medical condition meant that she was with us for only twenty-seven years, it also made her the extraordinary person she became. She talked with matter-of-factness about how her illness had affected her, but with no hint of self-pity. Diagnosed with a chronic blood condition aged fifteen, Rebecca had monthly blood transfusions on the paediatric oncology ward. It seemed to make her value all life deeply. Physically slight, with grey eyes sparkling in her pixie face, she just got on with what she had to do. She often wore a bracelet with Shakespeare's phrase: "though she be but little, she is fierce" – and lived it.

Becky grew up in Cardiff Meeting. At Junior Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting, she was introduced to the wider world of young Quakers. As a teen she became a Base Group Facilitator for national gatherings and loved being able to give other young people the support and nurture she herself had received. Her most significant early Quaker experience was the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage month with young Friends from Europe and the Americas. They explored 1652 country; she spoke of experiencing the

spirit of God during a Meeting for Worship on Firbank Fell when wild ponies came up to young Friends.

The USA Friends introduced her to the Woolman Semester in California, a progressive college which encourages young people to become active citizens. Rebecca went during her Gap Year and was their first international student. She learned about environmentalism, planting vegetables, and building irrigation channels. She practiced activism techniques to campaign for peace, such as film making and public speaking. This experience helped Becky to be awarded a John Lennon Trust bursary when she started her degree at Liverpool University.

Only five weeks into her first term, a kidney infection swiftly developed into sepsis and she spent four weeks on life support machines in intensive care, followed by three months in a Teenage Cancer Trust unit, rebuilding her strength and confidence. She had developed Type 1 diabetes; a challenge for someone who hated needles.

A gradual understanding that she had been close to death perhaps had further impact on Becky. She restarted her degree the following September. Despite her regular medical appointments, and now with chronic pain from osteoporosis in her feet, she lived life with purpose. She came into membership in 2012, aged twenty-one. In 2013 she went to the QUNO summer school in Geneva and was particularly impressed by a meeting with the ex-UN ambassador to Sudan, Mukesh Kapila. On return to Liverpool, she and a young Quaker friend set up the Aegis Trust Society, a university society to advocate against genocide.

One of our abiding memories of Becky is her energy. She was on the Liverpool committee for Friends of Palestine, on the committee of MAW: the Movement for the Abolition of War (later becoming Vice Chair), and volunteered with Crisis.

In 2014, MAW supported Becky to visit Sarajevo for a youth peace event, marking 100 years since the start of the First World War. In 2016, she travelled to Berlin for the International Peace Bureau World Congress on Peace and Demilitarisation. A fellow delegate wrote “I have to admit that sometimes it is hard to stay motivated, especially when it comes to big challenges that seem impossible to accomplish such as banning nuclear weapons and achieving a demilitarised world. But she was just on it, so passionate and so ready to put in the work needed.”

Having become an Honorary Scouser, Rebecca studied an MSc. in Humanitarian Studies at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. She became increasingly involved in Liverpool Meeting: through employment as reception staff, in worship, and then

when appointed as an Overseer. “Becky was focussed; she didn’t waste time; she got things done.” She encouraged involvement in the Meeting by other young people, organising evening events at pizza restaurants. An Elder wrote that “she had a wisdom and a force about her that was uncanny. I loved her from the moment I met her.”

Rebecca was referred to a pain-management clinic which changed her relationship with her chronic condition. She got a job with the British Lung Foundation, where she hoped to encourage people with lung disease not to let the condition limit their lives.

Rebecca served on Britain Yearly Meeting Central Nominations Committee, a friend joking that she was possibly the youngest member for two-hundred years. She enjoyed travelling to London by train and finding out about the wider work of Quakers in Britain. She was due to become co-clerk of Central Nominations in 2018.

In March 2018 Rebecca went into the Royal Liverpool with a kidney infection which, as previously, deteriorated to sepsis. This was the beginning of five-months in Intensive Care. Through a cycle of decline and partial recovery, her life was saved repeatedly by the skills of the medical team, multiple life-support machines, her own exceptional determination, and the power of prayer. It wasn’t until her final illness that doctors confirmed that the underlying cause of her frailty was a defect with her mitochondrial DNA.

Becky never gave up; she did not go gentle into that good night; when asked what she most feared her response was “that people will give up on me.” Nevertheless, Becky knew how precarious her life was. Palliative care specialist Dr Mannix writes of the love that exudes from people who are near to death: “they are examples of what we can all become: beacons of compassion, living in the moment, looking backwards with gratitude and forgiveness, and focused on the simple things that really matter.”<sup>1</sup> That was the experience of many of us over those five months: it was an extraordinary period of love and peace.

Becky’s spirit, which had powered her activism, continued to grow and to do its work, but now, not outside in the world, but deep in the hearts of all who knew her. As her ability to speak became more and more limited, her spirit spoke through the smallest gestures of her eyes, her face, her hands, and through the powerful stillness of her presence. Her pain and fragility focussed our hearts on compassion and love, and her

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<sup>1</sup> With the End in Mind, Dr Kathryn Mannix, pg 336, paperback

wisdom, which we all knew she possessed, continued to speak to us through a process we didn't fully understand.

The Meeting for Worship which took place at the hospital with Becky present in her hospital bed was the most powerful some had ever attended. The chapel was filled with love and healing light. An enduring bond was created between all who were present that day and those who were present in spirit. Friendships deepened as we came to know each other in 'that which is eternal'. We were together with Becky, held in the presence of a power much greater than our simple human selves.

Becky's final months were deeply painful to witness. So much prayer, silent waiting and hope for her recovery finally gave way to a heart-wrenching acceptance that her work in this world was coming to an end.

A student friend wrote "She was a walking example of perseverance, compassion and optimism in the darkest of hours. She gave me the perspective to be able to face hardship with a shrug, a rolling up of the sleeves - and a smile." A Quaker friend said "after Becky died, everyone spoke about how kind and caring Becky was. Becky was these things, but she was also angry, passionate, extremely nosey, determined, bossy and occasionally just simply annoying! She did an incredible amount with her time and her energy, but I don't want to pretend she was a saint because she wasn't – she was a very real person. She was my friend, and I miss her."

She taught us to 'attend to what love requires'. She reminded us to take every opportunity we can, as she did, to live, think and act in the spirit and the light of God's love. Becky reminded us that this is what we are here to learn.

Signed in and on behalf of Hardshaw and Mann Area Meeting  
Held on 8th November 2020 via Zoom  
Liese van Alwon and Julia Cadman, Co-Clerks



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## George Bradshaw

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I daresay most of us have seen Michael Portillo on the television programme, with his Bradshaw Guide, speeding along to some railway destination. But did you know that George Bradshaw was a Quaker?

He was born in Lancashire in 1800. Although his parents were not particularly wealthy, when he was young, they sent him for lessons to a minister known for his devotion to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

On leaving school, he was apprenticed to an engraver in Manchester. By 1820 he had set up his own engraving business in Belfast. Two years later he returned to Manchester and continued his business as an engraver and printer, mainly of maps.

When he joined the Quakers, he gave a considerable amount of his time to working with radical reformers, such as Richard Cobden, in organising peace conferences. As well as this, he set up a school and soup kitchens for the poor of Manchester.

With his belief as a Quaker, the early editions of his Bradshaw's guides avoided using the usual names of months and days of the week, using First month for January and First day for Sunday and so on. As you will recall the early Quakers refrained from using the usual terms being based upon Roman deities, as they considered them to be 'pagan'.

He also founded a high-quality weekly magazine, Bradshaw's Journal: A Miscellany of Literature, Science and Art.

In May 1839 he married Martha Darbyshire, in the same year he initiated his railway guides. George and Martha had six children.

Whilst touring Norway in 1853, he contracted Cholera. He never returned home. He died four months later and was interred in Oslo.

George Bradshaw's range of titles of his railway guides continued after his death until 1961.

Rita Bell

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