

a Quiet Word

The Leeds Quaker Newsletter: February 2011, No 1.



The Ancient Spirituality of February

“I would wish a great lake of ale for the King of Kings; I would wish the family of heaven to be drinking it throughout life and time. I would wish the men of Heaven in my own house; I would wish vessels of peace to be given to them. I would wish joy to be in their drinking; I would wish Jesus to be here among them. I would wish the three Marys of great name; I would wish the people of heaven from every side. I would wish to be a rent-payer to the Prince; that way if I was in trouble He would give me a good blessing”.

Prayer Attributed to St Brigid

Did you know that for the ancient Britons 1st February was seen as the beginning of spring? Lacking the advantages of natural science, our ancestors had a number of techniques for determining the end of winter and the coming of new life. Snow-drops were a sure sign; so to the sight of adders vacating their comfortable holes. In the old British calendar the month of February began with the two-day fertility festival of *Imbolc*. When Christianity made significant inroads into the British Isles, the festival became known as Candle-mass- a celebration of Jesus’ dedication at the Temple in Jerusalem [Luke 2:22–40]. Patron of the original festival was the pan-British goddess Brigid; sacred expert in smith-craft, poetry, fertility and healing. At the beginning of lamb-season her protection was invoked to ensure healthy flocks. Such was the popularity of her worship that she was incorporated into the saint-cult of a contemporary of St Patrick; a holy woman known as Brigid of Kildare. It was said that Brigid (through a miraculous vision) became the foster-mother of Christ and as a consequence became known as ‘the Mary of the Gael’.

Junior Holidays 2010



Pond-dipping on Junior Holiday

2010 was different from previous years in that there were four Junior Holiday events and not the normal three. The 'new' event was a successful reunion in April which was held at The Mount School in York and coincided with the Quakers in Yorkshire gathering. The day mirrored the QIY programme as we also looked at the theme of 'Quaker Schools' which also included a tour of the school. After lunch we walked to Rowntree Park in York and ended the afternoon with an ice cream treat before returning to The Mount for a much enjoyed tea with friends at the QIY gathering. Our first weekend holiday was in June and was for our older children aged 10 to 12.

The venue was the Nell Bank activity centre, which is on the edge of Ilkley. Highlights of the holiday included a night walk, a morning of activities provided by the centre staff ie a team building obstacle course, pond dipping and a water activity designed to get you very wet unless you worked together as a team - many of us got very wet. Saturday afternoon was hot and sunny and just right for a long visit to the Ilkley lido. Sunday took us on a long walk into Ilkley, then up the steep hill to the Meeting House where we joined friends for the end of Meeting for Worship. After meeting, Ilkley friends led us if a round of 'On Ilkley Moor Ba'Tat' - I have never heard it sung better, it was truly wonderful - who said Quakers never sing!

We enjoyed drinks at the meeting house before proceeding up Ilkley Moor to White Wells where we enjoyed our packed lunch before returning back to Nell Bank and home. Snowball Logde, near York, was the destination of our longer holiday in August. This was for 9 to 12 year olds and was attended by 23 children. We now use the system of 'nest groups' for all of our holidays, this is a good way of getting to know one another better, especially for new children, as we eat together in our nest groups. The nest groups are also used to share the chores - the room preparation, washing up and cleaning. At Snowball the nest groups were named after Chocolate companies - Fry, Rowntree, Cadbury and Terry's. We had a number of activities that followed the chocolate theme and needless to say, these were very popular! We enjoyed three action packed days, starting with a long walk across the fields to

the Murton Park Centre - Yorks farm museum. It was a most interesting place with lots of animals, displays about rural life of bygone days and a reconstructed Viking village where the children all made a Viking candle holder out of clay. On the return journey the main highlight was playing on the bales in one of the fields. Then the clouds darkened and eventually there was a massive thunderstorm, so we were able to test out the newly purchased storm shelters that we had with us. The shelters saved the day and kept us all completely dry and when we emerged there were great puddles everywhere so we would have been absolutely drenched. On day two we travelled by service bus to Eden Camp Museum, near Malton.

When we arrived we were given our own Mess Hut to have our packed lunch in! We had a very interesting afternoon exploring Eden Camp, which is a former POW camp and now an award winning museum which covers all aspects of life in the Second World War. At the end of the visit, we had a discussion about what we had experienced before catching a bus back to Snowball. In the evening we made a big fire and sang camp fire songs ! The main highlight of our last day, was a swimming treat at York's 'Water World'. There was great excitement when the three minibuses arrived to take us to the pool. The children had a fantastic time - there was a 'wave machine', a 'river' to swim in and three different water slides which were exhilarating for those daring enough to try them out.



Our final holiday was our regular return trip to the ever popular Barmoor near Hutton-Le-Hole for 17 young children aged 7 to 9. Two of the children were vegan, so we experimented with an 'all vegan' weekend rather than our normal vegetarian weekend. Many of the children were on their first ever junior holiday so there was much excitement when we went on a torch lit walk up to the nearby 'Nab' and this was followed by a rewarding mug of hot chocolate. Saturday's walk took us through fields of cows, across some moor land, through forest and along the edge of a river where we played pooh sticks. We eventually found our destination, the Lowna Quaker Burial Ground where we held our Meeting for Worship. Sunday was wet, so we had a massive game of hide and seek inside the house, which was followed by a big tidy up, then lunch and fond farewells.

Five adults attended each of our holidays, but we still need to develop a bigger group of **energetic and fit helpers who are CRB checked and skilled at supporting children - could this be you?**

Robert Keeble (co-clerk JH Committee)

Sometimes it pays to be a Quaker

Long winded short story....

I had to do two errands before Meeting. The first was near home. I didn't go in for a cup of tea, but hurried on with a book for a friend who lives near St Chad's Church. I'd set off in good time, parked near the church and tried to take the short cut I'd used before. Couldn't find the formal short cut, took an informal one through someone's gate and garden and left the book with my friend. I tried to go back by the formal short cut. Found the first part easily, down a ginnel. Then the ginnel came to an end. I asked a man putting out his bin, but he said there was no short cut – only people's gardens. I didn't like to push past him, so I walked back to the car the long way by the roads and up the long drive to the church.

By now I was late. I was hurrying, tripped and fell heavily. Immediately I was surrounded by helpful churchgoers. They wanted to stay with me. I insisted that I would be all right in a few minutes. They persisted. More good Samaritans arrived. At last, it must have been at least two whole minutes later, I said I just needed to be quiet. [All this time sitting on the ground] Could it be easier to help than to be helped? In the end I said I was a Quaker and needed a few minutes silence. That worked. Someone knew about Quakers and I was left to recover. You never know when being a Quaker will be useful. **Joan Wyatt**

Meeting for Sufferings 04/12/10

I had expected that MforS may have been cancelled due to the snow but this was not to be. To my even greater surprise, only a small number of friends were prevented from attending. The day started with us being introduced to our new Recording Clerk, Paul Parker of Thaxted Local Meeting. Paul had been appointed to the recording Clerk's position by BYM Trustees only the day before. Paul is presently working as a Deputy Head at a large comprehensive and as such is prevented from taking up his post to May 2011. Paul would seem to be an excellent choice and I am sure he will serve us well as he was the co-clerk of the Yearly Meeting gathering that was held at York last year. A number of friends commented that it was time for plain speaking and we should recognize Paul as our new Chief Executive - possibly 'Recording Clerk and Chief Executive' might be a better title.

The main item that needed discernment was when we considered the Experiment With Light Project. Rex Ambler, supported by Lancashire AM, asked that friends

nationally might 'own' this important project. There was much love and goodwill expressed for all that Rex has done with the EWL project, but there was also uncertainty about adopting this project and making it a piece of centrally managed work supported by our paid staff. The future of EWL is to be looked at in May 2011 at a conference at Glenthorne. It is hoped that the best way forward will emerge from this conference.

In the afternoon we looked at Sustainability, which is priority D from our Framework for Action. We met in our home groups and looked at what questions friends might be asked at the BYM gathering which is to be held in 2011 and will have the theme 'Sustaining the Spirit: changing the way we live to sustain the world we live in'. I won't talk more about this now other than to encourage you all to consider attending the gathering which will be at Canterbury.



A man sleeping rough outside Carlton Hill Meeting House: Many Friends are worried that cuts in the in welfare budget will lead to increased homelessness

A number of Local Meetings continue to raise concerns over the impending Government cuts and the effect that this will have. In response to this, QPSW will update its 2004 Social Inclusions Tool Kit. Finally, we heard that children of failed Asylum Seekers are still being held in detention despite the pledge made by the new Government to end this practice. Susan Seymour, the Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings, has written an open letter to the Home Secretary, Teresa May regarding this matter and we are awaiting a reply. In the mean time, friends and Local Meetings are also encouraged to write to local MP's and the Home Secretary

regarding this matter. **Robert Keeble**

City of Sanctuary Comes to Leeds



Byzantium Icon: Abraham offering shelter and hospitality to the three angels

Many Leeds Friends are familiar with the work of PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) but they may not be aware of another organisation which began in Sheffield and is now going nationwide. In this piece Tiffy Allen explains the aims and work of City of Sanctuary.

Imagine that your house has been destroyed, your family lost, and your whole life shattered by war tearing through the place you have always called home. Imagine that you scraped together your savings and found your way to a new country, a new city, somewhere that you believe you can be safe. You don't know much of the language or culture, the new place is freezing cold, but you desperately want a new start. You're scared, you're traumatized, yet you know you have something to give – if only this society can let you have a chance. You've been rejected, you've been persecuted, you've been hated, and you're afraid that this new community might not accept you. Imagine the difference it would make if your new neighbours, your new place of worship, the college where you study English, the surgery where you register, the offices where you have to fill in forms – if they made you feel welcome, wanted, valued.

City of Sanctuary is a national movement which seeks to create a culture of welcome and hospitality to people who have come to our cities seeking safety. The movement is finding expression all over the country, with a fast-growing group emerging in Leeds over the past few months. The City of Sanctuary movement began in Sheffield five years ago, and since then has spread to over sixteen cities across UK. It is based around the idea that a society of welcome and inclusiveness is better for everyone. – an idea that is embedded in all faith groups. 'Sanctuary' is an ancient

value, and it simply means a place where people, especially those fleeing danger, can feel safe and welcome. Indeed, the founders of many faiths were sanctuary-seekers themselves – Moses, Jesus and Mohammed all had to flee persecution at some stage in their lives. In Leeds, we are aiming to create a partnership of people and organisations in all walks and stages of life right across the city, united in the goal to make our city more inclusive and welcoming. We recognize that asylum seekers and refugees come here seeking safety from persecution, war and trauma. We know that they have a positive contribution to make to Leeds, and we are committed to creating a ‘city of sanctuary’ here.

How Does City of Sanctuary Work?

So – what exactly happens? Well, we are starting with two simple actions. First, we have created a form which we’re asking individuals and organisations to sign. You can download the form by simply clicking <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/node/842> - and you can sign online if you like. We’d love you to take the form to your school, college, place of worship, business, or place of work. We hope that all sectors of society – education, health, sport, businesses, arts, faith groups, council, community groups, clubs and many more – will get involved. If this is a new idea to you, you may want to consider ways that you would like to express your commitment – please get in touch or look on the website for suggestions.

The second action is that in November we are planning a LAUNCH for Leeds City of Sanctuary. This will be a big celebration where people from all walks of society can meet each other, hear real life stories of people who have found Sanctuary in Leeds, find ways of getting involved, and celebrate the wonderful diversity our city reflects through music and food from all over the world. Look out on the website for the details!

If you are already involved in activities that welcome refugees, THANK YOU! Let us know what you are doing - we hope that through City of Sanctuary we will be able to publicise what you are doing and point important resources in your direction. If you would like to hear more, please feel free to email leeds@cityofsanctuary.org. For more information on the City of Sanctuary movement, please look at the website www.cityofsanctuary.org. At the bottom of the home page you’ll find a short film – it is less than ten minutes long and we guarantee that you’ll find it inspirational.

Tiffany Allen

City of Sanctuary Co-ordinator

Up and Coming Events

Risk & the Criminal Justice System Conference



14TH MAY 2011

9:30am – 4:30pm

Oxford Place Centre, Leeds LS1 3AX

Cost £15 (£10 unwaged)

Chaired By Dr. Fiona Macaulay

Speakers include:

Sir David Latham, Chair of the Parole Board

Dr. Bob Johnson, Former Prison Psychiatrist

Eric Allison, Guardian Prison Correspondent

Lindis Percy, Peace Campaigner

Marian Partington of the Forgiveness Project

Followed by a selection of workshops on a range of related topics such as
Mental Health, Addiction, Rehabilitation, Women and Children

For further details please contact PHIL O'HARE on **0113 2564072 philomena.ohare**
@btinternet.com or find us on **Facebook** (search for Risk & the Criminal Justice System in
Events)

Yorkshire Global Feminist Activism Workshop - Saturday 5th Feb



**Saturday 5th Feb 15:00-17:00 at Leeds Carlton Hill Meeting House, 188
Woodhouse Lane,**

International Women's Day 2011 marks the 100th year of celebrating International Women's Day. **UKFeminista and Women for Women International** join together to discuss how women's rights are progressing globally and how UK activism can further women's rights around the world. Women perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the food, but earn 10% of the income and own only 1% of the property. **100 years on from the world's first International Woman's Day, where are we and what have we achieved?** This regional workshops will allow you meet feminists in Yorkshire and discuss how you will make the 100 years anniversary of International Women's Day a truly memorable day. The workshops will be focused on the **skills and knowledge** that will make your **activism impactful!**

[Global Feminism and Global Feminist campaigning](#)

- 20mins Networking
- 10mins Introduction from hosting group and local activist

- 20mins Presentation on Global Feminism
- 10mins Presentation on Join me on the Bridge (JMOTB)
- 15mins Networking break

Global feminist activism. How to get involved? 25mins Campaigning skills – presentation on campaigning skills focusing on JMOTB for a frame work. Skills covered, media skills, engaging with local politicians, developing partnerships, creative campaigning, applying for march permits.

- 5mins No Women No Peace – TAKE ACTION NOW
- 15mins questions

There is no charge to attend. Refreshments provided. Everyone welcome

To book, please contact Sarah at Women for Women International on shaynes@womenforwomen.org

There is limited capacity in the room so to attend you must book a place. If you can no longer attend, please cancel your place to free it up for others.

The In-Betweeners: Some Reflections on ‘Messy’ Quaker Identities and Dual-Membership



Jill Page being welcomed into Membership

As I begin to write this piece I reflect upon how I had spent a recent Friday night at a Jewish Synagogue with a Quaker-Pagan friend of mine. We both stumbled through the Hebrew, watched the Shabbat-candles being lit and (while I can't presume to speak for my companion, I at least) found a measure of peace and closeness to God

comparable to the deep silence of Meeting. While we both sat and heard the Torah being read I reflected upon how complex and fractured contemporary religious identity is. People are raised one faith and adopt another. Some fall away from religion and discover it again in later life. Still many (like my friend) hold several spiritual affiliations at once, feeling that each facet of spirituality is part of a messy but satisfying whole. Some Friends see these in-between, dual or fluid identities as something 'bad'. All this ambiguity is thought by some as a sign of flippancy, a pathological lack of commitment, or worst-still a kind of 'pick your brand' mentality applied to religion. A more charitable interpretation is that we live in times of intense spiritual hunger; people are seeking answers in the face of the challenges posed by modernity and scientific-materialism, by rooting out from the old treasure-chests of religion what they find must sustaining in a period of transition.

Any suggestion that this is some strange contemporary aberration is simply not true. Being a Quaker has always been a complicated business. The earliest English Friends represented a visibly hybrid movement, encompassing many radical ideas which emerged during the bloody years of the Civil War. Identity was a highly fluid thing in those years; after all it was before the days of the *Society of Friends* and its procedures of membership recognition. Among the attendees of those first charismatic Meeting one would have found affiliated Baptists, Puritans, Ranters, Levellers, Seekers and sympathetic Anglicans. The sheer diversity among the first generation of Quakers is quite astonishing; a fact which sometimes brought near-breakable tensions to the surface. One of the most difficult groups to incorporate into primitive Quakerism turned out to be 'the Ranters'. Like Friends, the Ranters believed in the immediate and transforming power of the Spirit. Unlike later Friends however, Ranters took this belief further than George Fox ever did. As well as rejecting 'outward' ritual forms, the Ranters also rejected what they perceived as the burdensome nature of *the Law*. Since Jesus had forgiven our sins, moral transgressions were no-longer an issue. Conventional offences like drunkenness and sexual liberality became means of achieving religious ecstasy and grace. In the surviving records of the 1650s we come across an interesting group called *The Proud Quakers*. Demonstrating a clear affinity with the Ranters, they drank, used profane language and engaged in 'lax conduct' (Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p.254).

Yet, these same Ranter-Friends were more than pleasure-seeking libertines; many of them added considerable religious richness to the experience of early Friends' Meetings. With their emphasis upon the 'the Light' as the sole guide for spiritual experience, they opened up a profound sense of religious freedom, of a sense of deepest autonomy from which many Liberal Quakers today benefit. One such 'rantish' Quaker was the infamous James Nayler who, before his persecution and downfall, had been a keep exponent of a faction of Friends dedicated to the liberty offered by 'the Light'. Many surrounding Nayler (including a Friend by the name of John Perrot) emphasised the power of the Spirit to such a degree that they even believed the time and place of worship should arise from the spontaneous leadings of the Spirit (Ursula Jane O'Shea, *Living the Way: Quaker Spirituality and Community*, p. 44). Here we see a highly ecstatic and mystical form of faith, in which the traditional separation between God and the world had been closed. All life could now come under the ordering of the Spirit.

In time such apparent excesses led to the imposition of a greater centralisation and the crystallisation of Quaker authority. While the formation of Monthly, Quarterly, Women's and Yearly Meeting led further break-ways, it was George Fox, not James Nayler, who became the central charismatic figure for later Quaker generations. Understanding the various tensions and power-shifts of early Friends gives us a more realistic, but also a more generous view of what it means to be a Quaker. There was never one 'authrative' Quakerism, nor a single and incontestable way of 'being Quaker'. It was from the very beginning a matter of struggle and negotiation between other Quakers and their individual consciences. Today's hybrid Friends who hold fluid or multi-layered affiliations are simply discovering something which existed at the heart of Quakerism from the very beginning. Those of us who walk complex paths among Friends; Quaker-Buddhists, Jewish-Quakers, Quaker-Universalists, Quaker-Pagans, are not watering down the Society of Friends, but rather re-kindling some of Quakerism's early vitality. And just as the Ranters, Levellers, Seekers and others added something to the great tapestry of Quakerism, so today attenders and members from non-Christian traditions or those who hold dual-membership are doing the same.

Ben Wood

You Do Have To Be Mad To Work Here, And It Does Help!



Inside Leeds Survivor-led Crisis Service with Lisa Saunders

As many others do, I suffer from depression. It has been with me since childhood and it isn't going away any time fast. Therapies, medication, repression, wishful thinking, you name it I've tried it. Until my last dark episode in Spring 2010, where I was introduced to something new by the CMHT. Leeds Survivor-Led Crisis Service at Dial House & Connect Helpine. Dial House is a sanctuary for those in mental health crisis in every way imaginable. There are no doctors, no shrinks, just fellow survivors who support you through your worst hours, no matter what. You are never a patient or client, you are a visitor. The entire ethos of the service is Person-Centred

– you don't need to be diagnosed, pigeon-holed or have anything to prove to be accepted. It's your crisis, your definition. In addition they have a Helpine called Connect which provides callers with confidential and anonymous support at night. Outside of Meeting I have never encountered such a sense of being "held in the Light" than I do every time I enter the building, whether as a Visitor or a Connect Volunteer.

So many mental health drop-in services are being cancelled wholesale across Leeds. Dial House spends its scarce resources on its visitors and callers so I simply want to spread the word. I recommend Dial House to you and anyone around you who are suffering bad mental health and feel unable to access the more conventional routes to help. Connect supports people on the phone every night of the year. And I mean every night. I did the Christmas Day double shift on Connect & possibly had one of the best Christmases ever. I was tucked away in the warm office helping callers explore their feelings and get through the day, being fed mince pies and warm drinks and having first-rate supervision from staff. I didn't do this because I am a nice person who does selfless things but because it helps me survive too, knowing that people are out there trying so hard to make it through each day. If you ever want to learn more about Person-Centred helping/counselling or experience a totally different way of working I suggest you contact LSLCS. They'll give you details about how to sign up for the Connect Helpine Volunteer Programme which is the best training I have ever had. Like everyone at Meeting, I feel LSLCS with me everywhere I go, helping me though the dark and holding me in the Light.

Oh, one more thing, Connect has a remit to support carers; if you know anyone who could do with a free phone confidential support chat any evening of their choice, please please give them the number too! (it is for people in the Leeds area only) You can contact the service directly via their website, or if you ever fancy a chat about what it's like to volunteer there, grab me over tea & coffee at Carlton Hill.

Connect Helpine : 0808 800 1212

<http://www.lslcs.org.uk/>

[email: survivor.led@lslcs.org.uk](mailto:survivor.led@lslcs.org.uk)

Telephone: 0113 260 9328

Lisa Saunders

Formerly of Blue Haired Lady fame ;)