

## Life of Spiceland Meeting 2015

In this busy year of change we have celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rebuilding of our beloved Meeting House and, more importantly, we have reflected on the life of special people, we have enjoyed the company of many visitors and we have begun to experiment with our ways of organisation which we hope will improve the life of our community at Spiceland.

In June we were all moved by the celebration of the extraordinary life of Charles Hannam. Oak leaves and hedgerow flowers transformed the overflowing Meeting Room. Charles rests now in the wild part of our Burial Ground far from his native heath. Within a few days Spiceland was the setting for an amazing Quaker wedding involving our Bridgwater friends. Other visitors to Meeting for Worship during the year included couples returning to the place of their marriage, and some friends who had attended as children.

We are pleased that Margaret Sheppard is feeling better and can again attend our main meeting on Sundays. We will miss Anna Mews who has left to start a new life in France- we look forward to her promised blog! Happily our mid-week meetings in Tiverton and in Wiveliscombe are offering the opportunity for worship to those who for one reason or another find it difficult to get to Spiceland on Sundays.

Our Anniversary Garden Party at the end of June was blessed with idyllic weather. Over 200 people came from far and wide to inspect our recent refurbishments and to enjoy refreshments. After an 'al fresco' Meeting for Worship in the old orchard field where George Fox is reputed to have preached twice in the 1660's-now our New Burial Ground- we planted some commemorative apple trees. Other events in the year included Taize singing, stargazing along with a local astronomy group, a 'book share' lunch, participating in the 'Just this Day' and Heritage Open Day. In September, an all-age worship was combined with camping in the Long Close and we are grateful to Fran Hicks for leading this event so ably, which we hope to repeat.

Our connection to, and understanding of, our role within West Somerset Area Quaker Meeting has been enhanced through the service of Chris Jeffery and Margaret Stocks as Trustees. We reach out to BYM through Kathy Gollin who represents our Area Meeting at Meeting for Sufferings. Our Website is improving all the time and we have to thank Pat Bell for her efforts which enables us to reach out beyond our Spiceland community

Amid all the doing we have not forgotten that we are a faith community but sometimes we need help and guidance to move us forward. In October, Gilly Lee led us in an 'At home' day which helped us look at ourselves, and to recognise our strengths but also to acknowledge some hurts within our meeting. We found this exercise

opened up new understandings and brought us to new challenges. How can seek to grow as a community?... work in progress.

As with other small Meetings across BYM we have struggled to cover all the tradition roles within our organisation. Our Nominations Team have thought long and hard about new ways that we can develop our human resources and our ways of working within the order of Quaker discipline handed down to us. How can we avoid an undue burden falling on just a few? Margaret and Michael Stocks deserve particular mention for holding us together effectively as Elder and as Clerk in our changes in 2015. Margaret's support has been tremendous as we have struggled to find a way forward. Her experience and that of Michael, of the ways of other Quaker Meetings outside of our own Area has been really useful.

Our evolving solution for Spiceland is, with the approval of our Area Meeting, to appoint a Central Team consisting of two Elders and three Overseers whose task is to make things happen and to link with our other working groups including Shared Clerking, Finance/Treasury, Property, Events...and with all other tasks such as Library, Doorkeeping, Refreshments, Burials, Contact List and others of no less importance

Spiceland has a unique diversity of property requiring upkeep: our recently restored Meeting House, the adjoining 'Gingham' Room, the ancient thatched linhay, old and new Burial grounds, the tenant's cottage and its beautiful garden. We are working increasingly closely with the Trustees of Area Meeting to help them in the fulfilment of their duties as Landlords of Spiceland responsible to the Charity Commissioners.

At the end of 2015 we feel we are better able to focus on our vision for the use of Spiceland as an Area Meeting resource. We look forward in 2016 to welcoming friends from across Area Meeting and from our community of other faiths, and none, to enjoy our unique rural facilities - perhaps as a rural counterpart to the amazing new urban facilities in our new Meeting House in Taunton.