

CENTRE QUAKER DE CONGENIES

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CENTRE QUAKER
de
CONGÉNIES

Dear Friends,

I have just come home from the Centre Quaker where I enjoyed sitting in the shade of the big parasol. The garden is now so pleasant with its beautiful trees and flowers. A Friend, who lives near-by, is a real gardener, down to the tips of her fingers, as we say in French, and spends a lot of her time working in the garden making it more and more beautiful. Do come and see us and relax somewhere in the garden with a good book, or rest just doing nothing, after a walk, a bicycle ride or an exploration, with one of our self-drive Discovery Guides.

Since Libby's last letter, in June 2008, more progress has been made in the house. A store room is completed, thanks to the work and enthusiasm of volunteers, roughcasting walls, concreting, screeding and floor tiling. The garden shed is neat with new shelving.

plumbing for the summer kitchen in the garden is not installed, and our project for the showers / toilets outside lacks funding. Parking needs to be re-located nearer the car entrance. The house is comfortable, peaceful and welcoming and the garden is a joy.

Welcoming is indeed so important. At present, an American Quaker couple are our resident Friends, who are very pleasant and helpful, and will be with us for another 5 months.

Many Quakers and attenders visit us on Sundays from many parts of the world!

Our 2008 end of year accounts show a positive balance. So is our balance over the last nine months, in spite of the financial crisis

which has reduced the time spent by our visitors in the house. We are looking at ways of increasing the scope of our publicity..

The Languedoc local Quaker group meets once a week for a meeting for worship, followed by a sharing time and often by a meal together outside. The group and the Centre together organise every 2 or 3 months meetings where people from the village and the area are invited. The themes this year were: "Heritage Day" which attracted descendants of the first generations of local Quakers, International Peace Day, Poverty in the world.

Last October, we had our first mini-conference "Around 1788, The origins of the Quaker movement in France". There were people from several European countries and the house was full. Several local Catholics and Protestants came too. This was a rich experience, enhanced by the fact that it was preceded by a retreat day. We are planning a second conference for October 2009: "Relations between Quakers and Francophone Reformed

Protestants through the centuries".

Our priority for now and the future is to keep a Quaker spirit alive in this house, to offer a welcoming space for holidays, retreats, discoveries weeks, workshops and other activities. Come with your ideas, your family and friends, and please, do carry on helping us to repay our initial loan, and finish the work. (Cheques payable to "Amis Quakers de Congénies")

Françoise Tomlin,

Clerk of the Conseil d'administration du Centre.