



A MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR HEALING

It was a chance remark by a business acquaintance that led to the trip to Stonehenge to enjoy the Summer Solstice on the night of 20th June 2006. By way of preparation F(f)riends and family had been invited and the visit was planned with just a modicum of organisation.

As it turned out there were a party of just seven from the Bournemouth area (Including Brandon who was visiting from the Bronx, New York, USA), with one other joining us from Wokingham.

Not one of us had experience of this event and so it was a novelty for all. The intent had been to savour the energy and spirituality of the occasion that had grown at this place during the last five millennia.

Prior to the day, an entry had appeared in the 'Faith' page of the Evening Echo Bournemouth inviting guests to join us or to send in their requests for distant healing. This had attracted a good response and we were joined by Ruth and Helen from Poole and also had several requests for distant healing telephoned through to us. These were added to those

emanating from BYM in late May and requests e-mailed from Friends Fellowship of Healing in particular from Glasgow.

The journey there, as was the return, was easy and trouble free and the expected traffic jams did not occur even though there were upwards of 20,000 people at the event. Ingress and egress to the site was easy and this was an unexpected pleasure. The car park however, was massive, and we had to walk at least a kilometre to reach the pathway to the Stones. That pathway was an additional kilometre in length and so the amount of walking was unexpected for us and especially wearisome for some in our party who handled this difficulty with great stoicism.

English Heritage who manages the site throughout the year is to be congratulated. The event was free and gave unimpeded access to all and therefore was a considerable logistical and cost burden to them. They managed well and other than just two food stalls there was a marked absence of commercialism. They are commended for their organisation at this event that

could have been turned into an unsavoury commercial junket if one was not careful.

Throughout the night the stones were bathed in a deep blue floodlight. This created an ethereal atmosphere appropriate to the spirituality of the occasion but permitted enough lighting so as to avoid health and safety hazards. In addition there were several giant braziers around the stones and these, we were later to find out, were to prove invaluable.

Once inside the stones all was ad hoc' as there was no organisation and every one of each group did as they pleased.

This was a great achievement of the gathering. There were many groups and some went to have a good revel and to drink (and perhaps use other substances as well), and others went because of the spirituality that the occasion offered. We Quakers or course, were of the latter group but I have to admit to feeling a large degree of tolerance for those for whom the spirituality of the night was probably lost.

Feelings of resentment and annoyance that one could expect to arise did not do so and there was no detraction from the purpose of our being there.



Perhaps it may have been that we hoped for something of what we felt, and what we were exploring, would rub off on them.

The atmosphere of the place was intense. Of course one became accustomed to this after a few hours, for we arrived at 11:00pm and left six and a half hours later, but it did have a special quality about it. This atmosphere was to a large part engendered by the sheer numbers of people milling around, the wonderful blue lighting and the noise of the drums.

What an energy? The drumming was incessant, but not overbearing. It was going when we arrived and was going when we left. Drums are a large part of the ambiance here and although I was prepared for this (I had taken two of my own, a large Djembe drum and a smaller Egyptian or Darbuka drum), I was still taken in by the sound of it all. As it turned out, I played my drums only a little as most drummers were in their own circles. Although I am sure they would have welcomed an approach for us to join them, my confidence with the instruments

not being high, dissuaded me from putting myself forward. Nonetheless our enjoyment was diminished not a jot and the music(?), accompanied by the occasional flute, penny whistle and guitar was, in retrospect, an essential element of celebrating the solstice.

The various spiritual groups all did their thing. Perhaps the best known were the Druids but they were remarkably low key although very visible in their white cloaks and though ceremonies were held, they seemed to have escaped the attention of all those in our party. On the other hand, the Pagans were very extrovert. The noise of their orchestrated drumming was intense and together with their flaming torch lit circle and their chanting and dancing, provided a most exciting interlude during the night. Within the circle, members were playing and dancing. Most were dressed for the occasion in woodland garb and many of the men and the womenfolk had garlands of flowers and leaves around their heads or their hats. One fellow 'wore' a giant wicker 'Green Man' perhaps twelve to fifteen feet high and this image was a

significant focus of their attention. It was viewed by many of the onlookers also, but for a different reason. Its supporting structure had collapsed somewhat and it leant skewed at an angle and came perilously close, on several occasions, to the naked flames of the torches forming their drumming and dancing circle. Fortunately it never caught alight.



Another group there was the Hare Krishna's and its members were happy in their orange robes and their drums and cymbals as they made a couple of parades around the stones.

We Quakers gathered in silence for a Meeting for Worship for Healing. This was a special and quiet time for us and other than two small interruptions at the start and at the end, followed a peaceful and lightly programmed course.

The many requests for healing that we had received had been typed onto slips of paper with just the name of the person to whom healing was being directed and the condition for which healing was sought. If the matter was of a confidential nature the name was given as 'A cherished soul' and sometimes just a name was read out with the words "Please hold in the Light".

Each person forming our circle was given several slips and following a quietening and drawing down of our consciousness so as to focus on the need for love, compassion and healing that we wished to send, each of us read a name and the associated condition or illness and passed the reading torch on to the next person in the circle. This continued until all names had been read and thereafter further names were brought



forward as they came to mind, and several names from Bournemouth Meeting were held in the Light.

The Distant Healing was important. Healing happens because of a divine intervention. Healing can happen because the recipient knows that someone, somewhere, at a special time is praying just for them. Healing happens because the healer acquires a grace and comfort made possible by the brain's triggering of the endocrine glands to release

endorphins that stimulate well being. This has been scientifically known for just a few years but the benefits of compassion have been spiritually known to Buddhists and the like for centuries. It is therefore more than serendipity that healing has been shown to be so effective, although 'unexplained' in so many instances.

The Meeting for Worship for Healing was our final planned gathering but another did occur later for which significant energy was present. Although the gathering was more in wonder and expectation at the sunrise, rather than worship, I was later to learn that in fact, some very meaningful worship and energy was generated there.

It had been our intention to recite poems and other readings but somehow, what with the terrible rain that we had for about twenty minutes or so, followed by the wind and the cold, and then the wondering off of some of our party at various times, it never happened. The poem written for the occasion was unheard and so is contained here on its first public hearing (or reading).

SOLSTICE

Somewhere,
Out there on these vast and prehistoric plains
Lie the dust of long forgotten priests and kings.
Serve them now with honour; do not attempt to learn their names.
Together, these stones in their ancient sacred rings
In tune with nature and the sky, so well modernity shames.
Can you not feel in one thousand choirs or one still voice that sings
Eternity is theirs, their energy is ours, but when we leave, it here
remains?

Severing the year, this cosmic solstice knife
Our focus directs, to nights that now begin to draw and
Leave behind those seasons of birth and immaturity whilst
Seeking the promise of fecundity and further life.
Though the years have been dissected and now four seasons grow
from one. and
Incessant is this pattern where nature's magic leaves us still in awe
Cascading night on day, season by season, year by year; of this
we can be sure:
Energy is vibrant at this cosmic time, the time of the 'standing-
still-sun'.

Standing-still-sun is just another term for solstice.
Our imaginations, our science, our spirituality accord it a special
place.
Lying deep within our souls, is an awareness and further sense
of knowing,
Surfacing rarely, but when it does we grasp it and will not miss
This resonant opportunity to share in harmony and grace.
In darkness through to light as dawn's sunlight rays are growing,
Compassion, love and all the soul's dimensions our hearts are
singing, for
Energy here is timeless. It has no end for it had no beginning.

The cold from the soaking and the wind was penetrating and to keep warm we went into the inner circle of the stones. It was more packed than a London tube train at rush hour but nonetheless there was still space for drummers to drum and dancers to dance. A couple of revellers were so moved as to divest themselves of their clothing and how they coped in the wet and the cold is a mystery. Rather than vulgarity being the mood of the moment there was a general 'good jest' tolerance of their high spirits with perhaps the very common sense viewpoint that they were madder than March hares.

Dawn occurred slowly with the first signs appearing about 3:00am. I was amazed that the skylarks could be heard and then reflected, that at so many feet above our heads, they would be seeing sunrise long before us. Even so, as nesting birds upon the ground they would have taken flight in the same darkness that we were in. It is only as I write, that I reflect upon the age old cliché "Up with the larks". I am therefore amazed a second time firstly at noticing their singing so early in the day and secondly at

forgetting the time honoured customs of the countryside in assigning the virtues of animals as goals for our own good behaviour.

As the light from the dawn grew in intensity the blue floodlights were turned off and we gradually took on more detail of the stones, it's surrounding henge and the thousands of people gathered there. The sky was diffident and could not make up its mind whether to cloud over or to clear.

All present hoped for a clearness so as to view the suns rays breaking through the circle upon the heel and slaughter stones but were apprehensive that cloud would prevent it.

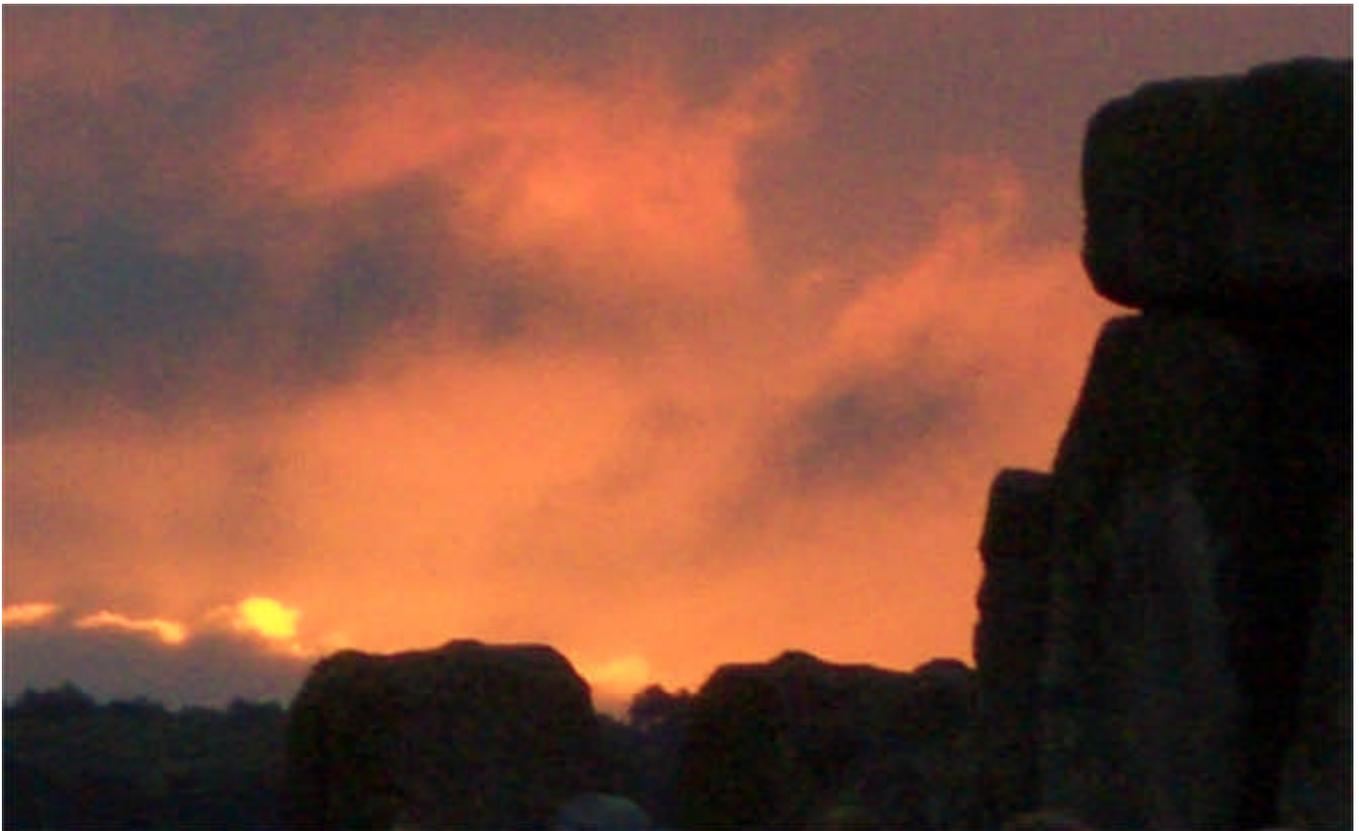
In the end we had the best of both. The sun, during its rising illuminated the underside of the clouds with a brilliant crimson hue adding vastly to the spiritual tone of the occasion. Just before 4:58 the clouds parted for a few seconds and the sun burst though. Within the hour the clouds had dissipated but for me, the presence of the clouds had added an atmospheric quality and it is

patent that clouds are not restricted to silver linings only. It was at this moment that I later was to realise that our second meeting for worship took place.

I had expected, (not having been to this event before), that a resounding cheer would be raised by all present at the moment of the sun rise. This did not happen. As if in unspoken contract, all present just stood in the gathered silence and watched the sun break through. It was a quite moment. There was no hullabaloo, there was no pulling of strings by officials and organisers (for there were none), and there was nothing but a sort of respectful silence.

It lasted just for a few moments, when each present entertained their own thoughts and connected with their own divinity and source of all energy.

A Friend was later to tell me that, forty miles away she was unable to sleep. She had awoken, not oppressed, but heavy with a unique awareness that she just knew something special was going on. This was at the exact time when 20,000 people were gathered in that few precious moments of silence in and around the stones. It is beyond explanation and one should not try. It is however, not beyond belief that such moments form the



milestones and the signposts of one's spiritual journeys.

Within a few moments folk started to drift away although I understand that many stayed on for a few more hours. For us, tired, cold but warming up now that the daylight was here, and the beginnings of breakfast time hunger drawing upon us, it was time to go also, and this we did.

We arrived back home about seven o'clock, showered, fed and then slept. With that resting and fading of the chill and soothing of aching muscles from the night came the hope that our memories of the Solstice would not fade away. Nor too should the healing and the compassion that we had felt, and had been a conduit for, diminish in any way.

We understand a lot about Stonehenge but it is probable that a greater part of it remains a mystery. Whatever its past, the present, and its future should not its setting amidst the open plain serve well the purpose of healing?

In the sending of compassion from this ancient place and with the coming of every dawn, solstice or otherwise, there should arrive a greater love for humankind by humankind, and in the expression and receiving of it, recognise and nurture that of god within us all and within the environment.

Stephen Feltham
21(vi) 2006



Perhaps in some far distant time
Reverence and adoration were then in mind.
And humankind was conscious of a greater being,
Yet could not phrase nor write; but seeing
Eternal powers more spiritual than man,
Raised monuments and thoughts, concordant with a higher plan.

