

A Very Special Postscript

The final paragraph of chapter one of the book ‘Memories of the Playgroup Movement in Wales’ describes a reunion of twenty members of Wales PPA, which took place at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells, in April, 2004. The final words of the paragraph were, “We could write a book!” and so we did. The book was published in November 2008 and it seemed appropriate to celebrate this publication with another get-together, which again took place at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells, on 25 April 2009. Approximately twenty members, including many contributors to the book, came together for an enjoyable lunch and, once again, friendships were renewed and memories shared.

Two specially invited guests joined the gathering. They were Lord and Lady Barry Jones who have been loyal supporters of the playgroup movement for nearly forty years. Lady Janet has been Chair, President and Trustee of playgroups in north Wales since 1970 and Lord Barry, as a government minister, was responsible for the Wales Region of PPA being awarded its first central government Grant.

Before lunch a short meeting was held, chaired by Ivy Webster. Ivy welcomed everyone and then invited Lord Barry Jones to address the assembled delegates. Lord Barry’s support and admiration for the playgroup movement was evident right from the start of his talk. He said that those involved in the movement had operated a social revolution, without becoming revolutionaries, at a time when many cultural and legislative changes were taking place. He stressed the important role of playgroups in educational and social history. He said that playgroups were child-centred before this was the vogue and before it was state policy and the movement had created a “Rolls Royce organisation that cost buttons!” He praised the major Llandudno conference organised by PPA in Wales in 1983 that “went like a Swiss watch” attracting many prestigious speakers. He said that the playgroup movement had benefited children, parents and communities in Wales over two generations with integrity and success.

Lord Barry illustrated his talk with numerous quotes from the ‘Memories’ book and

concluded his talk with a simple phrase which he said his wife said he should use –
'Playgroupers are magnificent, quite the best!'
All received his talk warmly and Leontia Slay gave a short vote of thanks.