



The Kendal Project

Patterns of the sacred in contemporary society

www.kendalproject.org.uk

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After 21 months of fascinating research in and around Kendal, the Kendal project draws to a close at the end of June. Fieldwork has now mostly finished and we're focusing in upon writing up our findings. If all goes according to plan, this will come out as a book sometime in 2003.

In the meantime, we're planning two feedback sessions in June and July of this year. Many of you have been very kind in giving up your time answering our questions and these sessions will be a chance to get a brief overview of our findings so that you're not left wondering what became of it all. There will also be an opportunity to ask us questions (though we give no guarantee we'll be able to answer them!). Further details are overleaf.

Recent Project Activities

In November of last year, group facilitators and one-to-one practitioners in what we're now referring to as 'the holistic network' in Kendal distributed questionnaires to their group participants and clients. Despite the hefty size of the questionnaire, we got a very good return rate. Thanks to all of you who took the time to fill it in; a few snippets from the findings follow. Most respondents were aged 45-60; there were also considerable numbers over 60 and between 35-44, but very few younger than this. Over 80% were women, a finding that backs up our earlier mapping. The most popular reasons for originally getting involved in the activity or therapy were health and

fitness, followed by stress relief. When asked to rank the reasons for which they are now involved, health and fitness stayed top, but was closely followed by spiritual growth. This suggests that as people get more involved, many become more focused upon a spiritual dimension. Asked to rank satisfaction with work and home life, respondents reported high levels of wellbeing, the modal response for work life being 8 and for home life 9. 55% sometimes meditate at home, 48% pray and 46% do some Yoga. In terms of beliefs, 30% believe in 'a personal God' but 51% in 'some sort of spirit or life force'. There was wide variety in specific chosen definitions of spirituality; the most popular was 'being a caring and decent person' (21%), followed closely by 'spirituality is love' (20%) and 'being in touch with subtle energies' (17%). Slightly left leaning and clearly critical of economic growth, 16% are 'committed church going Christians', and a startling 94% are incomers to Kendal, a large proportion having studied for degrees and being in more mobile, professional occupations.

A similar questionnaire has recently been distributed to five of the churches in Kendal, and we are looking forward to comparing the results.

In December 2001 to March 2002, we carried out a doorstep interview survey of over a hundred households in Kendal, in order to investigate beliefs and attitudes about religion and spirituality

outside the churches and holistic network. The results are still being analysed, but have already generated fascinating insights into how wide a variety of beliefs and practices can be found even in one small area of Kendal.

Feedback sessions.

1) The first session will be focused on Kendal's *holistic network*. It will be presented by Ben Seel and Bron Szerszynski (with Paul Heelas also coming along if other commitments allow). It will be held at 7.30pm Thursday 27th June, at Loop Cottage in Crooklands, a venue many of you will already know of. For those who don't, below are some instructions on how to get there. Please share cars if you can.

From Kendal: take the A65; pass through Endmoor; immediately after the end of speed limit signs take a small lane on the right called Nuttinghall Lane. Bear right at the bottom; it's then 200 yards to a cottage called North Lodge, where you turn left. Loop Cottage is the next one along and you'll see parking signs outside.

From M6 Junction 36: take the roundabout exit to Kirkby Lonsdale, then turn left immediately at the first roundabout. You go under the motorway, then past the Crooklands Hotel. There is a small hill, the road flattens out and about a quarter of a mile after the hotel is a first turning on the left down an unsigned, single track lane with grass running down its centre. Go as far as the North Lodge cottage, turn left and follow parking signs for Loop Cottage.

2) Karin Tusting will be leading a study day focusing primarily on presenting the findings from *churches and chapels* in

Kendal. This event will be held at St. George's church, Gooseholme, under the auspices of the Centre for Practical Christianity, on Saturday 13th July. There will be a small charge to cover lunch and administrative costs. For further details of this event, contact Jane Smith, +CPC+, 70 Gillinggate, Kendal, LA9 4JB, tel. 01539 732029.

Karin will be joined by Lancaster PhD student Abby Peters, who from July is going to be carrying out research into how religious values and beliefs have changed during the late 20th century, drawing upon oral histories of people living through that period by interviewing families in Kendal.

Finally, you may be interested to know that some brief findings from the Kendal Project appear in an upcoming Channel 4 documentary. Exact scheduling times have not been finalised, but the 3 part series will probably go out in November and will be called something like, 'A History of Religion and Magic in Britain'. It will be part 3 where Linda Woodhead from our research team, as well as some Kendal faces will appear!

Thanks again for all your help in carrying out this research. Further findings will gradually be posted at the Kendal Project web site:

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

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