

# Bringing Health and Healing



Randolph's Spiritual Quest and Search for Meaning

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**Bear Lands Publishing**

Published by Bear Lands Publishing  
The St Mary's Centre  
Llys Onnen  
Abergwyngregyn  
Gwynedd  
LL33 0LD  
Wales

Tania ap Siôn and Phillip Vernon are identified  
as authors of this work.

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First published 2019.

Sponsored by the Welsh Government.

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## **The Travels of Randolph the Wise**

Randolph the Wise sat in his chair, scratched his old grey head, and thought about the very big question.

“What *really* matters?” he asked the empty room in a deep, booming voice. As usual, there were no other voices to answer him.

The question ‘what *really* matters?’ had been puzzling Randolph the Wise very much. He had spent many days thinking about it, but he knew that he would not find answers by staying in his room.

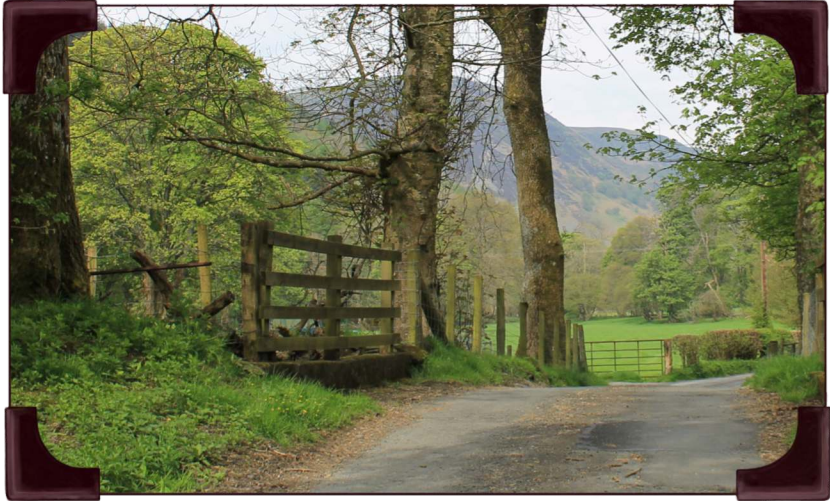
“I will go out into the world!” declared Randolph the Wise. “I will find and bring back here some answers from there.”

Randolph the Wise put on his coat and hat, picked up his bag, and gripped his staff. Then, turning his face towards the rising sun, he set out on his journey through Wales.

It was in this way that Randolph the Wise began his spiritual quest and search for meaning.



# 1 The Road to Pennant Melangell



Randolph the Wise came to the village of Llangynog, near Bala, where he discovered a narrow road winding through the Tanat valley.

With the sun warming his back and the river as his companion, Randolph the Wise strode on.

Every now and then, he stopped to listen, sniff the air, and inspect something more closely. Sometimes, he pulled out a notebook from his bag and scribbled observations.

“It is important to sense the signs,” he muttered.



As Randolph drew closer to the mouth of the valley, he sensed a change in the air and space around him. He was surprised by the sudden and curious dip in temperature. Pulling his coat tightly around him, he wondered at the sun still shining brightly.

He was also puzzled by the eerie shrieks and calls of the valley's living creatures. Tricking his senses, the whole valley held the weight of each cry for a long moment.

"This is no ordinary place," Randolph wrote in his notebook. "Is the ancient and sacred here?"

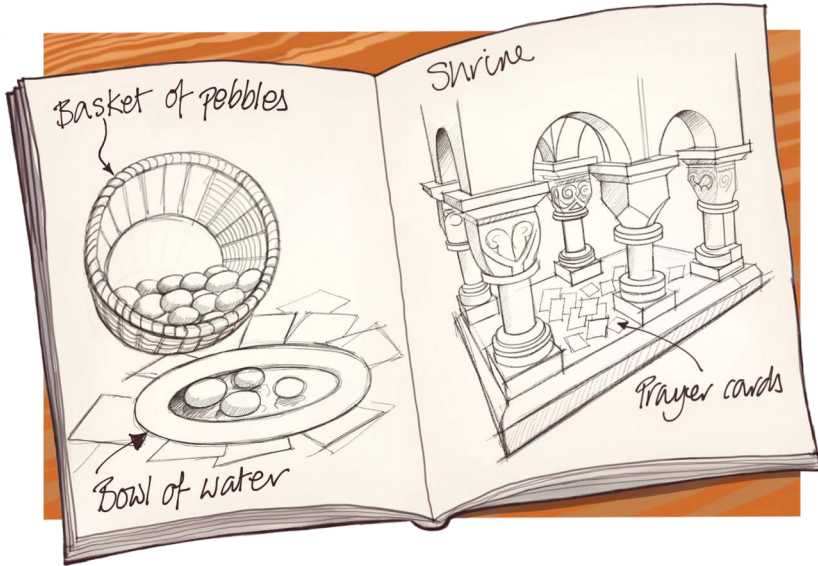
When he looked up, he saw the church of Pennant Melangell in front of him. Walking through the graveyard, he made his way directly towards it.

Then, Randolph lifted the latch of the heavy church door and entered the calm stillness within.





## 2 Into the Darkness



At first, Randolph thought that the church was empty. It was so quiet and dark inside. But as he looked and listened carefully, Randolph realised that he was not alone. There was a woman standing motionless by the rood screen. She reached out to take a glass pebble from a basket.

There was a small splash and dull thud as she released the pebble into a bowl of water. Randolph wondered at the sign by the pebble pool, speaking of pebbles and prayers.

Randolph watched the woman move deeper into the church. Now, she picked up a prayer card, wrote some words, and placed the card within a mound of other prayers in the shrine behind the altar. Randolph wondered at all the prayers left there, and the people who had written them.

Set under a clear stained-glass window, rows of flickering votive candle lights warmed Randolph's heart. He peered closely at a sign placed nearby.

"Lighting a candle is a prayer, lighting a candle is a parable, lighting a candle is a symbol," he read. Randolph wondered at the strange power of light.





Once again, Randolph's attention was drawn towards the woman. She had moved to a small wooden table just behind the shrine. Here, there was a large open book with a solitary candle and some white flowers, which marked the space as special. Slowly, the woman read the names listed on the page. Her fingers briefly rested on each name in turn.

Then, picking up a card, she wrote a date and a new name for the book. She carefully placed the card in a brass holder. Randolph wondered at the sign that said, "Please leave this memorial book open on the date of the current day."

When the woman turned to leave the church, Randolph approached her. "What really matters to you here?" Randolph asked her.

The woman looked thoughtful and sad. “I have lost someone close to me – someone I love greatly,” she said, looking back at the memorial book. “I have dropped a pebble in the pool with a prayer to heal my pain. I have written a prayer request to ask that he rests in peace. I have lighted a candle to bring light into darkness. I will come back next year too and remember. Meanwhile, this little church will keep remembering us with prayer for our health and healing.”

Then, the woman gave Randolph a pebble, a prayer card, and a small candle. “This is what really matters to me here. Please take these gifts back with you,” she said with a smile. Placing the gifts in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued his search.



### 3 Healing Service



Movement in the nave of the church caught Randolph's attention. Now people were dotted around the pews, waiting for a service to begin. Randolph made his way to join them.

The priest stood at the front, wearing a purple stole. The priest prayed,

"Loving God, we hold in your healing presence all the prayer requests made in this place today, those said aloud or in the silence of the heart, those symbolised by the lighting of candles and the pebbles in the pool. We also bring before you those named in our memorial book – those who have died and those facing loss."

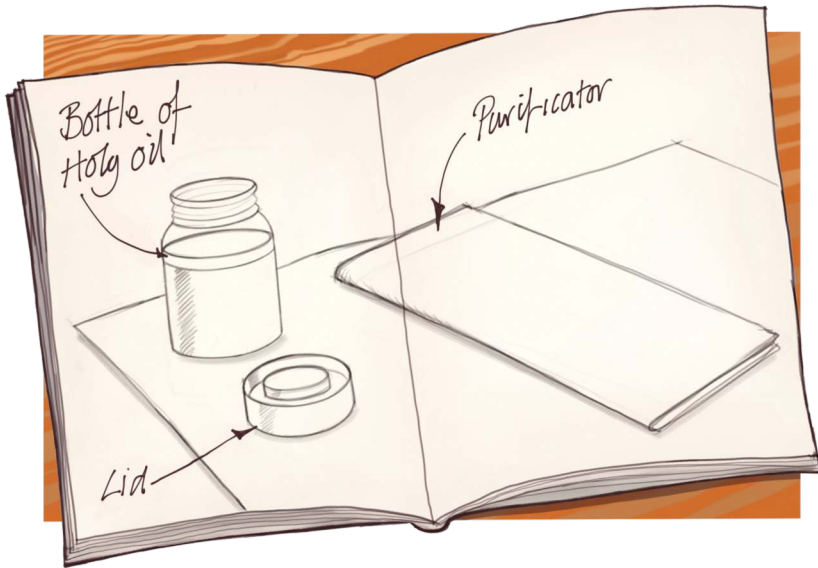
Randolph noticed that the candles were lit on the altar and a number of new objects had been laid there ready.

Then, the priest invited people to come to the altar rail, saying, "Jesus says, 'Come to me all who are troubled and I will give you rest'. So anyone who is burdened by regrets and anxieties, you who are broken in body or in spirit, you who are torn by relationships and by doubts, you who feel deeply within yourselves the divisions and injustices of our world, come now to the altar rail for Jesus invites us to bring him our brokenness."

One by one, the people made their way beyond the rood screen and into the sanctuary. Randolph sat at the back of the pews and watched.







At the altar rail, the priest came to each person in turn and said a prayer before placing hands upon their heads. The priest said these words.

“Living God, breathe your Spirit upon us and surround us with your love.  
Giving Jesus, grant us your compassion.  
Healing Spirit, come and bring us peace.”

The priest then anointed with holy oil each person in turn, making the sign of the cross on their heads and on the palms of their hands.

When the service had ended, Randolph approached some of the people about to leave. “What really matters to you here?” Randolph asked them.

One person said, "I have been sick for a long time. I want to feel well again." Another person said, "My relationship with my brother is broken. We don't speak anymore. I want things to be mended." Another person said, "I have not got long to live. I want to find peace." The priest added that this service was for people seeking health and healing.

Then, they gave Randolph a healing service booklet and the priest gave him some holy oil. "This is what really matters to us here. Please take these gifts back with you," they said with a smile. Placing the gifts in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued his search.



## 4 Saint Melangell's Relics



Randolph noticed a small circular room hidden behind the altar and the shrine. A man was hunching over a rough stone grave, placing an object there. His object sat alongside those left by many others. Randolph wondered at the feathers, shells, pictures, and stones, and the stories that lay behind them.

At the head of the grave stood a banner bearing the image of a young woman holding a hare. Her name read, Saint Melangell. Randolph remembered that he had passed many pictures of the same young woman and hare on his way through the church. There was also an ancient story carved into the wood by the rood screen.

Randolph made his way back towards the rood screen to read the story in pictures.

A long time ago, a prince set out on horseback to hunt wild game with his men and dogs. The dogs caught the scent of a hare and chased the terrified creature into dense undergrowth. Then, a strange thing happened. The dogs stopped and refused to go forward any further. The prince's men were filled with fear. Only the prince continued onwards, cutting his way through the thickly knotted branches and brambles.

The prince came to a small clearing and was surprised to find a young woman praying. At her feet was the hare, which had found safety with this mysterious woman! The prince felt a deep sense of peace.





The prince questioned the woman to discover who she was. She replied that she was Melangell, daughter of an Irish chieftain. She had fled to Wales to avoid a certain marriage to another Irish chieftain. Instead, she chose a life of prayer and lived in a cave in the Pennant Valley. The animals felt safe with her and had grown to trust her.

The prince was moved by this holy young woman, and he did not harm the hare. He gave her the land in that part of the valley. Through Melangell, this place became known as a place of prayer and refuge, drawing many people to it.

When the man who had left the object on Saint Melangell's grave emerged from the small room, Randolph approached him. "What really matters to you here?" Randolph asked him.

The man immediately pointed back to the grave and said, “I come here because this is Saint Melangell’s place. Her presence and prayers can still be felt here. This place makes me feel safe and peaceful. Maybe I am not too different from the hare in Saint Melangell’s arms. Sometimes, I leave something on her grave, like today. It’s my way of praying, and it brings me health and healing.”

Then, the man gave Randolph a small icon of Saint Melangell. “This is what really matters to me here. Please take this gift back with you,” he said with a smile. Placing the gift in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued his search.





## 5 A Healing Encounter



Soon something else caught Randolph's eye. A woman had quietly entered the small circular room unnoticed. She was sitting down at the prayer desk, flicking through the pages of a book. She must have found what she wanted because she suddenly stopped and started reading.

Randolph wondered at the book that made the woman read so intently. Discreetly, Randolph peered over her shoulder to get a closer look. Randolph noted that the book was the Bible, and the woman was reading a story written in the Gospel according to Luke.

"A centurion had a servant whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death," the story began.

The centurion felt unworthy to approach Jesus for help, so he sent some Jewish elders to appeal to Jesus on his behalf. As Jesus made his way to the centurion's house, the centurion sent out some of his friends to him. This is what they said to Jesus.

“The centurion says, ‘Don’t come any further, for I am not worthy to have you under my roof. This is why I do not come to you in person. I know that you are a man who has been given authority. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.’”

Jesus was amazed to hear these words and commended the centurion's faith. When the centurion's friends returned to the house, the centurion's servant was in good health.





When the woman had finished reading the Bible, she wrote a prayer in the prayer request book and went to sit in the pews.

Right above her head, Randolph could see a wooden carving of Jesus. Jesus seemed to be looking at her with his arms opened wide, and she was looking up at him.

When the woman stood up to leave, Randolph approached her. "What really matters to you here?" Randolph asked her.

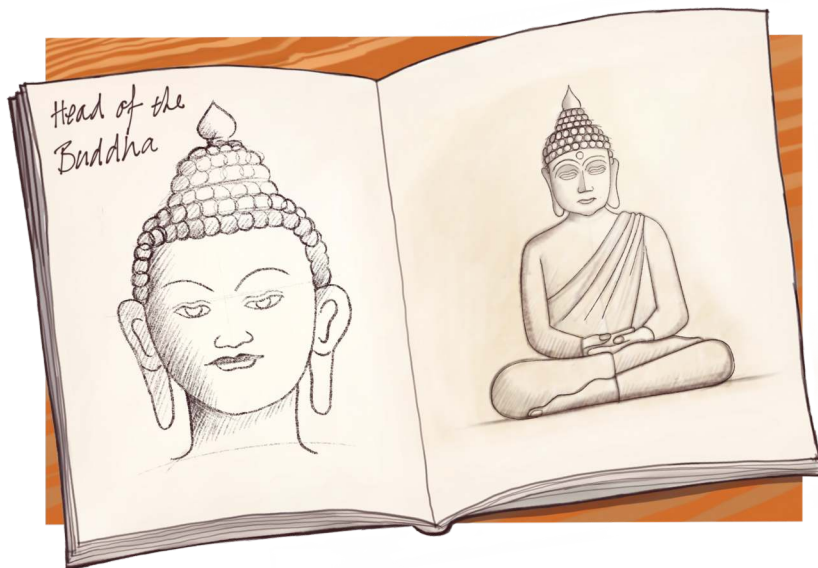
The woman did not answer immediately. “It is difficult to explain,” she said eventually. “I love reading stories about how Jesus helps people in the Bible. He doesn’t seem bothered about who they are, or if they are good people or not. All they have to do is come to him and ask for his help. That is why I am here today. I am asking Jesus for health and healing. I would like faith like that centurion.”

Then, the woman gave Randolph a Bible and a cross. “This is what really matters to me here. Please take these gifts back with you,” she said with a smile. Placing the gifts in his bag, Randolph said farewell.

Randolph then frowned and pondered. He could see that health and healing really mattered. He knew that this was part of his spiritual quest and search for meaning. “But what do other people in different places say about this?” asked Randolph.



## 6 A Buddhist View



Randolph trekked north and then south, east and then west. His search led him by mountains and valleys, through cities and towns, around coasts and lakes. Then, at one large terraced house, he finally stopped.

“BUDDHIST TEMPLE,” said the sign by the front gate, in clear bold letters.

As Randolph walked along the path, he muttered, “I wonder what a Buddhist can tell me about health and healing?”

Inside the house, Randolph found a room where a statue sat serenely above the green swirling sea of carpet below. He went up to the statue to inspect it more closely. He studied the statue’s face, hands, and pose. Randolph wondered at the expression on the statue’s face.

Randolph then turned his attention to the objects placed around the statue.

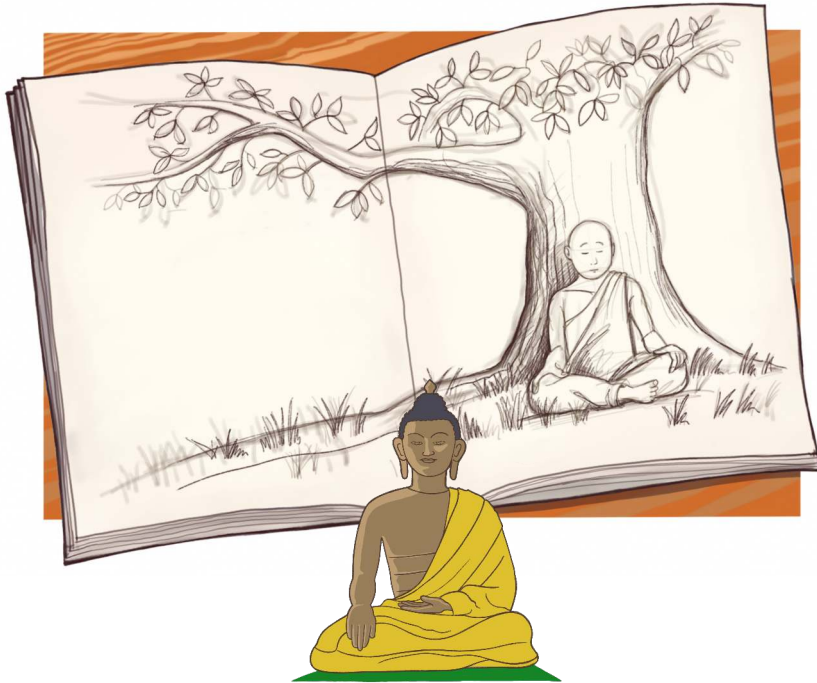
The flowers in the vase were beginning to wither. The candle flames were swaying slightly in the hidden draught. The curls of smoke from the incense were filling the room with rich, aromatic scent. Randolph wondered at the decaying flowers on such a beautiful shrine.

The room was so still that Randolph was surprised to find that he was not alone. There, sitting quietly was a woman, looking like a mirror image of the statue. The woman's eyes were closed and her face looked relaxed and peaceful.

When the woman's eyes opened, Randolph leaned forward and asked earnestly, "What might a Buddhist say about health and healing?"







The woman nodded and told Randolph the story of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, who lived in northern India over 2,500 years ago. Siddhartha was born into a very rich family. He lacked nothing in material possessions but he was not happy. When Siddhartha looked around him, he saw so many different kinds of suffering. This troubled him deeply.

“How can this suffering be cured?” Siddhartha kept asking. He vowed to sit and meditate under a tree until he had found the answer.

After much meditating, Siddhartha learnt why there was suffering and how to cure it. He was now fully awake and enlightened. He was the Buddha.

The woman continued. “So you see,” she said, “health and healing are important to me as a Buddhist too. I follow ancient teachings and practices that have been passed on from the Buddha. Meditation helps me to see things in the right way and to practise wisdom and compassion. In your words, this brings me health and healing.”

The woman then gave Randolph a small statue of the Buddha and a wilting flower. “Please, take these back with you,” she said with a smile. Placing the gifts in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued on his journey.



## 7 A Hindu View



Randolph trekked on and on, braving the sun and the rain, then the gales and the snow. He did not stop until he arrived on a flat grassy cliff top perched above a hidden beach. He smelt the rich sea air and tasted the salt on his lips. He heard the lonely cries of the gulls and saw the solitary figure of a man stretched out in a yogic pose.

As Randolph walked nearer to the man, he muttered, "I wonder what a Hindu yogi can tell me about health and healing?"

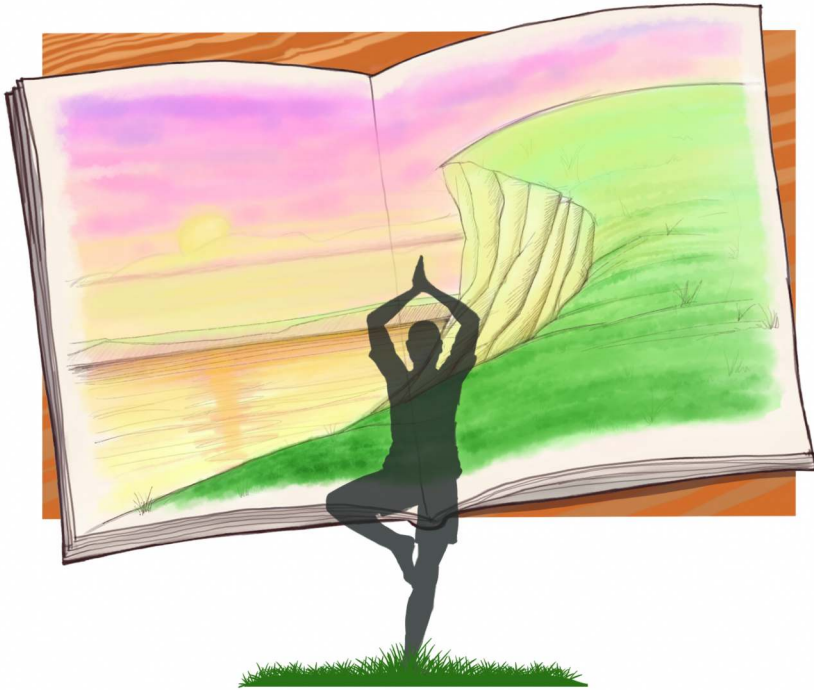
Randolph watched for some time while the man moved slowly through one position to another. Randolph wondered at his physical agility and the strength and discipline that were needed for this.

As the man was supporting his whole body weight on two arms alone, Randolph looked more closely at his face. The man's expression was calm and focused. Then Randolph listened more closely to the man's breathing. He noticed that it was being carefully controlled. So Randolph counted the seconds for a breath inhaled and then did the same for a breath exhaled.

Randolph wondered at the power of breath.

When the man started rolling up his mat and putting on his sandals, Randolph leaned forward and asked the question, "What might a Hindu yogi say about health and healing?"





The man looked out to sea and watched the evening approaching. “Yoga is very important to me,” he reflected. “I have been practising since I was young. I try to make yoga my way of life because I know that it is good for my body, my mind and my spirit. All these things are interconnected.”

The man then told Randolph about how popular yoga was becoming in the towns and cities of the area. People went to classes for many different reasons but for him yoga was really a religious practice. It was the religious traditions that gave yoga its history and its meaning, he said.

The man continued. “So you see,” he said, “health and healing are important to me as a Hindu too. I follow ancient teachings and practices that have been passed on from our earliest sacred texts, the Vedas. Yoga joins my body and mind with the soul, and this has the power to set me free. In your words, this brings me health and healing.”

The man then gave Randolph a picture of a renowned yoga guru. “Please, take this back with you,” he said with a smile. Placing the gift in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued on his journey.





## Can you help Randolph?

Randolph the Wise has been given many gifts on his travels. He has also made many notes in his notebook. But the quest is not yet over. There is still space in his bag for more things to help him reflect on 'health and healing' as something that really matters.

Now Randolph needs your help.

What other places could Randolph visit to find out about health and healing?

Who could he ask in those places?

Do you think that health and healing is something that really matters?

Where would you go to find health and healing?

What gift would you give Randolph to take back with him?



## Randolph the Wise Returns Home

As the sun set, a weary Randolph the Wise returned to his room, where he carefully unpacked his bag. One by one, he placed in front of him *all* that he had collected on his journey through Wales.

Then, Randolph the Wise sat in his chair, scratched his old grey head, and thought about the very big question.

“What *really* matters?” he asked again in a deep, booming voice. This time, *all* that he had collected on his journey answered him.

Randolph the Wise listened carefully and smiled.

“This is an essential part of my spiritual quest and search for meaning!” he said. “People need to be healthy in their minds, their bodies, and their spirits. Bringing health and healing is something that *really* matters.”







Prayer



HEALING & SERVICE

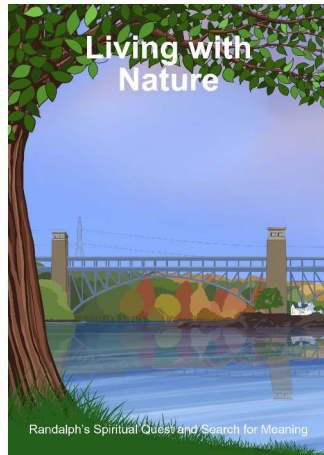
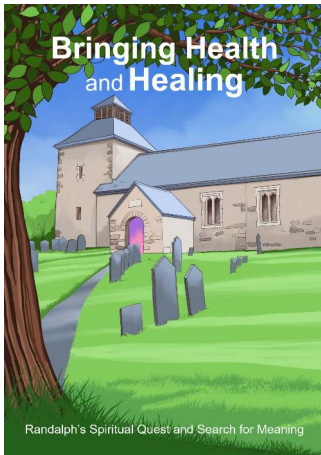
My gift to Randolph

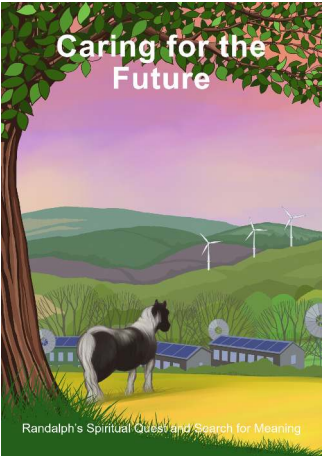
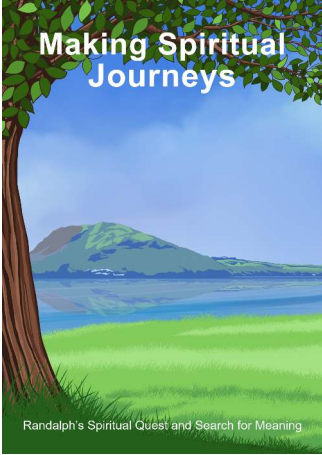


## Read more...

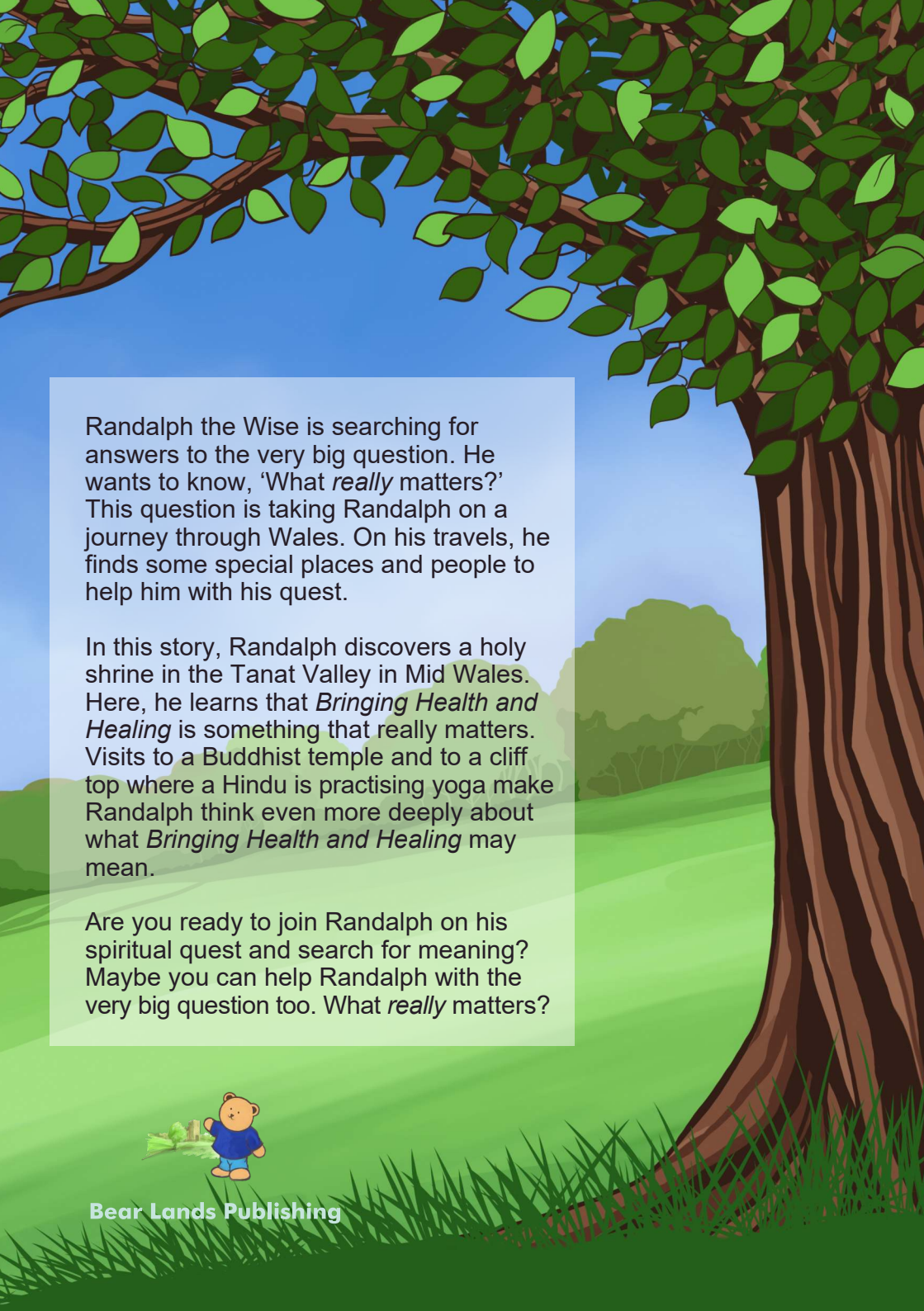
Join Randolph the Wise on some of his other travels around Wales.

All storybooks are published in both Welsh and English. Open access copies are available on the Welsh Government 'Hwb' website ([hwb.gov.wales](http://hwb.gov.wales)) and on the St Mary's Centre website ([st-marys-centre.org.uk](http://st-marys-centre.org.uk)). Teachers' guidance material, films and music are also provided.









Randolph the Wise is searching for answers to the very big question. He wants to know, 'What *really* matters?' This question is taking Randolph on a journey through Wales. On his travels, he finds some special places and people to help him with his quest.

In this story, Randolph discovers a holy shrine in the Tanat Valley in Mid Wales. Here, he learns that *Bringing Health and Healing* is something that really matters. Visits to a Buddhist temple and to a cliff top where a Hindu is practising yoga make Randolph think even more deeply about what *Bringing Health and Healing* may mean.

Are you ready to join Randolph on his spiritual quest and search for meaning? Maybe you can help Randolph with the very big question too. What *really* matters?

