

Remembering the Past



Randolph's Spiritual Quest and Search for Meaning

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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 A Strange Place

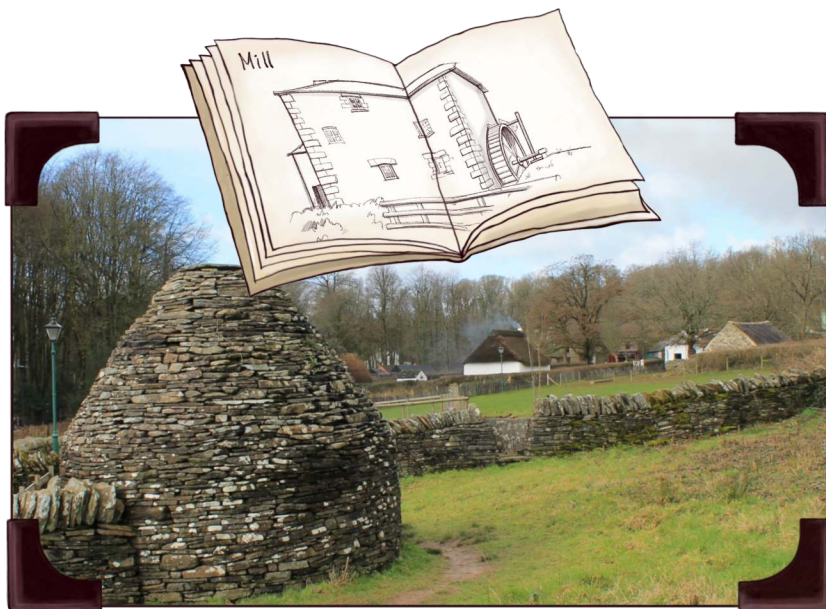


Randolph followed the river through the fields and woods, and beside a road. In this country landscape, he was surprised to find a very long and elegant modern building. Its sharp clean lines of light stone and dark glass were quietly confident and impressive. Welsh flags and banners flanked the broad path leading to the building's entrance. The banners said, "Croseo, Welcome," so Randolph accepted the invitation and walked straight through the main doors.

Immediately, Randolph was greeted by an enormous sense of light and space. The reception desks, seats and people appeared as tiny objects within it. Far above his head, Randolph gazed at the open walkways of the floor above, which were supported by tall white pillars. "The St Fagan's National Museum of History," said Randolph, reading the signs.

Then, turning left, Randolph walked straight through the building. He did not stop until he was standing outside again. Looking all around him, Randolph felt as if he had just entered another world. What was this strange place?

Following the winding paths, Randolph passed by one building after another. Each building was different. Some belonged in the country and others belonged in the town. Some looked very old and others looked much newer. There were farmhouses, cottages, barns, mills and pigsties. There were also town houses, shops, artisan workshops, a post office, and a tollgate. Randolph had never seen such a collection of buildings in one place before. The gently puffing chimneys filled the winter's air with wood smoke, and somewhere nearby there was the smell of fresh baking. What were these buildings doing here, and what were their stories?



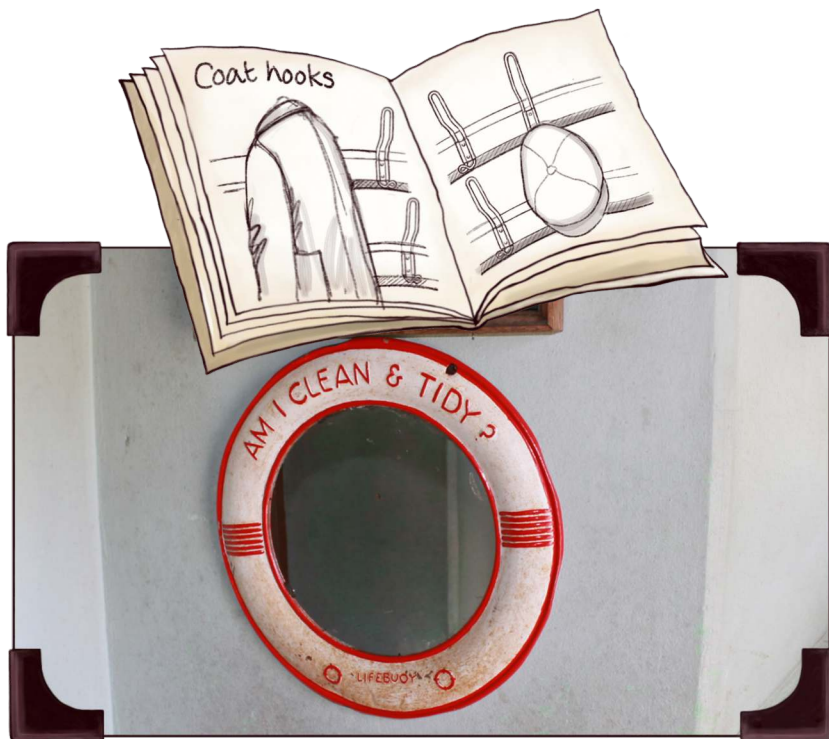
2 The Old School



With so many buildings to choose from, Randolph did not know where to start. Then, a light green building set behind metal railings caught his attention. A sign announced that this was an old school built in 1880. Piece-by-piece, the old Victorian school had been moved to this place in 1984, all the way from Lampeter in South West Wales. Randolph peered closely at a black-and-white photograph at the centre of the sign. Looking straight back at him were the school's first young pupils and their headteacher. Randolph wondered at schooling and what it had meant so long ago. How had things changed, and why?

Still puzzling, Randolph walked through the gate to the open door of the old school. He immediately found himself in a tiny cloakroom. On one side of him, there were metal hooks for children to hang coats. Then, on the other side of him, there was a white and red lifebuoy, which had been turned into a mirror. Randolph bent down to the height of the mirror, and looked at himself. Words printed in bold capital letters on the lifebuoy gave him a question to ask himself, "AM I CLEAN AND TIDY?" What did that mean, and who decided? thought Randolph.

Randolph heard voices talking together in the schoolroom, so he made his way further inside the building.





The first thing that Randolph noticed in the schoolroom was the bright light coming in through the large windows. This light illuminated the long dark wooden desks and benches, which looked very uncomfortable.

A man and his young son were scrutinising some objects displayed on a front desk. The man said, “Do you see the wooden back straightener? A slouching child would have had to wear it. Next to it, there is the ‘Welsh Not’. Any child caught speaking Welsh would have worn that. It was passed from child to child, and whoever was left with it, would be punished. Next to that, there is the device to stop children writing with their left hand. Then, of course, there is the cane.”

When the man had finished speaking, Randolph approached him and the young boy. “What really matters to you here?” Randolph asked them.

The young boy started drawing on a piece of paper, and his father replied to Randolph's question, saying, "How young people and adults are educated changes so much depending on time and place. Just think about all those centuries before this little school was built. Things would have looked very different. Each time and each place can tell us a lot about life and what people valued. The same is true today."

Then, the young boy gave Randolph an outline drawing of his left hand with "My left hand" written in Welsh above it. "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.



3 Two Houses



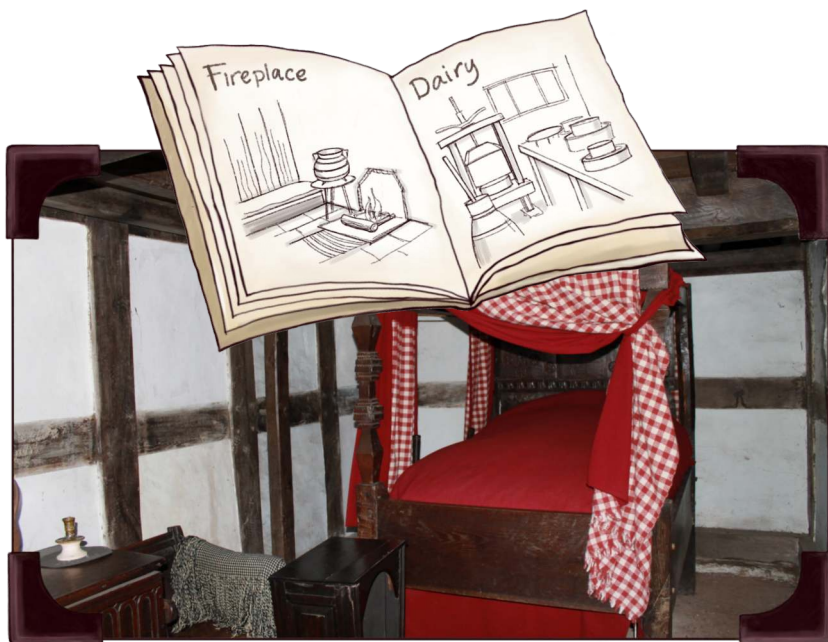
Randolph followed the path around a field until he reached a wooded area. There, beside the trees, a small group of people stood chatting. They had a dog with them, whose nose was pressed keenly through a gap in the field's fence. After sniffing excitedly, the dog stood back and looked expectantly at the still model sheep placed among the trees. One of the women noticed the dog, and laughed. "Look, he's trying to communicate. He's waiting for those model sheep to talk to him in some way. What makes something real in this place?" she asked.

Then, they made their way to a big timber-framed house with a thatched roof. A sign outside said, "Abernodwydd Farmhouse".

The sign announced that this was an old farmhouse built about 1678. The farmhouse was moved to this place in 1955, all the way from Llangadfan in Mid Wales. Randolph followed the small group of people into the house.

It took a while for their eyes to adjust to the darkness inside. They were standing in a large living area. A man said, "The wealthier the family, the bigger the chimney. This is an enormous chimney." Everyone faced the huge fireplace and chimney. There were long cushioned seats on either side of the fireplace, which looked straight up the chimney.

The man continued, saying, "Just imagine, a maid lighting this fire in the morning, and slow cooking food in those pots. Look at these two bedrooms, and there is even a dairy for making butter and cheese."





After looking around carefully, another person said thoughtfully, “Do you remember the small cottages that we saw earlier? They were so different from this farmhouse. There was Nantwallter Cottage, which a family rented from a wealthy landowner. Even with their pig and growing their own vegetables, life must have been very hard at times. I have no idea how they managed to fit eight children into that small cottage.”

The whole group fell silent as they remembered the black-and-white photograph of the large family at Nantwallter Cottage. When they started to leave the farmhouse, Randolph approached them. “What really matters to you here?” Randolph asked them.

One person said, “Today, some old houses would be turned into luxury homes with character. Others would be pulled down to build something new. If these buildings had not been moved here, they would have disappeared. This makes me think about how we keep things to remember the past, and what we do with them. Museums and archives are really important.”

Another person said, “So much changes, but I think that people’s basic needs stay the same. In many ways our lives are much easier and safer today, but we have our own problems and challenges, which are not so different.”

Then, a woman gave Randolph a photograph of her home with her family standing outside. “This is what really matters to me here. Please take this gift back with you,” she said with a smile. Placing the gift in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued his search.



4 A Drowned Valley



Randolph wandered through the museum’s strange town, exploring many other places before he returned to the modern building. Here, he decided to have a closer look around. Climbing up the wide staircase, Randolph noticed a glass wall with the words, “Cymru Wales is ...” printed on it. As he approached, a pair of glass doors glided open to reveal a large exhibition space beyond.

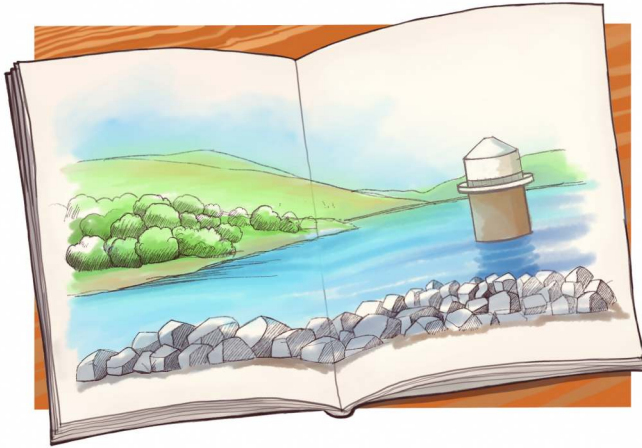
Inside, Randolph discovered that Wales is many things. There are the landscapes, natural resources, literature, music, arts, politics, religions, languages, migrations, farming, industries, artisans, disasters, and wars. So much has shaped Wales, and it is still being shaped. As Randolph wandered through the exhibition, the list continued to grow.

At one display, Randolph found two children engrossed in photographs of a place and people. A village sign had been used to name the display – “CAPEL CELYN,” the sign said.



Randolph tried to see what was of such interest to the children. Looking over their shoulders, Randolph read about the village of Capel Celyn in the Tryweryn Valley, near Bala. The city of Liverpool in England needed more water. So, in the 1950s, Tryweryn Valley was identified as a good location for making a reservoir. Unfortunately, this valley was home to the village of Capel Celyn. The planned reservoir meant that water would cover 800 acres of land, 12 farms, a school, a post office and a chapel.

Photographs showed people protesting against these plans. Most Welsh politicians opposed the plans too. Despite the protests, the British Government supported the proposal, and the land had to be flooded. Randolph and the children read how the villagers got ready to leave before the flooding. One photograph showed the last service at the chapel. Another photograph showed the moving of the bodies from the chapel graveyard.



Before the school closed for the last time, a villager remembered being at school as the reservoir was built. His words were on a large photograph of the reservoir. He said, “I remember seeing the valley being destroyed by these big machines. They were enormous – making a great noise, and the school shook as they passed by.”

The villagers were relocated and the Tryweryn reservoir was filled with water in 1965. Randolph and the children studied the photograph of the beautiful, tranquil reservoir. They imagined what lay hidden beneath the waters, and how this is remembered.

Some visitors had written down and left their feelings about Capel Celyn – “Heart broken”, “I would fight to make my town safe”, “Angry”, “If it’s not happening to my village, not my problem”, “The people of Wales would not let it happen again”.

When the two children had written their own responses, Randolph approached them. “What really matters to you here?” Randolph asked them.

One child said, "To lose your home like that must have made the villagers feel really powerless. Why did this happen? This makes me think about how important it is to know the right ways to make your voice heard."

The other child thought hard, and said, "How do people decide whose needs are the greatest? Could anything have been done differently here? What have people learnt from Capel Celyn?"

Then, the two children gave Randolph some labels with their responses written on them. "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.



5 Signs of Life



Back on the landing at the top of the stairs, Randolph noticed another glass wall. This time the words, “Life is ...” were printed on it. Again, as he approached, a pair of glass doors glided open to reveal another large exhibition space beyond.

Inside, Randolph discovered that life is many things. Life is eating and drinking, clothing, working, travelling and holidaying, playing, learning, inventing, communicating, sleeping, and dying. Life is so much, and new ways of doing old things keep appearing. As Randolph wandered through the exhibition, the list continued to grow.

When Randolph saw two middle-aged women enter the exhibition and point excitedly towards one of the displays, he went to see what they were looking at.

In the 'Eating and Drinking' display, there were jugs, cauldrons, tankards and ewers. There were also serving implements and knives. They came from different times, and styles changed. The women, though, were interested in the Victorian afternoon tea sets. "Look at those cups and saucers," one woman said. "My grandmother had some just like that. I still have them." On a nearby sign, Randolph read how afternoon tea began in Victorian times.

Everywhere, there was the sound of recorded voices, telling their stories in Welsh and English, again and again. Images flickered on screens dotted around the displays, waiting for someone to notice them. The women approached one screen to find an elderly man talking about the old cafés of South Wales. "The old cafés have all gone now – I am the only one left," the elderly man said. They studied one of the first coffee machines and a black-and-white photograph of a younger man standing behind the counter of an old café.





Randolph followed the women into the 'Work' section of the exhibition. Here, Randolph was surprised by a photograph of a 13-year-old boy, standing with his lamp, coal pick and food bag. It was 1903 and this was the boy's first working day at the Blaenafon colmine.

The two women were staring at a large blue mangle. The sign said that families without fathers earning money would often have to do people's laundry or starve. If a woman lost her husband, neighbours would help by buying her a mangle for laundry. The two women read the words of someone remembering her life in the 1890s, saying, "I don't want to remember it. It was a poor, poor time. And I took in some washing."

When the two women had finished walking around the exhibition, Randolph approached them. "What really matters to you here?" Randolph asked them.

One woman said, “Here, I remember how people’s lives have always been different. There were widows taking in laundry to live, and then there was the luxurious 1950s caravan over there. Even coffins for the dead were different depending on how wealthy someone was.”

The other woman said, “I like finding out about inventions. Lots of things have been developed in quite a short amount of time. These have changed people’s lives in so many ways. Think about our kitchens now, or televisions and radios, or the way we go on holiday.”

Then, they gave Randolph a holiday postcard sent from a faraway beach. “This is what really matters to us here. Please take this gift back with you,” they said with a smile. Placing the gift in his bag, Randolph said farewell.

Randolph then frowned and pondered. He could see that remembering the past 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 Jewish Feast



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, on a street of houses in a small town, he finally stopped. Randolph had noticed something nailed to the doorpost of a house. Was it a small metal box inscribed with Hebrew letters?

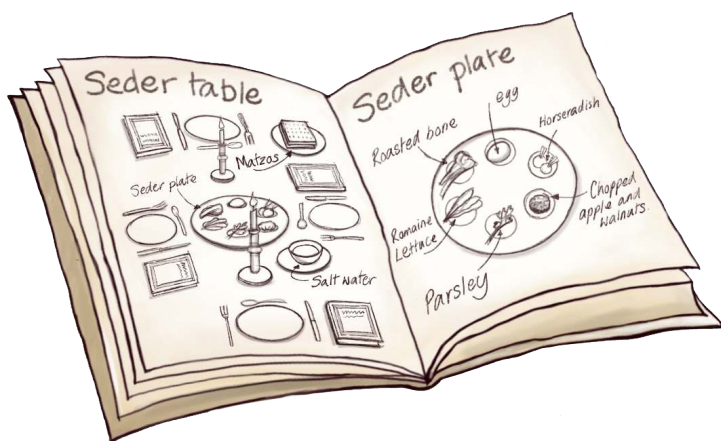
As Randolph went to investigate, a young man and woman walked past him and knocked on the door. Noticing Randolph's staff and bag, the woman said, "This is a special evening. Please come and share the Passover Seder meal with our family." As the couple entered the house, Randolph saw how they touched the metal box on the doorpost.

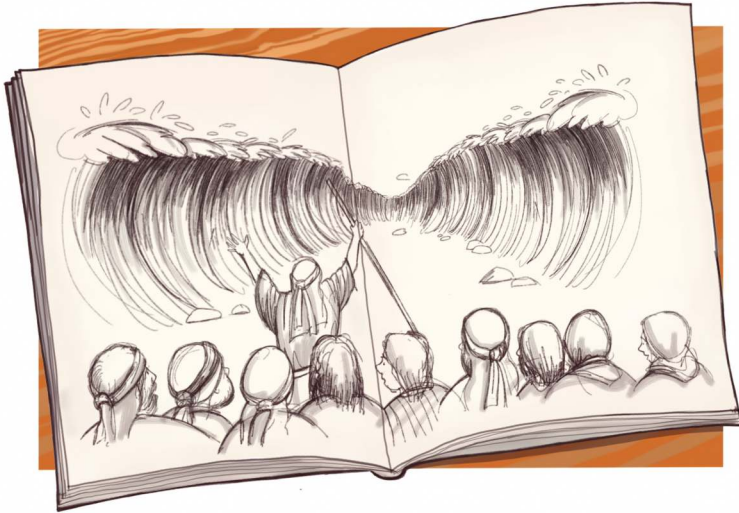
Randolph accepted their invitation, and he pondered, "I wonder what a Jew can tell me about remembering the past?"

Randolph sat with the Jewish family around a table. Everyone looked relaxed and happy. Randolph sensed that this was no ordinary meal. Two lighted candles stood on the table with three unusual plates. On one plate, there were three matzot flatbreads. On another plate, Randolph identified a shankbone, an egg, lettuce, horseradish, parsley, and a paste-like mixture. On the last plate, there was salt water. Each person had a 'Passover Haggadah' book. Was this an order of service?

The youngest person asked why this night was different from all other nights. Then, reading from the book, she asked four questions – “Why are we eating only matza, unleavened bread? Why are we eating only bitter herbs? Why are we dipping our herbs twice? Why are we reclining around the table?” The reply came through a telling of the Passover story.

After listening carefully to the story of the Jewish people and their experience of slavery and freedom, Randolph asked, “What might a Jew say about remembering the past?”





One of the older women replied to Randolph first, saying, “The Passover story is a very powerful one. We remember and tell about the early days of our people when they were slaves suffering greatly in Egypt. God freed us and led us through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Every year, in each generation, our family has celebrated the Passover. Every year, we see ourselves as being personally freed from that slavery and oppression in Egypt.”

Sitting next to her, a man nodded, and said, “Without really knowing oppression, it is difficult to really know freedom and why it is so important to protect it. Our people have known much oppression and persecution. Tonight, we remember and celebrate the freedom that God has given us.”

Then, the young girl, who had asked the four questions, tugged at Randolph’s sleeve, and said, “That’s why all the things on this table are important.”

At the end of the Passover Seder meal, the family began to sing:

Who knows one? I know one.

One is our God, in heaven and on earth.

Who knows two? I know two.

Two are the tablets of the covenant;

One is our God in heaven and on earth.

Who knows three? I know three.

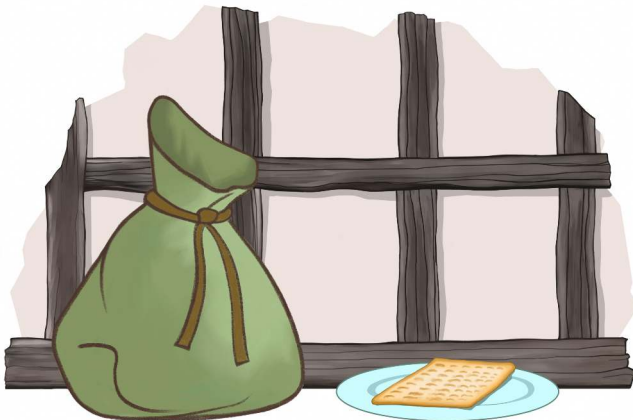
Three are the patriarchs;

Two are the tablets of the covenant;

One is our God in heaven and on earth.

And so the singing continued into the night.

As Randolph stood to leave, the young girl gave Randolph a small piece of matzot flatbread. "Please, take this back with you," she said with a smile. Placing the gift in his bag, Randolph said farewell and continued on his journey.



7 A Christian Altar



Randolph trekked on and on, braving the sun and the rain, then the gales and the snow. He did not stop until he arrived at an ancient country church. A single church bell was ringing, letting people know that a service would soon begin. As people walked along the church path and through the big wooden door, Randolph followed them in.

Randolph found a place to sit at the back of the church, where he could watch and listen. In the pew in front of him, a conversation started between a man and his friend who was staying with him. "It is good to have you here today," said the man. "I know that you would normally go to a chapel back home. Today, in this church we are having a Eucharist service."

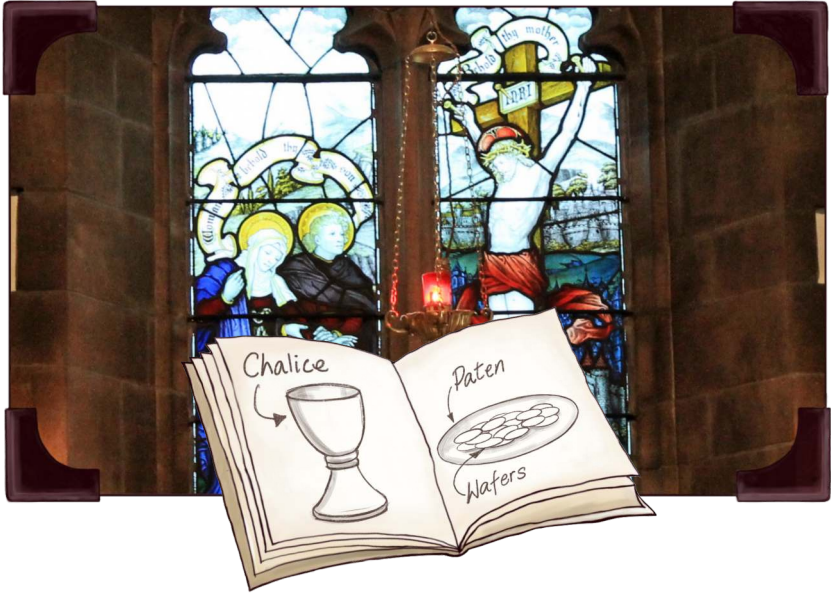
As Randolph stood with everyone else to sing the first hymn, he muttered, "I wonder what a Christian can tell me about remembering the past?"

When the priest moved to the altar, Randolph sensed a great drama unfolding. Bread was placed on a silver plate, and wine was mixed with water in a silver chalice. Raising the bread, the priest said, “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer.” The same was done with the wine.

The priest gave thanks for Jesus and the love that led to his life-giving self-sacrifice on the Cross. He lived again Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples, where Jesus shared bread and wine, and said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Finally, he said these puzzling words, “Made one with Jesus, we offer you these gifts and with them ourselves, a single, holy, living sacrifice. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine that they may be the body and blood of your Son.”

After everyone had received the consecrated bread and the wine at the altar, Randolph asked the question, “What might a Christian say about remembering the past?”





One person said, “In the Eucharist, I feel that Jesus is here with us in a special way, just as he promised he would be. I feel this when I receive the bread and the wine. I also remember the words, ‘Though we are many, we are one body, for we all share in one bread.’”

Another person said, “I am always moved when I remember Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples – the way Jesus shared bread and wine, and said, ‘This is my body’ and ‘This is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.’” She then nodded towards the stained-glass window, which showed Jesus on the Cross.

Another person frowned, and said, “For me, the Eucharist is not really about remembering the past at all. It is about the present. In the Eucharist, Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross becomes present, right here, in a real way. And we all become part of it, too, at that altar.”

Finally, the man's friend, who had been sitting in front of Randolph during the service, shared his thoughts, saying, "I normally go to a chapel, but I am staying with my friend so I've come here today. Things do look different in my chapel. I use the word 'Communion' rather than 'Eucharist', and I say 'table' rather than 'altar'. In my chapel, we usually have Communion once a month, and that part of the service seems much shorter and simpler. Sitting here, in this service today, I remember how and why we do things differently, even though we are all Christians together."

Then, one of the women gave Randolph a plain silver cross necklace. "Please, take this back with you," she 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 'remembering the past' as something that really matters.

Randolph needs your help.

What other places could Randolph visit to find out about remembering the past?

Who could he ask in those places?

Do you think that remembering the past is something that really matters?

Where would you go to remember the past?

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



SOSIA FOR
WHAT WAS
LOST

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. “The past can be found in every place and there are different ways of connecting with the past. By remembering the past, people discover many things about themselves and the world around them. Remembering the past is something that *really* matters.”





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My gift to
Randolph

So sad for
what was
lost

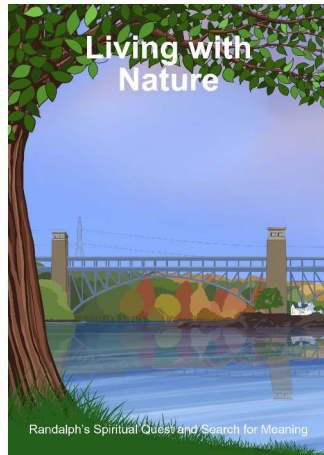
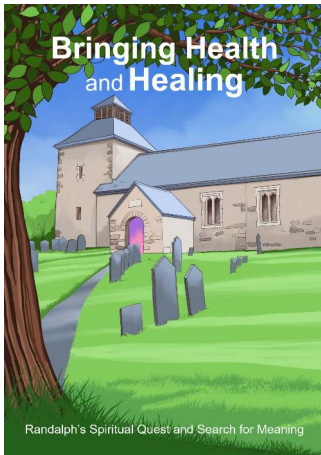
How did this
happen?

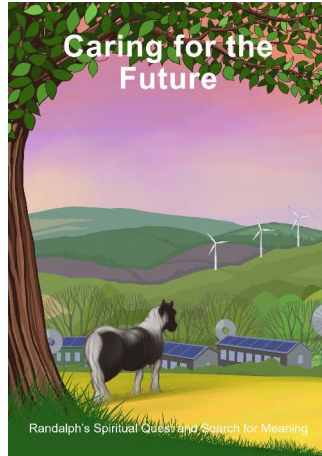
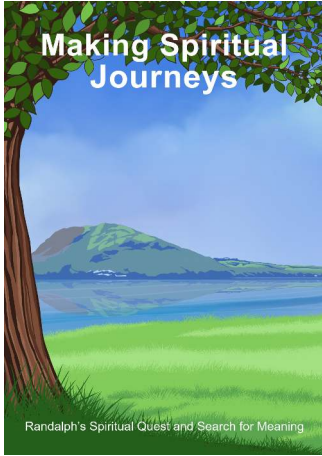


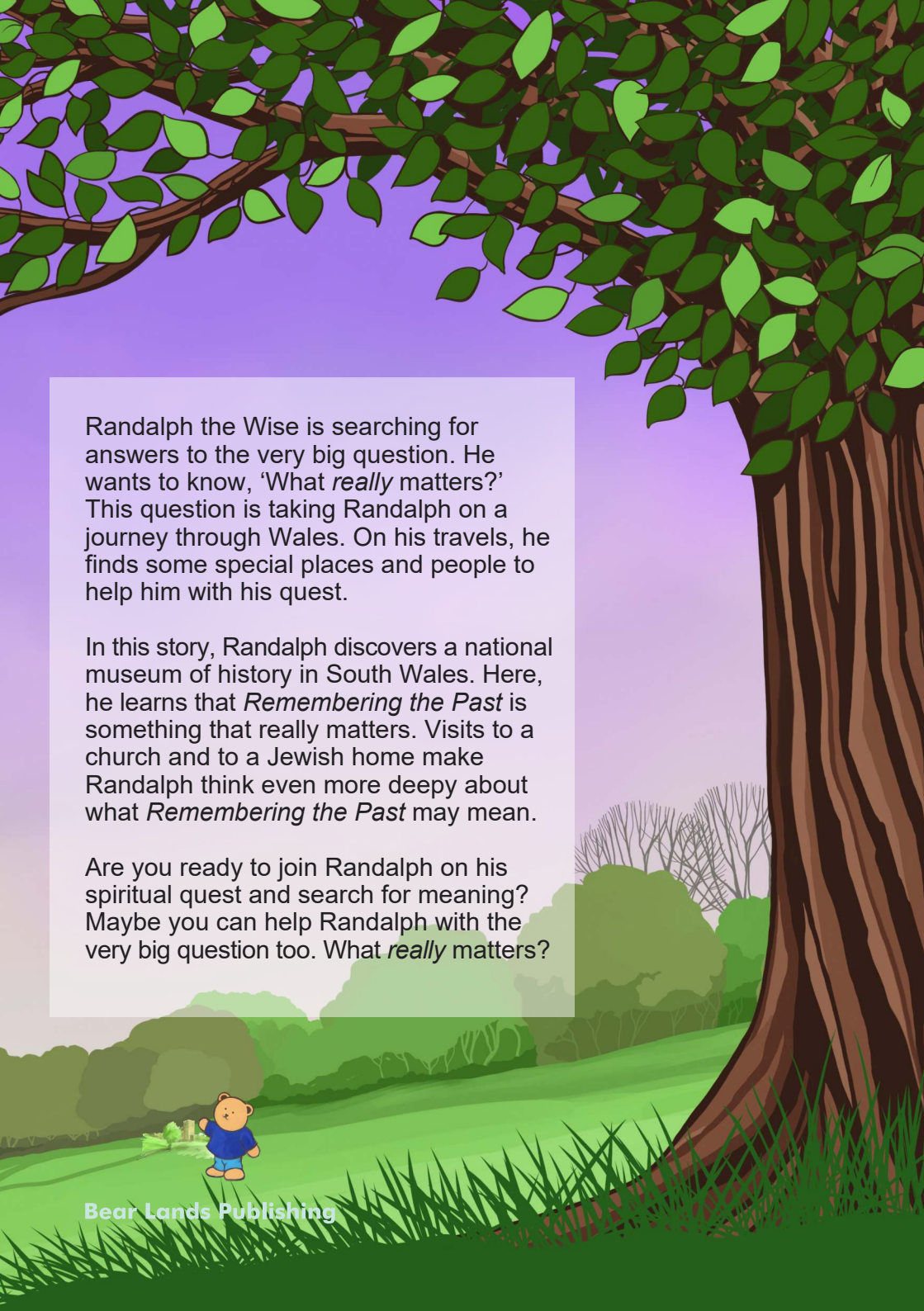
Read more...

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) and on the St Mary's Centre website (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 national museum of history in South Wales. Here, he learns that *Remembering the Past* is something that really matters. Visits to a church and to a Jewish home make Randolph think even more deeply about what *Remembering the Past* 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?