

# The Harry Edwards Spiritual Healing Sanctuary

Dawn Redwood

The Sanctuary nestles in 30 acres of Surrey woodland at Burrows Lea just outside the village of Shere, south-east of Guildford. It has, indeed, been home to spiritual healing for 59 years as Harry Edwards purchased it when his house in Ewell outgrew the ever increasing numbers of people requesting an appointment with the healer whose reputation was spreading, and who would go on to fill the Royal Albert Hall with his demonstrations of healing.

As soon as Harry Edwards saw the house he knew it would offer the perfect setting for the work he was to do. He had a vision of the billiard room being the Sanctuary and this remains so today. The larger house offered office space for his secretarial staff who would soon be handling 10,000 letters a week from people requesting distant healing. There was further office space to house the work of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers which Harry Edwards founded in 1955 and for whom he wrote the first course for training healers.

Harry Edwards continued to reply to letters and see as many people as he could up to and including the day he died in December 1976 aged 83.

Although his work continued with his successors it was scaled down, and when a new administration team took over about two and a half years ago changes were made and a programme of refurbishment and expansion was embarked upon. This will be completed by June this year, but throughout the programme the work of the Sanctuary has continued on a quieter scale.

The Sanctuary's policy is to take the best of the tradition and practice of healing here into the future. One of the ways in which this is being realised is for us to record every patient request on our data base along with the reply. Requests for Distant Healing now arrive electronically as well as by post, and the technology used here enables us to deal quickly and efficiently with these requests which are individually read by a healer. The names of all those who contact us are kept in a Book of Dedication on the Sanctuary table for a month. We welcome further correspondence from those who wish to keep in touch.

Those people coming for Contact Healing will have the choice of the Sanctuary's more traditional healing session in the Sanctuary or a longer, more private session, in one of the two new healing rooms. There will a purpose-built reception and visitors centre. Residential accommodation in five newly refurbished double bedrooms will be available at tariff rates, and upgraded conference and seminar facilities will soon be available for hire. The Sanctuary will be a beautiful venue for weddings and other social occasions.

The renowned woodland has been re-defined once again to be a traditional Surrey woodland in which wildlife will continue to flourish. There is a Meditation Glade for those wishing to have some reflective time. Car and coach parks are being extended.

Our first Retreats are already programmed into our calendar as well as Continuing Professional Development workshops and Healer Training courses.

The latter is especially appropriate in view of the role Harry Edwards played in the training and regularisation of healers. There is also a Resources room available which incorporates a library.

The programme of refurbishment and building has, quite naturally, been a little disruptive to the open-house policy that has been the hall-mark of the Sanctuary for 59 years. However, throughout all this time the work of the healers and the administration team has continued apace. Letters have been responded to with as much attention as before and people have still come for contact healing. The grounds will soon be free of builders and the Sanctuary will once more be open at weekends.

The Spiritual Heritage of the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary is underpinning all we do as we move into a new era of healing. The fabric of the building required attention and the building of the two new couch-healing rooms takes healing into an era beyond that of Harry Edwards. The emphasis on self-healing has not changed since his time. He knew of the mind-body connection, but today we have the research literature to substantiate this. Our healers are trained to help patients find ways of helping themselves using relaxation techniques, imagery, reflective and meditative practices.

We could not change, diminish or dilute the 'healing intent' if we tried. Spiritual Healing is steadfast, unchanging and constantly accessible. As healers we seek to fulfil the expectations of modern accountability and best practice through sustained dedication to all who seek help. Our approach to healing combines spirituality with practicality. We encourage those who contact us for healing to find ways of helping themselves through their difficulties, for I believe that in reaching out for 'healing' we are in fact simply reaching deeper into our own understanding and inner resources to meet our own needs-however that may manifest.

To 'Know Thyself' is surely the greatest healing we can give ourselves.

We look forward to our celebration to re-dedicate the work of the Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary in early June. When we open officially to the public once more from June 8 we hope that all those who visit the Sanctuary will leave feeling sustained and renewed.

### **Biographical Note**

Harry Edwards was born on 29 May 1893. There are many stories recounting the escapades of the boy who, in his own words, just managed to avoid ending up in Borstal. It was at the age of 12 that he renounced the 'boy's' life of fun and joined the London Diocese Church Lads Brigade.

Two years later he left school and became apprentice to the print trade. That did not capture his imagination but a poster in the local headquarters of the Liberal Party did and he campaigned on their behalf. Both those aspects of his life ceased abruptly in 1914 and his first role as soldier was to scan the seas beyond Brighton for marauding visitors. His ingenuity was not sidelined for he made sure that a fishing rod under the pier was catching his supper at the same time!

By the close of 1915 he was in Bombay en route for Tekrit where he proudly wore the title of 'Engineer' (after 60 minutes of training) and laid the railway track between there and Baghdad. His skills as an engineer building an elaborate circular incinerator are legendary (known as 'The Edwards Mosque').

His piece de resistance as an engineer was his bridge. Building one over a deep and fast-flowing river after an hour of training was a tall order so he built it on dry land and simply dynamited the river to flow under it when his bridge was ready.

The way in which he soothed the wounds and ills of both the troops and the locals earned him the title Hakim.

After the war he returned to printing and politics but neither flourished. The problem now was that he had a wife and 4 children to support, apart from any yearning he may have had to find fulfilment on another level.

That was soon to come for he felt at home in the Spiritualist church in the company of mediums and his own ability to be a channel of healing manifested itself.

Not only did his day job weary him, it bored him and printing had to give way to healing. His house soon became far too small and he moved his family to Shere in 1946, not really knowing how he could afford to.

Mindful of the fact that healing was considered to be unlawful under the terms of the Witchcraft Act of 1745 until its repeal in 1951, and aware of the wonders of spiritual healing, Harry Edwards took on the medical profession and the Church. By the end of the 1950s healers were allowed to work in hospitals, the National Federation of Spiritual Healers had been formed and he had written their first healing courses.

Despite the stutter of early childhood he spoke knowledgably and eloquently to politicians, churchmen and the medical profession alike and the legacy we have from him is very special.

He died on December 7 1976 at the age of 83.

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