Merseyside District Churches

Ancient Chapel
Toxteth, Park, Liverpool
11.00 a.m. (Fortnightly from Dec 7th)

Chester
Waverton Village Hall
3.00 p.m. (1st & 3rd Sundays)

Gateacre Chapel
Gateacre Brow, Liverpool 25
11.00 a.m. + Family Service last Sunday in the month 2.00 p.m.

Isle of Man Fellowship
Meeting in members homes
As arranged

Park Lane Chapel
Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield
11.00 a.m. each Sunday

Southport Unitarian Church
Portland Street, Southport
11.00 a.m. each Sunday

Ullet Road Church
Cheltenham Avenue, Sefton Park, Liverpool
11.00 a.m. each Sunday

Warrington Cairo Street Chapel
Cairo Street (off Sankey St) Warrington
3.00 p.m. (check with Secretary)

Wirral Unitarians
Quaker Meeting House, North Drive, Heswall, Wirral
6.30 p.m. (2nd and 4th Sundays)
(No services in August)

MDMA President
Mr Ian Lowe

MDMA Secretary
Mr Richard Merritt : 37 Kings Walk, West Kirby, CH48 8AF
Tel: 0151 625 5488

Lay Preachers Secretary
Miss Beryl Black
Tel 0151 733 2927

Spring Newsletter 2010
of the
Merseyside Unitarians (M.D.M.A.)

Incorporating Centrefold the Women`s League Newsletter

"The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day.
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud come over the sunlit arch,
And wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March."

- Robert Frost, *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, 1926

A Snowdrop by Muriel Hilton

A snowdrop! What a lovely thing
To speak the joy of coming Spring;
Look how its pointed petals hide
A softly glowing lamp inside.

A little lamp - so small a light
To pierce the depth of winter's night,
To bid the spectr'd fears depart …
I catch its gleam, I warm my heart!

Please see inside the front cover for the editor and contact details.
Remember : this newsletter will only be a success if you send me your news. I can type it out in full; just the information is all that I need. Thank you to all those who sent me articles for this copy - I had to squash it all up to fit. I am sorry if I have left anything out that was sent.

Eileen Wiggins
**Around the Churches**

**Chester Church**
- April 4th: Rev Lynne Readett (Easter)
- April 18th: Mrs Anna Jarvis of Knutsford

**Wirral Unitarians**
- March 14th: 4.00 p.m. Mothering Sunday Family Service
- May 9th: 3.00 p.m. Classic Concert
- September 26th: 4.00 p.m. Harvest Family Service
- October 10th: 3.00 p.m. Classic Concert
- November 28th: 4.00 p.m. Anniversary Family Service
- December 19th: 6.30 p.m. Carol Service

These are the only specific dates and times of services that have been sent to me for this magazine. Could you let me know what your church is doing and we will advertise it for you??

**My contact details are:**
- email: eileenwiggins@uwclub.net
- Address: 78 Western Avenue, Blacon, Chester, CH1 5PP
- Telephone: 01244 390590

You don’t have to type out the information I can do that if you drop me a handwritten note.

**Park Lane News**

At Park Lane the usual Christmas events such as the Toy Service, the Children's Service and the Carol Service went ahead successfully.

Attendances at the chapel have been maintained. In addition to Sunday Services the Thursday coffee club has continued to attract both members and visitors who have had the opportunity to meet on an informal basis.

There has also been a group of people who are not Chapel members who have met, and continue to do so, on Mondays to do all the odd jobs; we have been grateful for their contribution. Thanks to the grant from the M.D.M.A. work has continued on the schoolroom; this has largely involved the painting of the windows which were in very poor decorative state. **Ian Lowe.**

**Mr Roscoe’s Garden : Presented by Liverpool City council, Parks and Greenspaces**

*(piece submitted by Sylvia Spencer)*

This display celebrates the life, work and spirit of one of Liverpool’s best loved figures, William Roscoe (1753 - 1831); poet, politician and botanist. In 1803, Mr Roscoe founded the Liverpool Botanical Collection. Two hundred years later, it is one of the largest and oldest plant collections in municipal hands; owned by the people of the city whose name it bears.

The Liverpool Botanical collection has an incredible history. Over the years it has been displayed in three separate gardens, but today the plants are divided between several locations, of which three, Calderstones Park, Croxteth Country Park and Sefton Park Palm House are open to the public.

Central to the display is a small glasshouse, evoking the very first Liverpool Botanic Garden. It was founded by William Roscoe and was very much ‘his’ garden. The view into the glasshouse is inspired by the portrait of Mr Roscoe which hangs in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Mr Roscoe’s chair is there, his coat hung over the back, as if he has just stepped out momentarily. In the front of the greenhouse is the bust of his great friend, Sir James E Smith (1759 - 1828), the founder of the Linnean Society (a botanical society). Mr Roscoe’s famous huge book on gingers, “Monandrian Plants of the Order Scitamineae” can be seen too. A globe compliments the scene, representing Roscoe’s work to rid Africa of the transatlantic slave trade, as well as to reflect the ‘world in one garden’ which he created in his beloved hometown.

Mr Roscoe’s feast of plants proliferates beyond the glasshouse, long since augmented and nurtured by generations of the Liverpool botanic curators, gardeners and plant hunters. Most of the Liverpool ‘stars’ are here - representatives of the National Collections of Dracaenas and Solenostemons, as well as orchids, bromeliads and ferns, for which the Collection was widely famed.

The tallest plant in the display is a specimen of the Phoenix Palm (Phoenix roebelinii), a tree to which Mr Roscoe himself was compared - strong, self-sufficient, unwavering, even in stormy times.

For further information please contact : Mike Brown Tel: 0151 233 3000.
The William Hill Organ: By Anne I. Crowther M.A.

Ullet Road Unitarian Church organ is the second of two Liverpool William Hill organs to receive a certificate from the British Institute of Organ Studies, the other being St John`s Church of England in Tuebrook. The awarded Grade 2 certificate was for the Ullet Road "organ whilst not unaltered, nevertheless contains important historical material." The aim of the certificate, established in 1995, is to attempt to ensure the preservation and conservation of such organs.

The 3 manual and pedal organ (1869) was originally built for Renshaw Street Chapel where it replaced a “very good one” installed ready for the chapel`s opening on 20th October 1811.

Mr Don Meacham is organist now. A pupil of concert and radio pianist Stephen Wearing (1899 – 1977) he first tried the organ, a harmonium, whilst on National Service in Hamburg (1952 – 1955) at a chapel that was, on Sunday mornings, Church of Scotland and in the evening Methodist.

The capability of the William Hill organ was fully demonstrated at an organ service through members of the congregation choosing 3 letters, D. A. G., from the note range, on which Don improvised by inverting their order : “I like to build things.”

At the close of Jeremiah Clarke’s Trumpet Voluntary, transposed to the minor key by Don, a small boy, James approached. Seated on the organ seat which has been shortened for Don`s comfort, James perfectly executed a treble Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. Does it begin afresh …?

Hucklow Open Day: Saturday 29th May

Fun for all the family and a time to meet up with old friends :  All the usual stalls, side shows etc

Lunch 12.00-3.30pm   Fair from 2- 4pm

This is a great opportunity for Merseyside District Unitarians to have a enjoyable day out in a lovely part of the country, meeting Unitarians from across the country and at the same time supporting our Nightingale Centre.

Funds raised in the past have made a significant contribution to the Centre’s on-going refurbishment and upgrading programme.

A Note from the Editor

I couldn`t decide which poem to put on the front of the magazine so I put two. The first one is about knowing where you are : is it May, or has the Spring started, or is it April. How can you know what the season is when the newly warmed days suddenly turn back to winter.

The other is about snowdrops. I thought that snowdrops came in one sort. Evidently there are many, many different varieties. In an article that I was reading it said "we need to start with some basics. Galanthus come in three leaf types. G. elwesii has one leaf wrapped around the other - Convolute. G. plicatus, has the leaf margins turned in - Plicate. Gilanthus nivalis emerges from the ground in the spring with it`s leaves facing each other - Applante. Galanthus with nivalis and plicatus in their `blood` have one or both leaves showing placation."

There were many other types of snowdrops - the list too long to quote. Also I thought “this is getting a bit technical for me”. I thought that snowdrops were snowdrops and that is that.

I think this is the same as being Unitarian. When I became a Unitarian I thought there was only one point of view. But evidently, like the snowdrops, some of us turn one way and others turn the other. Some have double bells, some single, some have green tinges and some yellow. But we are all still Unitarians. Some of us, like the poem on the weather, do not really know where we are and why - always questioning.

Like the weather and the snowdrops that are all different but good in their own way; Unitarians come with different beliefs, different ways of worshipping, different points of view but after all we are still, like the snowdrops, all Unitarians. We are all one family growing together even though the snow blasts and the wind blows we need to keep flowering. Little points of light to warm the heart and spirit. Bright Blessings : Eileen
Cairo Street News

In November Marjorie Massey died. She was only a few days short of her 89th birthday and for all of her life had been connected to Cairo street Chapel. It was Marjorie more than any one else through her dedication and hard work ensured the continuation of the Chapel. All of her life, she was involved in all aspects of chapel activities, Sunday School Teacher, Secretary, Treasurer, Lay Preacher and General Fact Totem. We, the members of Cairo Street, owe Marjorie much. It was fitting that Neville Kenyon Vice President of the General Assembly attended her funeral service to honour the work Marjorie had undertaken for the Unitarian Movement and fitting also that Jonathan was playing the newly refurbished organ for her funeral service. Thank you Marjorie, may you rest in peace.

The refurbished Organ was heard again on Saturday September 12th Chapel Heritage Open Day when local organists and organists from other Unitarian congregations played to the delight of our visitors. The Roundalay Group of Musicians based in Cross Street Chapel also sang to an appreciative audience. One visitor to the chapel had travelled from Stroud in Gloucestershire to record our memorial tablets. Apparently they are very impressive and are sculptured by some of the country’s premier memorial sculptors.

On Sunday September 20th we held our Annual Academy Service. The theme this year was the Unitarian Influence on the Writings of Elizabeth Gaskell. It was an interesting lecture and attracted a few more visitors to our service. Choubent Choir lead us in our singing and the fellowship of fifty or so in the Chapel made it feel alive.

One member of the Choubent Choir is also the Music Teacher and this lead to Penketh High School holding their Carol Service in the Chapel on Thursday the 3rd of December. The Chapel is now to be used for other musical events during the coming year.

On the 20th of December we held a ‘Light up a Life’ service of remembrance for those who have gone from our lives. Whilst we did not attract a large congregation the service lead by Lynne with members of the congregation taking part was both moving and

Merseyside and District Missionary Association
District Service 2010
at 3pm on Sunday 23rd May
at Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington

To be led by Neville Kenyon
President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches 2010-11

Refreshments will be served after the service
(Donations of cakes on the day would be most welcome!)

School Choir at Cairo Street

A thoroughly successful evening of song was only possible due to Unitarian networking from Chapel to Chapel to High School. At Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington there is a small but committed group of worshippers, who are reaching out into the larger community, opening the doors of the chapel for others to utilise.

It was an opportune meeting between Donna Platt who is deputy organist at Chowbent Chapel and also a music teacher at Penketh High School, Warrington and Jonathon Rimmer (Cairo Street Chapel organist) that made the concert possible. Donna had made the trip to Cairo Street along with the Chowbent Chapel choir by invitation to swell the chapel with song during the Academy Service, which is held every year in September.

Very quickly the two musicians were deep in conversation, Jonathon proudly showing Donna around the stops and pedals of the newly restored bellows organ. It was then that the idea of a school choir concert was mooted. The ball was set into motion and general enthusiasm fuelled the preparation. On the evening of the 3rd of December over 100 people attended the concert and were royally entertained to “An Evening of Song” followed by seasonable refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies.
Wirral Unitarians - a progress report!

Three years ago an article appeared in this magazine entitled ‘Onwards and upwards’.

It was a time tainted with sadness as we left our well-loved building in West Kirby and a time of uncertainly as we moved four miles down the road to our new home as ‘guests’ in the local Quaker Meeting House. Our new spiritual home was now an ‘upper room’. How would it all work out? I am sure this was a question on many of our members’ minds.

The warmth of the Quakers’ welcome has been matched with a spiritual home that is simple in style, accessible to all and always warm. A change of venue, service times and routines has enabled us to look afresh at what we offer our congregation. Some events such as the Classic Concerts which are now in their twelfth year have transferred seamlessly into their new home with packed houses, while on the other hand the Christmas Coffee Morning and the Summer Fair unfortunately have dipped in their support. However a recent ‘Let’s Party’ lunch-time event was extremely successful and, who knows, could become the annual event the Coffee Morning once used to be!

Perhaps more importantly, new people have found us who are comfortable with our Unitarian message, some becoming members and others welcomed as very regular attenders.

Although a change of time was forced on us to fit in with the Quakers’ Sunday morning meeting, it has seemed that quite a few people actually prefer to meet at 6.30 pm, some joining specifically because the time is right for them. Numerically we have grown and we are also doing more things together beyond our regular twice-monthly services. So we look forward to our fourth year in Heswall with optimism, as we continue to move, we hope, ‘onwards and upwards’.

Cairo Street News (continued)

On Sunday 17th January we held a joint service at Park Lane followed by a very enjoyable lunch at Bryn Masonic Hall. I must say Park Laners know how to enjoy themselves.

Our regular 1st and 3rd 3pm Sunday Services continue. On the 16th of May we are the venue for the MDMA Annual Service, please come along and experience the hospitality of Cairo Street. We will give you a warm welcome. Rev. Lynne Readett

Youth Roadshow comes to Park Lane Chapel

The Youth Team rolled out their travelling Roadshow one bright Saturday afternoon in September. The venue Park Lane Unitarian Chapel, Ashton-in-Makerfield, combined Merseyside District initiative.

The team treated us all to a “Taste of Hucklow” and packed the afternoon with activities, we made name badges, we cooked! (Iced biscuits with sweets on the top Yummy....) there was storytelling and interactive games, we all ran around and got thoroughly over excited—and that was just the adults!

The children enjoyed the event immensely and were keen to hear from the leaders all about Hucklow week-ends, children who have already attended week-ends joined in to add their voice to the general acclaim. Two children who had never been to a Hucklow week-end attended the October week-end and really enjoyed the experience. Fourteen children from across the district attended the Roadshow and the photograph shows them alongside the Youth Leaders. From Rev. Lynne Readett.

Annual Conference Nottingham : April 8th - 11th 2010

Meet fellow Unitarians, take part in interesting information and discovery sessions, participate in worship, find out what’s going on in other congregation communities. This year there will be significant involvement from the younger members of our movement which should lead to a stimulating few days. Church Secretaries will have details on the events shortly including how to book. Or contact the General Assembly for a Booking Form. www.unitarian.org.uk
Report from Southport Unitarian Church

Early in 2004 we spent about £120,000 having the church altered into a building which would be more fitting for the use we had in mind, and a more welcoming place for all who wished to use it. However, following a quinquennial inspection we were faced with a further need to find funds to pay for more urgent work to be done, to an amount of over £30,000, which we did not have unless we could get some grants or a loan. We decided to get estimates for the work we thought was most urgent.

However, in the end after much soul-searching we had to make what we can only describe as a momentous decision - we felt that we could not continue to spend money in order to maintain the building as we would wish - we have therefore decided that the best way forward is to get planning permission for the site and then put it on the market, and rent or buy a place to fit our requirements with the money raised from the sale.

We are only a small congregation, and hope that we will have a future.

We did at one stage in the Spring hope that we were to have a new Leader in the person of Mrs Hilary Ellis; but by her sudden death it was not to be, but by the Grace of God we hope to continue with the Unitarian presence in Southport.

Classic Charity Concerts 2010

In 2009 Wirral Unitarians raised £694 for our local hospices through their Charity Classic Concerts and this year we plan to support the hospices further with two more of our concerts. Wirral is a great place for a day out, so why not plan a day-trip to our side of the Mersey on either Sunday May 9th or Sunday October 10th and take in our hour-long concert which starts at 3pm. The concert programme in May has already been arranged and will include The Deeside Singers, soprano Pat Hayes with our own Terry Perry on saxophone. Light refreshments are included in the £5.00 entrance, payable at the door.

Twenty Years Ago …………… Daphne Roberts

Remembering some good friends of those days. Margaret Merrick was the MDMA District President, Grace Stephens the President of Southport Women’s League and Vera Harrison one time President of the Southport League for many years; Connie Murren and Elsie Smith, two Presidents of the League at Ullet Road, and Mary Potter, also a shining light in the District League. Last but not least, the Rev Jeff Gould began his ministry at Ullet Road.

Margaret Merrick in her Christmas Message remembered her Head Mistress getting them to sit on the floor – “Now girls, Christmas is not all parties and presents…. I developed an endurance technique” she confided. Writing of the past year she pointed out that none of our early believers allowed the immense task they faced to daunt them.

Grace wallowed in memories of a weekend visit to her birthplace and the visit to a Methodist ‘Family Church’ – very lively! But there was a couple also celebrating their Golden Wedding. Those of us who remember Grace know how interested she was in anything and everything, and following this Service, having watched the Minister demonstrating how all your sins could be washed away, she asked him how he got rid of the brown colour on his handkerchief, thinking it was bleach, but he kindly explained it was a substance he obtained from a photographic shop. I can just see her!

Vera Harrison wallowed in nostalgia, a native of Padiham. She remembered picnics, skipping, tops & whips, marbles, the May Queen. Tradesmen-hawkers, muffins, cream, scissor sharpener, hot peas and so on. Clogs, and the sound of them as the workers walked to the mills, but they failed in the snow. It was fascinating but far too long to go further now.

Connie Murren in her Presidential message talking of prayer bringing memories and our thoughts embracing friends, wherever they may be. Mary Potter was writing from South Africa, and obviously enjoying every minute – Victoria Falls, the Zambesi River, talking to two-month old crocodiles, traditional African dancing, and everything else.

Finally a little poem about Ten Little Unitarians losing numbers down to One, who knew what to do and got a friend to come to church – doubling.
Thank you everyone for your support during the last 12 months of the Women’s League Project Meningitis UK. The District and National totals will appear in the next issue.

Our next project will be the Margaret Barr Orphanage in the Kharang. John Hewerdine has agreed to come and talk to us about the work being done. Hon Sec.

Prayer

We commune too much, O God with what defeats us. We brood over our darkness until failure takes possession of our hearts.

Help us to see the good that we have done, and to be encouraged by it. Help us to see the good we might have done, and to be drawn towards it.

Help us try once more to do the best we can, and keep us hopeful even when we are discontented with it.

O God, when we must perform tasks that we do not want to perform, and there is no escape, help us to perform them without complaining.

O God, from whom we ask so much and in our hearts expect so little, show us that most of what we need is ours already, if only we would take it.

Amen

(Language of the Heart, A Powell Davies)

Women’s League Newsletter Spring 2010

Greetings from Chester.

In January I opened the New Year service with and wrote in the Provincial Assembly newsletter:

“Let us not wish away the winter. It is a season to itself, not simply the way to spring.”

Greta Crosby

In February I write in Mersey News:

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; and the time of the singing of birds is come … ” from Song of Solomon

Glimpses of snowdrops peep through the undergrowth that is my garden, my window ledge daffodils are smiling as Linda and I head for Hucklow and the mid-week Music Society gathering.

Climbing from Macclesfield I realise that Spring may be coming in low lying Cheshire but not in higher reaches of the county as we drive over the tops in fog. During our stay it snowed and thawed, snowed and thawed whilst we enjoyed our musical sojourn or even, as we scurried away on Friday morning, we were aware that winter had not finished in the heights. It was with relief that we reached the balmy lowlands.

Oh, smug lowlanders, you crowed too soon, Winter snow followed us!

However, by the time you read this, no doubt “The voice of the turtle will be heard in our land.”

I wish you all a bright and encouraging season.

With Love from Sylvia.
Forgotten Crocuses, Remembered!

The misbegotten, totally forgotten crocuses are freezing. They mistook the other day for spring and bloomed. I saw them: A flash of purple pushing themselves through leaves I didn’t rake last year…. And never really planned to.

What a little miracle; ….. Several of them, really I hoped they wouldn’t freeze and I guess they didn’t because they were here this morning.

They caught me as I came home loaded to the eyeballs with catfood and lettuce and paper towels and six more uncrossed items on my ever-present list.

Oh I had seen and counted the tiny sprigs and shoots of other things on schedule and expected. Although they made an early start in a January thaw which started before Christmas and lasted into February. These little bits of early spring that I had quite forgotten planting ….. had not forgotten how to grow.

(I think the rabbits ate their brother and their cousin bulbs in seasons past … a rather colourful repast)

So when I saw them breaking through the winter cover and braving the icy winds of spring. Leaning together, purple faces in the sun, like children in an unfamiliar place seeking strength in numbers and in nearness looking for a friendly face …. Thinking it might be the sun.

They were wrong.

That brilliance that cajoles us into thinking it is spring is cold as charity and twice as crafty. The purple flowers huddle closer but they stay. They didn’t freeze last night, although they probably should have and I feared they might. I guess they know how to care for themselves ….. or somebody does.

They speak of warmth and hope today that feels like January and looks like later May or that’s OK. Because it will be each of these in proper and improper time …. In the seasons of awareness of big and little gifts of life.

When duties threaten to undo me and I need a jumpstart into spring, I’ll think of the chilly crocuses ….. and sing, Amen

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Small Prayers for Big God (Greg Mitchell)

As far as commandments go …………………
Is 5 out of 10 still a pass?  Amen

Dear God - Do you believe in atheists?  Amen

Dear God - How come I can`t tolerate intolerant people?  Amen

Dear God - In the great jigsaw of life, where do my bits fit?  Amen

   Now the full throated daffodils,
   Our trumpeters of gold,
   Call resurrection from the ground
   And bid the year be bold.

   Today the almond tree turns pink,
   The first flush of the spring;
   Winds loll and gossip through the town
   Her secret whispering.  **From a poem by C Day Lewis**

From the Dalai Lama`s `Little Book of Wisdom` … Genuine human friendship is on the basis of human affection, irrespective of your position. Therefore, the more you show concern about the welfare and rights of others, the more you are a genuine friend. The more you remain open and sincere, then ultimately more benefits will come to you. If you forget or do not bother about others, then eventually you will lose your own benefit.