



FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 3rd—Friday 6th April – The 2012 GA Annual Meetings at Keele University.

Sunday, 20th May – District AGM at Highland Place, Aberdare. Children are welcome. Service at 11am (including a contribution by children) followed by AGM and a shared Lunch.

Sunday, 17th June – District Rally at Ross on Wye, joint service with the Cotswold Group and a picnic or pub lunch. **Note change of date.**

DISTRICT SPONSORED HYMN SINGING

To mark the 350th Anniversary of the Dissenting Movement the sponsored singing of fifty hymns took place at Capel y Graig, Trebanos on 11 March.

It may not have been one of the hymns scheduled to be sung at this event – (Or was it? We need to ask the pianist!) – but '*How Can I Keep From Singing*' certainly summed up the mood of all present on the day.

The money raised will be given to the Ministerial Students' Fund of the GA. So far the event has raised £500, with more pledges still to be made good.

(A full account of the event is given in the Trebanos news below.)



Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

Rev EIRION PHILLIPS

The Rev Eirion Phillips was a man of many talents and we remember him for many reasons. He died on 1st February at Swansea Hospital at the age of 76 years.

Many of us will remember him as a minister, always keen to serve his congregations to the best of his ability and using his own talents to draw people in. After training at the Presbyterian College in Carmarthen from 1958 until 1961, he became minister of Rhydygwin and Ciliau Aeron Chapels in Ceredigion in 1961. He joined in the work of the Young Farmers' Club locally and helped with Drama and some practical craft at the club. After 4 years, he decided to move to London to become the minister of the historical Essex Church in Kensington. He was also the minister of the London Welsh Congregation, meeting at Hampstead and Essex Hall at that time. He soon became involved in the very different life-style of Kensington. It was at this time that he conducted the wedding of Sarah Churchill, granddaughter of Sir Winston. He also met people such as Des O'Connor, Judith Stubbs and Tommy Steele during those years and was involved in all kinds of activities in the community. He conducted the wedding service for the actress Jennifer Jones to millionaire Norman Simon in 1971. That was aboard a tugboat five miles off the coast of Dover.

He was in London for 12 years and afterwards there followed six difficult years for him. He married Norma in 1984 and, in 1985, he became the minister of the Swansea Unitarian Congregation. Again, he was involved with the community and was deeply affected by the fire which almost destroyed the church in the early nineties. He worked tirelessly in collecting money for the restoration of the church. He took on the Trebanos Congregation from 1996 until 2008 and then he was appointed Minister Emeritus at Graig and Gellionnen.

A number of us will remember Eirion because of his talents in craftwork. He could draw, paint, and of course produce beautiful lettering in stone and there are hundreds of gravestones all over the country that are his work, as well as many house names in stone. He wrote the lettering on Winston Churchill's memorial at Blenheim Palace. He provided the commemorative plaque at the re-opening of the Llanmadog Youth Centre, opened four years ago by Archbishop Carey. His early training at the Pontardawe Technical and Mining institute and his apprenticeship with Cecil Jones of Swansea, provided the area with a meticulous and talented letter sculptor.

One of Eirion's many talents was his rapport with people. He could strike a conversation with anyone and he was always keen to help within his community. At Swansea, he worked as a supervisor with young people in order to help them to gain employment. He also got involved in working with the homeless. He was always interested in children, young people, old people, the disabled - and supporting the most vulnerable in society in many ways. He was proud to have belonged to the Lions Club in Swansea and became its President.

Some of us will remember Eirion for his sense of humour. He could be naughty, very naughty at times. One did not quite know what he was going to say or do next. His early days in Trebanos as a member of the Unitarian Young People's League, meant competing in Drama Festivals, and this experience enhanced his talent as an actor. He had a great talent for pretending to fall down steps and I remember some rather solemn events ending up with Eirion catching his foot on steps and people from all directions rushing to rescue him. It relieved the tensions. He would entertain aboard Cruise Ships and on holidays abroad. He loved to dress up and on Christmas morning, he would leave Norma with a glass of sherry in her hand, dress up as Father Christmas, drive off and visit a number of small children. Children were mesmerised as he explained that he was not sure whether he had left the right presents and thought he would call on his way home after delivering all the presents to children everywhere. On one occasion, he arranged a visit to Great Hucklow by Trebanos Young People's League and seven members travelled all the way to Derbyshire in an undertaker's hearse, to the amazement of passers-by on the long journey.

Underneath the light heartedness, there was another character – one of compassion, caring, a little worrier that things would not work out and of course, he himself had to face some dark moments and some difficult times which most of us would not have coped with.

His early days at Trebanos were important in formulating his whole life, the influence of ministers like J D Jones, who christened him, and Islwyn Pritchard in particular. He joined the RAF Regiment as part of his National service and served in Aden and twice was included on the Guard of Honour for the Queen's visit.

Eirion and Norma enjoyed 29 years of married life. He underwent a heart bypass operation fifteen years ago and recovered well from that. Norma recalls that he was so dedicated to his work that a day's outing would turn out to be a picnic in a cemetery whilst he chipped away at the letters on a gravestone.

He travelled a long way after his birth in 1935, one of 9 children of Evan and Mary Phillips. The last year has been a difficult one for both Eirion and Norma and the family - a deterioration in his ability to communicate, to make people happy and in physical activity, but Norma has been exemplary in her loyalty.

The funeral service was held at Llanelli Crematorium on 13th February, conducted by the Rev Eric Jones and Lewis Rees with a very large congregation gathering both inside and outside the Crematorium.

J Eric Jones

GETTING TO KNOW YOU ...Informal interviews with local Unitarians

The interview in this issue of South East Wales Unitarian News is with Gwynn Pritchard who is currently the Chairman of the Cardiff congregation. Married with three grown-up children, Gwynn lives in Penarth. Gwynn's father, the late Rev Islwyn Pritchard was minister at Trebanos in the early 'fifties. Readers whose memories do not stretch that far back may remember Islwyn, and Gwynn's mother Megan, from when they moved back to Wales on retirement and attended West Grove Church.

Like most ministers' children he moved around quite a lot while growing up. As a result, he became numerate and literate in Welsh and English at the village school in Trebanos in the Swansea Valley, but had his entire secondary and university education in different parts of England. After graduating Gwynn worked in broadcasting out of London and then at Cardiff for 40 years, the first 15 as a researcher, director and producer of factual programmes for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and S4C. In 1985 he became Senior Commissioning Editor for Education with C4, responsible for a wide range of popular and award-

winning history, arts and other factual projects. From 1991 until 2001 he was Head of Welsh Broadcasting with BBC Wales, in charge of all Welsh output on television, radio and the internet. From 2001 to 2006 he was Secretary General of INPUT (International Public Television) where he maintained and developed his links with public broadcasters around the world. After that he divided his time between working as a broadcasting consultant and as an executive producer on a range of factual projects for BBC Wales, TTV, ITV Wales and S4C. He retired at the end of 2010. In addition to being Chair of Cardiff Unitarians he also chairs Menter Iaith Bro Morgannwg.

Ella Lewis-Jones

I understand that your father was a Unitarian Minister. What effect did that have on your early life?

I think it would be fair to say that my father practised what he preached and as a direct result my childhood was a really very happy one. But my mother as well as my father had carefully and thoughtfully chosen to become a Unitarian and, between the two of them, they ran a ministry and a household which was warm, welcoming, understanding and open minded. So their Manse was a very lively place to grow up in, with lots of visitors and plenty of interesting conversation and discussion around the dinner table. On the other hand, no matter how liberal your father's theology might be, fifty years ago a preacher's kid was always under considerably greater social scrutiny than his or her friends. So you had to be careful!

In what way(s) has your Unitarian background influenced you as a broadcaster?

The stress that Unitarianism puts on tolerance, inquiry and the freedom of thought provides a wonderful foundation for a career in broadcasting. Interestingly one of my great role-models David Attenborough comes from a Unitarian background and I believe it shows in almost everything he does. But the most illuminating consideration of this question is to be found in "Broadcasting A Life", the autobiography of Olive Shapley. Raised in a Unitarian home, she was among the first women to work as a producer and a presenter in the early days of radio and then television in the UK and it's a fascinating and inspiring story.

Do you believe in the freedom of the press?

Not without some modest measure of regulation. But how could a Unitarian *not* believe in the freedom of the press?

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party and why?

Gwyn Alf Williams, Iolo Morganwg, Saunders Lewis and Mary Wollstonecraft. The various connections (most of all their shared brilliance) and the differences between them would guarantee a fascinating and lively conversation worthy of any Unitarian Manse!

What are the strengths that you bring to the position of Chairperson of the Cardiff Unitarian Congregation?

I certainly wouldn't call it a strength, but the fact that I had very little to do with the denomination from my early twenties until a couple of years ago can, I hope, be put to good use in understanding how to grow our congregation in Cardiff and bring people in who have either let their membership and active involvement lapse or don't even realize yet that they are in fact Unitarians.

When were you happiest?

I am happiest in the company of those I love

Do you ever feel angry?

Yes, but even in the face of great injustice anger in itself and on its own is never enough or appropriate

Have you ever made any decisions that you regret?

Yes of course I have and far too many to enumerate, but again the important thing is to recognize and acknowledge that I have and to try and work out why and how to avoid repeating them

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Having helped to bring up three free-thinking and fluently bi-lingual citizens of Wales.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK – O DDESG YR YSGRIFENNYDD

It has been a busy 2012 for me so far, with a lot of matters arising from the Welsh Department Committee, the two Unitarian Districts, and a visit to Undodiaid Bangor Unitarians.

I have also had the opportunity to lead services in Gellionnen and Highland Place, which I enjoyed very much. I would like to apologise to all at Highland Place for my service overrunning by 20 minutes! I

would also like to re-state my apologies to Swansea Unitarians, as a sudden snow-storm prevented me from leading their service in January.

After some thought, I have decided that I will not be leading services in the future. I found that the preparation time for the services, whilst it was an excellent experience, had too great an impact on my other responsibilities as Department Secretary, and as a self-employed harpist.

However, I am willing to visit any congregation to discuss my role as Department Secretary, and to make this a part of a Sunday service. I have arranged a visit to Cardiff on Sunday May 13th, on these terms, and I am happy to make similar arrangements with other congregations. This would be conducted as part of my working week as Department Secretary. The costs of such a visit would therefore be met by the Welsh Department budget.

I was delighted to have an initial business meeting with Dewi Owen, the new Development Officer for Cardiff. Dewi was a friend of mine during my PhD days at Cardiff University, as we both lived in the Cathays area of Cardiff. I know him to be a very loyal and committed person, who will be a major asset for us as a denomination. Already, Dewi had drafted some specific proposals for development, and has even started creating new, colourful resources for display. I wish Dewi and Cardiff Unitarians all the best for what looks like a very promising partnership.

One matter which I discussed with Dewi was the National Eisteddfod. I am planning some basic activities (colouring-in, youth competitions, a petition etc) which, if we execute it well, could help us build up a significant list of contacts and Unitarian sympathisers. The aim is to gain new faces for our denomination in all areas of Wales.

It is clear to me that we will need to muster the resources of both SEWUS and South Wales districts, and Bangor, if our stall is to be a success. I would greatly appreciate ANY offers of help at the stall, even if it's just for an hour or two here and there, if you are visiting the Eisteddfod for work or leisure. PLEASE contact me.

Our situation is complicated by the fact that Kathryn and I are expecting our second child in August, just after the Eisteddfod. Of course there is no predicting the course of nature: it is clearly possible that I will not be on hand for any of the Eisteddfod week.

Please: don't worry if you don't speak Welsh. There will be people on hand at all times to deal with the public side of our activities in the Welsh language. But we **will** need people on hand to supervise activities, keep the kettle brewing, taking things back and forth from the car park, etc.

And for those of you who "wish I could speak the language", remember that the Eisteddfod is the perfect place to start. There is an excellent meeting pavilion for Welsh learners, called "Maes D", which offers a cup of tea and a biscuit, lots of friendly faces, basic Welsh vocabulary sheets etc. Why not make it a belated New Year's resolution to learn a bit of Welsh, and help the Unitarians at the same time!

As someone who was born in Leicester and learned the language, I can guarantee that you won't regret it – *mae siarad Cymraeg yn hwyl!*

Gyda ddiolch am eich cefnogaeth – with thanks for your support

Carwyn Tywyn

UNIVERSITY LIFE, FROM A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Well, I can safely say that university life isn't for the faint hearted. My mum came to stay for one night at the end of my first term and I don't think she was best impressed with my messy room: nor the fact that our fridge smelt like something had died in it!

The first term was the best three months I've possibly ever had. Although I probably spent half of it under the influence of alcohol, the half that I do remember I enjoyed immensely! But don't worry, I haven't suddenly gone off the rails and spent all my student loan on alcohol and lying in bed all day, (although it has been very tempting). Music College is so much better than I ever could have imagined. We have five hours of academic lectures each week, including, history of music, aural, harmony, and looking at the history of recording music, luckily, I haven't had many essays (I only actually have one for the whole year!). I have accidentally slept through a few lectures, but only because I have been working so hard (or possibly because I spent the night before in the pub!). Obviously the main parts of my days are taken up with practice (when I eventually get out of bed... - only joking mum!) and playing in the different orchestras. I have been lucky enough to have been chosen to play in four orchestras so far, which for a first year woodwind player is very good.

I have also had master classes with bassoonists from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and have been in an orchestra which was conducted by Joanna Lumley's husband... wow!

This spring term I have performed in Symphony Hall in Birmingham with a folk group I am in, and we will also be performing when the Olympic torch comes through Birmingham in the summer.

Deciding to go the Birmingham Conservatoire was definitely one of my best choices in life, I'm so happy here,

One of the hardest parts of living away from home, (no, it isn't the washing), it is actually deciding what to eat each night, I normally buy so much food that I don't know what to cook! And unfortunately there is a MacDonald's right outside where I live, and sometimes it is so so tempting.

I've made some really great friends; however, I always look forward to coming home for a hug and, yes, for someone to do my washing and cook my food!

Isabelle Rosenberg, Porthcawl & Birmingham

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 24th, 25th February 2012)

1. 2020 Congregational Development Programme

The 2020 Congregational Development Programme is an exciting initiative to be launched by the Executive Committee (EC) to encourage and support the creation of new or renewed British Unitarian congregations. It is not just about starting new congregations from scratch but could include various ways of regenerating current congregations, fellowships or groups who wish to grow and are prepared to change. There are already congregations that are renewing themselves; with professional support we can see this spread to other areas and help build sustainable Unitarian communities for the future.

This will involve raising a substantial fund to support new congregational starts, encouraging the development of applications for funding, selecting suitable applications and providing support during implementation and monitoring the achievement of goals.

It was agreed to establish a Board to co-ordinate fund-raising and financial management of the programme and to support congregational development. The 2020 Board will be accountable to, and report regularly to, the EC.

Any funds raised will be kept separate from normal General Assembly budgets and no quota money from congregations will be used to support the programme.

If anyone is interested in supporting this initiative please contact the Chief Officer.

2. Millennium Fund

Billingshurst Chapel in West Sussex was awarded £700 as a contribution towards the cost of a loop system in the chapel.

Do you have a good idea to grow your local congregation but don't have the money you need to get it off the ground? There are still grants available to congregations from the Millennium Fund. The criteria are broad but any initiative should either directly or indirectly promote spiritual or numerical growth. At recent EC meetings several applications have been approved for funding and the EC would like to highlight that there is money available for well-thought out schemes.

Grants may be made for professional advisory services but not for maintenance and repair of buildings. They may also be considered for "fittings, furniture and equipment etc. following developmental work", e.g. audio loop systems, and for IT equipment. Developmental ministry arrangements may also be supported with any grants made on a reducing basis year on year (typically over a maximum of three years). Developmental activities can embrace a range of initiatives and/or trials designed to support local growth. Recent grants have been £5000 or less.

For further information on how to apply please contact the Chief Officer.

3. EC communications with Districts and Congregations

The EC has been struggling with how it can improve its communication with districts and congregations in light of the practicalities of time and distance and the cost of often lengthy travelling to meetings. It is simply not possible for EC members to attend every District meeting; they endeavour to do so at least once a year. Two-way dialogue by email is another way that works in some Districts.

Currently the work of the EC meetings is communicated through the Key Messages in **The Inquirer** and the email distribution list "uni-news". These have recently been expanded to include more detail and are prepared shortly after meetings by the Chief Officer. In future hard copies will be sent to Districts to

ensure all receive them directly. Minutes of meetings are published once approved by the subsequent meeting giving much more detail of discussions and decisions.

EC members continue to act as "links" to Districts and are available to answer questions or queries arising from the key messages. They also want to hear the views of their link district on issues affecting the Denomination. It would be useful for EC members to be copied into district communications. When links are invited to District meetings they should be given a significant time slot on the agenda to share the latest news about EC activities and future plans. We will seek to use the denominational press to reach members of congregations as well as districts.

It is not easy to communicate authoritatively with such a widely dispersed movement. We do know that things can be improved and this will involve the EC and Districts working together.

The new arrangements for the dialogue can be summarised as follows

- Key Messages - in The Inquirer and uni-news
- in an email from Links to District secretaries
- hard copies to District secretaries
- Districts to contact Links with any questions
- District Secretaries to keep Links abreast of District meetings and activities
- Link to attend a District meeting annually to speak about general EC activities and answer questions

4. Strategic Group Budgets and Business Plans 2011/12

The establishment of the new strategic groups in October 2011 resulted in an interim General Assembly budget being agreed pending further discussions by the new groups and the EC. Proposals for activities for the remainder of 2011/12 financial year and budgets were considered and additional funding was agreed of £12,500 for the remainder of this year. Plans for next year will be reviewed over coming months given the serious pressures on the finances of the General Assembly, both on income and expenditure.

5. Annual Meetings Planning

The President and Vice-President joined the meeting to finalise arrangements for the Annual Meetings to take place at the University of Keele, 3-6 April 2012. Numbers attending were in line with plans with the closing date for receipt of registrations not yet reached. The EC is pleased to announce that Honorary Membership of the General Assembly is to be proposed for Rev Keith Gilley in recognition of his contribution to the work of the Unitarian Movement over many years.

An additional EC workshop session on the 2020 Congregational Development Programme was agreed.

6. General Assembly Treasurer

As yet no suitable nominee has emerged for the post of Honorary Treasurer and therefore the EC will seek to put in place interim arrangements.

Derek McAuley, Chief Officer

THOUGHT FOR NOW

(We are indebted to Anne Jones for bringing the following to our attention.)

Don't be afraid to be yourself. Grow past the diminishment and pressures of your life. Open like a flower to the love of God. Be patient with yourself. Love yourself as much as the Lord loves you.

(This wonderful piece of advice comes from Canon Charles Shells, who runs retreats combining prayer with art or music.)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

With my poor short term memory I rely increasingly on my diary and recently, to maintain some marital brownie points, I needed to check on which day of the week my wife's birthday fell this year. Knowing that we were both born on a Palm Sunday, although one year part, I was intrigued that this year Passover starts on Margaret's birthday April 6th and ends on mine April 14th – No cards, presents or Matzah unleavened bread please.

The Passover marks the start of the Jewish flight from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Israel, a promised land that possibly never existed and acts as the catalyst for religious conflict which continues to this day.

Rabbi Jonathan Sachs tells us how Moses, in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, reflecting on the journey across the Sinai desert kept returning to one subject which is – How we teach our children.

Moses speaks about the duty of parents to educate their children, handing on to them their parents' story until it becomes their own.

As Moses sought to build a community in the wilderness he saw good parenting as a key element preaching a clear message - to teach your children well and hope to make a better life. It is a sad reflection on society's subsequent development that some three and a half thousand years later poor parenting and a lack of a role in society are identified as the causes of the inner city riots and looting by our youth in 2011.

We must not give up on the opportunity to pass on our faith and values to the present younger generation and indeed their parents. It is good to see the Sunday School re-open at Cardiff and Aberdare and I look forward to the children's participation at the AGM Service in May.

I am reminded of the words of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach - **In youth we learn, in age we understand.**

Birthdays apart, Passover will be doubly busy for me this year. I hope to be in Keele on the 6th April supporting Lis Dyson Jones in her much deserved inauguration as president of the GA, but plan to spend part of Passover week in Israel hopefully visiting the sites of the Holy Land.

My thanks to the 35 or so gallant worshipers, who attended the Hymn Singing at Trebanos, held to raise sponsorship funds for the Ministerial Students Fund of The G.A. of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, and to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the Dissenting Movement founded in 1662.

It was a truly inspiring service and my special thanks to Lawrence Bowen and Stephen Wilson for keying through twenty five hymns apiece. Let us hope we can dig deep and raise an amount of £1662 to match the founding date.

Numerical support for District events could be better. Acknowledging that congregations are getting older perhaps we should be making the effort to organise transport for members to attend these events and cancelling other scheduled services. Like Moses in the desert we must continue to find strength through commitment to our community.

Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach also reminds us that **'Those whom we support hold us up in life'**.

Phil Griffiths

ABERDARE

During the darkest winter months, for the convenience of the congregation, Sunday Services were held at 4pm. In March we reverted to the long-established pattern of 6pm for the first, third and fourth Sundays and 11 am on the second.

Sadly, Nina Lloyd who for many years had given valuable service to Highland Place and who for me, in her patient understanding and quiet strength, represented all that is best in Unitarianism, died in February. The funeral was well attended, with refreshments provided following the service, in the schoolroom.

It is almost a year since Carwyn Tywyn was appointed as Secretary for the Welsh Department. Recently Carwyn took a service at Highland Place, in which he outlined what he perceived were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to Unitarianism in Wales. He began by outlining his early experiences of Anglicanism whilst living in Leicestershire and his move as a child with his family to Aberystwyth and Nonconformity. Although he did not underestimate the challenges to the Unitarian movement in Wales he was optimistic that a higher profile for Unitarianism could be established amongst the other religious denominations in Wales.

The Annual Lecture this year will be given by Mr John Davies the eminent Welsh historian who, via his publications and television, has done much to raise awareness of the history of Wales, making local history accessible and interesting for many who previously had no interest in the subject. The lecture will take place on Thursday 14th June at 7pm. Mr Davies will lecture on "The Workers Education Association WEA in Wales between the wars."

As many people know, the WEA is a voluntary movement which from its introduction in Wales in 1906 (the first WEA class took place in Barry) has been committed to the promotion and provision of educational opportunities in the widest sense, particularly concerning itself with those who have found themselves on the outside of traditional education provision. The WEA has its roots in a cluster of 19th century initiatives, such as the co-operative movement, which sought to bring about educational opportunities for working class people, much as our Unitarian forebears did in Aberdare.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Aberdare Women's League

Spring is on the horizon, and here at Highland Place Women's League, we have had our usual weekly meetings.

On the 8th of February we had a lovely afternoon at Tŷ Newydd Country Hotel. We were joined on this occasion by Lis Dyson-Jones – it pleased us all to have her with us before her move to Portsmouth and her upcoming busy schedule as President of the GA. We wish her lots of luck and best wishes.

We have had a musical afternoon, an afternoon of Trugareddau (*treasured items of bric-a-brac and their stories*), and a Welsh afternoon to celebrate St David's Day. We also had an afternoon called 'Three Dinner Guests' – three imaginary guests we would ask to dinner. It was very illuminating and amusing. The 'guests' ranged from Nelson Mandela to John Wayne.

At our AGM I stood down as President, as my two year period was up, and this position is now filled by my Vice-president, Mrs Anne Watts, who I am sure will do a splendid job during her period in office.

Highland Place Women's League was proud to host this year's Women's World Day of Prayer. Several of the local denominations attended. The theme was 'justice' and, being a magistrate, who better to be the speaker than our own Lis Dyson-Jones. Lis, along with Dilys Evans, carried out the service duties superbly. It was a great success as many stayed behind for refreshments in the school room. Many commented on how good the service was and how nice the church looked. My thanks to Hazel Jones, Barbara Hughes, Christine Roberts and Barbara Chivers for their flower arrangements and to everyone who helped make the day a success.

Our thanks go to Dilys Evans who has now established a weekly coffee morning and book sale on Mondays from 10.00 am, slowly but surely drawing people in from the community. This event is getting talked about on the local bus! This all helps to raise our profile and show the community we are a living church which has plenty to offer. Thanks also to Tony Foster for his weekly contribution of delicious Welsh cakes. A cup of coffee or tea and a Welsh cake, 60p. All are welcome.

We also have a craft club on Monday afternoons from 2:00 pm run by Anne Jones

It's that time of year again! Oh how time has wheels! The Spring Fayre is upon us, April 28th at 2 pm, all welcome. This year we will have to redouble our efforts on the cake stall, as our very dear member Jean Thomas, who always makes a massive contribution with her delicious cakes and pasties, (and not forgetting her knitted goods, we shall miss her beautifully knitted dolls also) will not be able to contribute this Spring as she is very unwell and needs to rest and rebuild her health. We send her our love and best wishes.

As this will be my last report, I will leave you in the capable hands of my successor. Last but not least, a big thank you to Ken Morgan for his gentle reminders for deadlines for this newsletter, and for various corrections and editing, *hee-hee!*

Onward and upwards dear friends.

Love and best wishes,

Joy Foster.

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDODIAID CAERDYDD

We are delighted to share the news with all in the district that the congregation of Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd welcomed Dewi Owen as Development Officer for our congregation in February 2012. Many thanks to Betty Evans, our Treasurer in her support to Dewi with setting up an office in the upstairs room at the Friends Meeting House and for arranging to purchase office furniture, a computer and phone. Other members of the committee have met Dewi for induction and we also thank members of our wider Unitarian community in the district and in Wales, the Reverend Eric Jones and Carwyn Tywyn for meeting with Dewi. Dewi will be working for us three days a week over Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday afternoons. His work phone number is 07535748617.

Dewi lives in Cardiff with his wife and two young sons and will be keen to meet district members. He attended the service held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed with members from Cardiff on Sunday 4th March 2012. Dewi has been working hard on preparing contact detail data bases for members and friends and a Development Plan for Cardiff Unitarians/Undodiaid Caerdydd. He has also attended the Children's Club with his family and a Committee/Congregational Meeting. A further meeting is to be held this Friday 23rd March 2012 to discuss the Development Plan with church members. Dewi will also be attending the GA meetings at Keele University at the beginning of April.

Thank you to the Reverend Eric Jones for his support in training two members from Cardiff, Diana Bianchi and Sarah Boyce in Rites of Passage.

Ivy Thomas is currently living with her daughter, Pat Simpson and we wish her the very best.

Sarah Boyce will be attending the AGM for UNA Cardiff and District branch on Saturday 14th April. Cardiff Unitarians/Undodiaid Caerdydd are Corporate members of this branch. This is followed by a joint open meeting at 4pm with Cymru-Cuba on Cuba with a speaker from Middlesex University, Francisco Dominguez. On Tuesday 24th April there will be a joint meeting with CND Cymru on Bradley Manning at 7pm at the Glamorgan building of Cardiff University, close to the Temple of Peace, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff.

We are holding services at 4pm in Cardiff for the new Pulpit Plan. This is partly to hold services at a convenient time for families with children and our Children's Club will be held twice a month on the second and fourth Sunday to overlap with service times. Many thanks to Hilda Dumpleton for the new Pulpit Plan. Members from Cardiff look forward to visiting the GA meetings in Keele, in particular to support Lis Dyson-Jones taking up her new role as National President of the General Assembly.

Sarah Boyce

CEFNCOED

Women's League

We took an extended Christmas/New Year break so, apart from the fact that our fortnightly meetings are now back in swing, there is little to report at present.

Vera Tomsett

Rev Eirion Phillips

Members were saddened by the death of the Rev Eirion Phillips. He was held in high regard by all and we have lost a good friend. During the rebuilding of the chapel all the wall-plaques were taken down, repaired by Eirion, then repositioned in the lobby – those beyond repair were replaced by new plaques that bear witness to his skill with a chisel. A number of members attended the service at Llanelli Crematorium on 13th February. We send our sympathy to Norma and members of the family.

Joint Service

We were pleased to welcome members from Aberdare and Cardiff congregations to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 4th March for a service on the theme 'Joining Together to Welcome Spring'. We enjoyed their company and did our best to send them home full of the joys of spring and also filled with an abundance of culinary goodies.

Sponsored Hymn Singing

Those members who were able to travel to Trebanos to be part of the sponsored hymn-singing event at Capel y Graig thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They found singing the fifty hymns to be no problem. Could it be that living in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons enhances one's stamina?

Hospital patients

Recently, Shirley Douglas suffered with pneumonia and Arthur Saunders had an operation. We are pleased they are now out of hospital and we wish both of them a speedy recovery. We send our best wishes to Mrs Trixie Snead (Martin's mother) who is a patient at St Tydfil's Hospital, and to Mrs Margery Davies who is a patient at Prince Charles Hospital.

Unexpected publicity

A late change of speaker at the March meeting of the Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society produced an unexpected plug for Unitarianism. Instead of the planned topic there was an illustrated talk based on the recently published book *The Chapels of Merthyr Tydfil*, by Stephen Brewer. Beginning at Blaencanoid and Cwmglo the story moved on to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd with "its two hundred and sixty-five year

history.” Other denominations received mention as they appeared on the historical scene and there were further references to Unitarian chapels and Unitarian figures of note in the community. There were members of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and of Highland Place present in the audience so we were able to ‘declare ourselves’ and show that Unitarians aren’t confined to the pages of history but are around today.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Good to be with other members of the District for the ‘Hymn-along’ at Trebanos. A very enjoyable event – the singing of selected verses of 50 hymns whipped along at a steady pace: we could have sung more!! Members of Nottage sponsored Elizabeth for this event and she had a ‘goodly’ sum.

As spring is fast approaching we look forward to the drawing out of the evenings. The Chapel AGM takes place on 25th March, and British summer time begins, so, along with the weather, we look forward to a *spring in our step*. Although the congregation at Nottage remains few in number we are large in commitment.

A new monthly Parkinson’s group has come to hire the Hall, maybe their members will be curious to find out about our movement.

On the larger stage – Unitarianism made it into the Sunday Times newspaper... watch this space!!

Alastair Rosenberg

SWANSEA

Since the last issue of the newsletter Rev Eirion Phillips has passed away. As many members of the congregation that were able to go, attended his funeral where the large number reflected his very full life. The Rev Eric Jones has written (in *The Inquirer* and elsewhere in this newsletter) an excellent tribute to him that brings back memories of when Eirion was our minister. It was a time when we had a flourishing Women’s League that used to work hard for the Christmas Bazaar and Eirion used to dress up as Father Christmas and ring a hand bell at the church gates to bring people in. We have fond memories of such occasions and were saddened at his long, difficult illness. Our thoughts go out to Norma.

We thank the people who have led our Sunday worship. The Rev Eric Jones always leaves us something to think about. A rare appearance by Sarah Boyce sparked a lively discussion on the differences between our childhoods and those of today. Julianne took the special Mother’s Day service in which all the congregation participated with some very good, interesting readings. One in particular emphasised the different quality of life for grandmothers nowadays. They still have a big role as child minders but they also have a life of their own – many taking up educational classes, keep-fit classes, computing and travelling (free bus passes have helped). Everyone went home with a spray of silk, spring flowers.

We welcome signs of spring bursting through and the lengthening days. It is good to be going to church in the daylight.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

CAPEL Y GRAIG

We were delighted to host, in glorious sunshine, a Sponsored Hymn Singing event at Capel Y Graig on Sunday 11th March where about 40 people from chapels in the SE Wales District participated in raising money for the General Assembly Ministerial Fund to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the Dissenting Movement.

It was good to hear our student Pastor, Lewis Rees, speaking publicly after his long illness, when he opened the proceedings with words for the chalice lighting, followed by a prayer. His comments were most fitting and worthy of the occasion. He also took the Benediction at the close of our meeting.

Mr Phillip Griffiths, President of the South East Wales Unitarian Society, opened the proceedings with a historical account of the Dissenting Movement from 1662 to 2012 and reminded us that we have much to be proud about and appealed to our members to give generously.

The Rev Eric Jones introduced the hymn singing session and said it was to be enjoyed. He mentioned that six people are now studying for the Unitarian Ministry, and they are all worthy of our support.

All of the 50 hymns sung were selected from three Unitarian Hymnals, *Hymns for Living*, *Y Perlau Moliant Newydd* and *Sing your Faith*.

The selection was made by Lawrence Bowen, Julie Nedin and Colin Morgan, all led and guided by Eric who travelled from Aberdare to Lawrence's home at Ynystawe, a week prior to the event.

They are all to be congratulated for such a good selection of well known hymn tunes having beautiful words, which encapsulated our faith and beliefs.

All the hymns that were sung, were either accompanied by Lawrence, playing the Chapel's Pipe Organ, or by Stephen, playing the Piano They played in turn one after the other and the whole programme went very smoothly with good continuity without any break during the singing of 50 hymns

We are very fortunate in having two very professional musicians and we thank Stephen of Swansea and Lawrence of the Graig for their services.

We thank our churches for the loan of hymnals, which were used, and for their delivery and collection. We also thank Julie Nedin and Keith Lewis-Jones for preparing and printing the programme.

After one-and-a-half hours of music, song and a benediction from Lewis the day ended on a high note with refreshments provided by the ladies of Gellionnen and Graig. All in all a very successful event, which reminded us that we have some beautiful hymns and words - all suitable for our troubled world and for uplifting our spirits. I look forward to the next sing-along.

Colin Morgan

GELLIONNEN

Gellionnen's windows are at last being replaced, we can hardly believe it!

Our lay pastor Lewis Rees is back at work with the Fire Service after a year on sick leave. It has been a very long time for us all and it is so good to know that his health is now improved. The up side of such a long time out is that Lewis and Cheryl took in a dog – Oscar by name and we would often meet Lewis and Oscar on their daily perambulations. And, on the subject of dogs, Sandra Beynon usually attends service with her own small beastie, Toto. For a while Toto was accompanied by Barney, a lovely young rescue whippet who is now re-homed and in his place comes Jack. Jack was nervous, shy and in very poor health but we are watching an all round improvement Sunday by Sunday, and of course, we are all taking part in the socialising of this lovely animal.

Congratulations go to Angela and Sandor Nemeth who have recently celebrated their 32nd wedding anniversary. Angela's mother is now out of hospital and back at Dan y Bryn. It is good to have you back Eileen.

Caradog Jones has recently been heard playing with the folk band Yr Alltud and younger brother Aneurin playing with the Whitefern Mountain String Band, both in the Swansea Valley. Their mother Sara has recently taken on the position of Secretary of Gellionnen and Graig chapels. Thank you Sara, we know that you were *already* a very busy lady.

The 'Hymn Sing' at the Graig Chapel was much enjoyed. It is always a pleasure to meet up with friends from our other chapels and churches. To learn some new tunes and new words was a bonus!

It was no surprise when we heard of the death of Rev Eirion Phillips, but it was with sadness. Eirion was a man of great humour and great compassion. He was also a very practical man, always ready to step in wherever he could be of support and help. He will be much missed. My own memories of Eirion always come with a smile. Norma, we sympathise with you in your sad loss. We know what a huge support you were to him, you made a great pair. God Bless.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Our chapel family has been greatly saddened by the deaths of the husbands of two of our members, Anoop, husband of Helen Bhanaut, and Rheinallt, husband of Elin Jones. Their funeral services at Bridgend Crematorium were very well attended and there were many heartfelt tributes to both men who were loved and respected by all who knew them. Our love and sympathy go to both Helen and Elin and their families.

Phyllis Rose our oldest member is again in hospital for a time. She is recovering well and hopes to be

home soon. Her cheerful nature is a great tonic to all who visit her. She has a fund of stories of the chapel during the twenties and thirties.

Ivy has been attacking parts of our graveyard retaining wall yet again so we have to look to more repairs. The graveyard itself is looking very well in this spring weather, with primroses, daffodils, and even early forsythia in bloom – a welcoming sight for chapel worshippers and visitors.

Julianne is recovering from a fall in Birmingham during the Women's League meeting and is able to take up her taxi-driving duties for Sunday services. Our congregation is widespread but very loyal.

We feel we are a family and we welcome anyone who would like to join us at 3.00pm on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, with a special celebration of Spring and Easter on 8th April.

Julianne Morgan

UNITARIAN DISCOVERY HOLIDAY

In response to a request from Marjorie Walker, UDH Treasurer, we spread the word about the Unitarian Discovery Holiday held at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire. (Formerly known as Unitarian Experience Week and now slightly shorter – Monday to Friday instead of Saturday to Saturday.)

Ways of Seeing – All in the Eye of the Beholder

Do you see what I see? Do I see what you see?

At the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, SK17 8RH
Monday 9th July 2012 to Friday 13th July 2012

This is a new venture which we hope to make more of a short holiday break with some intellectual input. A chance for Unitarians to meet one another in a holiday atmosphere, relax, sing, worship and have fun together, walk or explore the beautiful Derbyshire Countryside.

There will also be time to look at the above theme from a religious, arts and social point of view.

How do you know what is true? What is real?

What is your perspective on life?

Can you really see things from another person's point of view?

Tom McCready will speak on 'Western Buddha – Eastern Christ'.

Arts and Craft Sessions and Serendipity Event.

ALL WELCOME

Enquiries to: Marjorie Walker, 236 Clement Rise, Dedridge, Livingston, EH54 6LR. Tel: 07718 106732
(please leave a message if phone not answered immediately) www.unitarianexperienceweek.org.uk

You may be able to extend the time you stay at the Centre before the event begins. This would be negotiable with the Centre.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Items for publication should be sent by to:-

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South East Wales Unitarian Society members receive the Newsletter free of charge.

The annual SEWUS membership fee for 2012 remains at **£5**.
