



April 2016

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 15th May – District AGM and Service at Nottage at 10.30 am.

Sunday, 3rd July – District Rally. To be arranged.

OUR BEST WISHES

As we prepare to 'go to press' we have received news that the Rev Lewis Rees has suffered a setback in his recovery programme. This will mean a continuation of the current restriction imposed on him that forbids him from driving.

We send our very best wishes to Lewis.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

It was very heartening to see so many members from South East Wales District attending the Welsh Department Conference at Carmarthen. My thanks go to Anne, Lis and Lynn for giving us a brief talk on what we are achieving in our District. Then followed a talk from representatives of the charity BAWSO, the charity that Unitarians in Wales are going to support for the next two years. After lunch, group discussions were held on different topics and feedback was given to the conference by a member of each group. It was an opportunity for Melda Grantham to gather views from members so that we can plan for the future.

The next major event in the District is the AGM. This will be held on Sunday 15th May at Nottage. As well as the business meeting, there will be a short service, a video from the EC will be shown, followed by a discussion. A buffet lunch will be provided at £3 per head. I hope this event will be well supported.

I will be attending the GA meetings from 30th March to 2nd April. As I am representing the District, the District Executive, at their last meeting on 15th March, agreed on how I should vote on motions. I shall be reporting on the GA meetings at the District AGM.

Tony Foster

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

WELSH DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE AT CARMARTHEN



The morning session at Carmarthen

Photo: Melda Grantham

On Saturday 5th March nearly 40 Unitarians from both districts gathered at the Boar's Head Hotel, Carmarthen for a conference. The Welsh department have recently agreed to focus on "Service to

Humanity” as the main focus for the coming year, and the theme of the morning session was on the good work already being done by our congregations and what more we could do. It was truly inspiring to listen to the presentations by Anne Jones from Highland Place Aberdare, Lynn Evans from Swansea, Rev Wyn Thomas from the South Wales District Association and Lis Dyson-Jones from Cardiff.

They outlined what they themselves did, what their congregations did and what was being done at district level. It was certainly beneficial to learn of the valuable contributions made by the Unitarians through volunteering and fund-raising, and also of the variety of the work being undertaken.

Later in the morning we were joined by some ladies from BAWSO, the charity which the Welsh Department have agreed to support for the next two years. They gave a very informative presentation of their work, and made us aware of the breadth of their programmes. At the end of their presentation Rev Lewis Rees presented them with a huge pile of nappies on behalf of the Nottage congregation, for which they were very grateful. During the morning session there was also an opportunity for everyone to purchase baby food etc. to be donated, and I was delighted that we were able to present them with a huge bag of baby goodies as well.

After a delicious carvery lunch we re-convened for the afternoon session which involved some group discussions. Each group focused on a particular topic and shared their findings with everyone at the end. The topics were varied and included spiritual needs, who we matter to, social justice, communication, being there for everyone, etc. I'd like to thank everyone who entered in to the spirit of the day and to all of you for being so willing to participate in the discussions. I hope that you all enjoyed it as well, and that we can arrange another day like this before long.

Melda Grantham



Two ladies from the BAWSO organisation.

Photo: Melda Grantham

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 12 FEBRUARY 2016

1. From Vision to Action – “The Next Steps”

The Executive Committee followed up its detailed discussion in January on the outcomes of the “From Vision to Action” one-day conference in Sheffield during November with an agreement on the final text of “The Next Steps” document. This will be presented at this year's Annual Meetings. The eight-page booklet will be circulated as part of the February Mailing from Essex Hall to give congregations and ministers time to consider its contents. It outlines the key issues that have been identified for action and sets out the next steps which, if approved, will form the basis for more detailed planning by the Executive Committee.

2. Stipend Review Committee Report

The report of the Stipend Review Committee meeting of 18 January 2016 was accepted by the Executive Committee for presentation to the Annual Meetings. The Stipend Committee recommends a 4% uplift in stipends as a further step towards parity with the Baptists and would like to receive views on the setting of a new target of reaching the level of the Congregational Federation. They also initiated work on the level of the manse allowance; particularly the London and District differential.

3. General Assembly Roll of Ministers and Lay Pastors

The following were approved for Ministry training:

- Mark Hutchinson to be trained for the ministry based at Unitarian College, Manchester, over 2 years.
- Duncan Voice to be trained for the ministry based at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, over 2 years.
- Lewis Connolly to be trained for inclusion on the Roll under route 3 iii of the Policy on Ministers from another Denomination or Religious Movement with his studies managed by Harris Manchester College, Oxford and a probationary ministry to be obtained through the Ministerial Vacancy system.

4. Sustainability of Buildings

The Chief Officer reported on exploratory discussions with Historic England about a possible joint project on the long term sustainability of our buildings. Although these are at an early stage and no decisions have been reached as yet, they do offer an opportunity to step back and look at how our chapel and church buildings can more usefully contribute to the achievement of our Vision.

5. Unitarian College Manchester (UCM)

A presentation was received from Rachel Skelton, Project Manager, on UCM's Ministry Training Project. She drew attention to developments at Luther King House and the benefits of being in partnership with other Colleges. UCM was seeking to broaden its role to meet the learning needs of the wider Unitarian and Free Christian community and would be involving a whole range of stakeholders in its deliberations. Her presentation to the EC was part of this broader engagement process.

6. National Youth Programme Update

Rev John Harley, Youth Programme Co-ordinator, reported on the challenges facing the National Youth Programme and focussed on some of the issues to be addressed if the Programme was to be expanded. It was unclear if a recent fall in numbers for some events was a one-off or a future pattern. The promotion of the Programme needed to be improved with more use of social media to reach young people; particularly those from families outside the Unitarian Movement. Greater administrative and IT support was required. There were currently 15 active youth leaders and it was hoped to make the training conference an annual event. The development of campus ministry and improved provision for young adults at the Annual Meetings were highlighted.

7. Annual Meetings 2016

A positive report was received on preparations for the forthcoming Annual Meetings to take place in Birmingham from 30 March to 2 April. The Annual Meetings Panel are already working on plans for 2017.

Executive Committee

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

One of the greatest lessons in life is to learn not to do what one likes but to like what one has to do.

Anon.

ABERDARE

Women's League

Once again we have enjoyed our choice of favourite music and readings. We are always amazed by the range of CDs chosen and by the quality of the creative writing of our members. There have also been debates, a discussion on household tips, and a meeting on uplifting writings and people who have inspired members in various ways.

We have had a fun quiz, a literary quiz and a "free-for-all" Welsh quiz. The latter was accompanied by a list of hilarious howlers in church publications. Also Marian Whippey brought us to tears of laughter with her imaginary letter of complaint to a company for the effect of its vanishing cream on her mother.

Our sessions concluded with a pleasant lunch at the New Inn, Rhigos.

In addition to our formal sessions, four of us plus Tony took clothes, nightwear, towels, slippers, toiletries and food for women and children in Welsh refuges. We had joined with other groups and denominations at the Mormon Church in Merthyr Tydfil. The vast amount collected was both uplifting and humbling.

Joy and I also provided a Women's League table at the day to celebrate the past and present achievements by women on International Women's Day. Tony also assisted.

Our District League AGM took place on Wednesday 9th March. Diana Bianchi handed over the District Presidency to Anne Watts. Joan Harlow became Vice President. Lis Dyson-Jones and Anne Jones agreed to continue as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

After discussion and with regard to Cefn Coed's transport difficulties, it was decided to hold our Summer Rally at the Nant Ddu restaurant. This will consist of a lunch and will be followed by a speaker or quiz.

Dilys Evans

The Coffee Morning has attracted one more regular new to the area, she has welcomed the friendship. It continues to earn substantial funds for the church.

Joy's meditation group continues to flourish and to be of benefit to those who attend.

Two crates of provisions will be delivered to the food bank in time for Easter.

As indicated in our Women's League section we have supported various refuges. The Church has also donated £50.

On Mother's Day we enjoyed an uplifting congregational service of readings and observations on family. The pulpit fee was donated towards the cost of a new microphone for the church.

Other dates in our calendar were the Welsh Department Conference at Carmarthen, where our branches joined with South Wales Branches. We enjoyed the group discussions and hope they will eventually lead to a positive outcome.

On 8th March, the friends of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon met with architect John Hilling for further talks about the building.

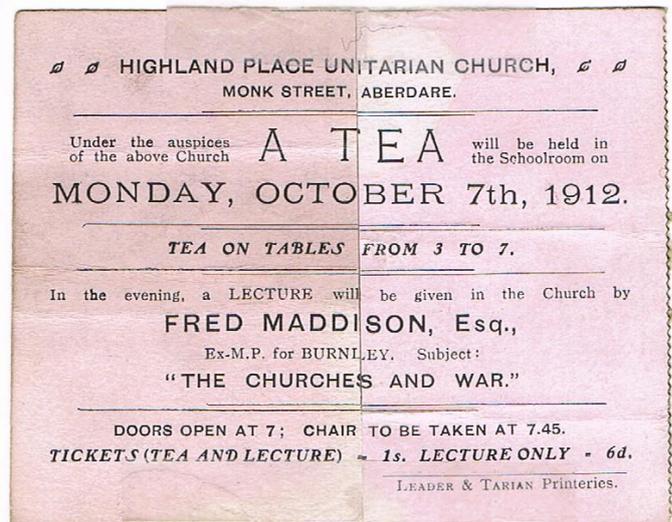
Since our last report Eric has conducted one naming and five funeral services. The quality and sensitivity of his services have gained praise from people outside the Unitarian community.

Having fulfilled her duties very conscientiously, Joy Foster hands over her presidency to Janet Poole of N.E. Lancs. at the GA. A bus load from Ceredigion will be attending.

Alongside is a photocopy of a ticket, dated October 7th 1912. It was recently found under the floorboards of the gallery at Highland Place.

On a lighter note, the Jones tradition in music is continuing. Dafydd, son of Dyfan and grandson of Anne and Eric, is forming a group with friends and practising at Highland Place. WATCH THIS SPACE!

Dilys Evans



CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDO DIAID CAERDYDD

Despite being a very small congregation we continue to meet and enjoy a variety of services each Sunday and are grateful for those who present us with such interesting, thought provoking themes. We have recently considered what it is to be a Unitarian with the challenges of modern life and what attending a Unitarian church means to different people, the legacy and role of Emerson and the Transcendental Movement, attitudes surrounding compassion and the joy animals provide in our lives. It has reminded us all of how good it is to respect diversity in all its forms.

Several members have been able to participate in a Welsh Department Conference in Carmarthen, where the theme 'Forward in Unity' provided an opportunity to share ideas and hopes for the future. An event was held in Cardiff on March 8th to celebrate Women's International Day and the programme included raising awareness of the, domestic abuse, FGM, forced marriage and human trafficking of black and ethnic women. Côr Cochion Caerdydd and the Welsh folk singer, Heather Jones provided a wealth of music for the event which was organised by Diana Bianchi, ably helped and supported by Tony and Joy Foster of Highland Place Aberdare. The sum of more than £170 was raised.

Marjorie Collins has recently undergone further treatment in England and is currently convalescing at the home of a relative in Bradford-upon-Avon. We look forward to seeing her again at our services. We wish Win John much contentment and happiness in her new home: it is always good to see her on Sunday afternoons. It was lovely to see Maia Banks, Martyn Jayne and their adorable daughter, Corabell at a recent service and hope that as their new family routine settles we will see more of them.

We look forward to sharing in some joint services with our friends from Highland Place and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Cefncoed during the summer. It is always good to be together for worship.

On the 13th April at 7pm, there will be a joint meeting with the UNA Cardiff and District and the Centre for the Study of Islam in Britain – ‘*Contextualising Islam in 21st Century Britain*’ addressed by professor Grace Davie of Exeter University. On Friday 6th May at 7pm there will be a joint meeting (title to be decided) addressed by Manal Tamimi from the Palestine village of Nabi Saleh and on Thursday 19th May, the AGM for UNA Cardiff and District will be held. All three meetings will be held at the Temple of Peace.

Something to think about

‘Hesitation, reluctance and doubt leads to fear and fear is a disease (dis-ease). It blocks the flow of energy; it spreads, it destroys and if it’s not stopped, it kills. So be open, accept new challenges and let life begin.’ (Paul Williams)

We should always remember the uncomplicated openness and fearless honesty of children. When asked in school to complete the following expression, “*Where there’s a will.....*” a child replied “*there’s always a dead person*”.

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women’s League

We made a delayed start to the new year as usual, with our first meeting not being held until 3rd February. Later in the month we provided lunch for Gwynfa Bowen’s daughter Elizabeth who visited Hen Dŷ Cwrdd with her Welsh learners.

On 9th March, a number of us attended the District League meeting at Aberdare: we are hosting the next District meeting in October – the date is to be arranged.

Unfortunately the talk arranged for 16th March had to be cancelled as the lady who was to speak was unable to come. At the end of March we went to the new café on Cefncoed High Street for lunch before league, the food was lovely.

We are looking forward to a visit by Anne Watts, who is to give us a talk in April.

Best wishes to you all.

Vera Tomsett

Visitors

On 10th February we welcomed a group of 12 Gwent teachers who were on a day trip from Coleg Gwent where they are following a course designed to improve their Welsh-language skills. During the morning the group visited sites of historical and cultural significance in the Merthyr Tydfil area, arriving at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd vestry for lunch prepared by members of the Women’s League. After lunch they visited the chapel where they were given a brief introduction to Unitarianism and learned something of the chapel’s history.

Welsh Department Conference

Three members from Hen Dŷ Cwrdd attended the Welsh Department Conference at the Boar’s Head, Carmarthen on 5th March. The theme was ‘*Forward in Unity*’ and there was also a presentation by two ladies from BAWSO.

Joint Service

The joint service with Aberdare and Cardiff congregations planned for 6th March was re-scheduled when it was realised that it coincided with Mothering Sunday and that this might affect attendance. Instead, a very moving Congregational Service was held on the theme of *Mothers*. Each person present contributed, and there were moments of humour and of pathos – plus a few moments of nostalgic pleasure as Arthur Saunders sang a number of unaccompanied Welsh lullabies. The joint service is now planned to take place at the end of March.

Service Times at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd

With the introduction of the new Pulpit Plan for the period April to September our services will be held at 3pm on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, and at 6pm on other Sundays.

In our thoughts

We send our best regards to Peter Powell who has been discharged from Brecon Memorial Hospital and is now a resident at Cartref, Hay on Wye. We hope to visit him soon; meanwhile we are grateful to his niece, Jane for keeping us up to date.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Rose Owen has given up her home in Porthcawl to live in residential care. Rose had not been well, and was struggling to look after herself, so moved to where she could be cared for. Her family live in Porthcawl so, with their support, we are very pleased to be able to say that she still joins us each week for Sunday

Service. Recently Sarah, one of her 5 granddaughters, became 18, and we were delighted that she came to chapel for Rose (and us!) to wish her Happy Birthday.

While we were having a cup of tea after service recently, David told us it was exactly 10 years since he had joined our congregation. David "found us" online, we are SO pleased he made the effort to "try us out", and even more pleased that he likes us, and our form of worship, enough to keep coming.

Nottage donated £50 recently for Melda to purchase on our behalf, items for the Women's Refuge appeal. A big thanks to all who donated. We also support the Porthcawl Foodbank, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group, and Schools and Hospitals in the Khasi Hills with Unitarian connections. We are small in number, but big in heart.

Also "big in heart" is Jonathan, each Mothering Sunday he buys all of the women in the congregation daffodils, because he does not have a grandmother to give them to. This year he added David to his list, because David lives alone. You are a treasure, Jonathan, and we all love you.

We have had the pleasure of Sarah Boyce's services twice recently, and really enjoyed our time together, and the services she wrote for us. Thank you.

Thanks also to Alastair (and his apprentice, Lewis!) for rearranging our notice boards on the schoolroom wall, and replacing our letterbox. Our premises look greatly improved with the new additions. Thank you, again to Lewis.

Avril Protheroe

Lights, Camera, ACTION!!

UK Unitarian TV will be visiting Nottage General Baptist & Unitarian Chapel to film a service on Sunday 22nd May 2016. This will be the first time that the group will have visited Wales, and they are very keen to sample Unitarianism with a distinctly Welsh flavour.

Nottage Chapel's minister is friendly with members of the South Wales Baha'i community, and they have agreed to attend with as many of their members as are able to make it. Therefore, it would be nice if friends from SEWUS could also come along to swell the numbers and lend their voices to the singing. For any further information, please contact Rev Lewis Rees on: nottage.minister@gmail.com or 07984 651888.

SWANSEA

Damp walls, gas leak, dodgy electrics – just a week in the Unitarian life of Lynn Evans!

The refurbishment of the Swansea building is well underway, supervised by Lynn. The gas leak was a bit of a surprise and meant we had to move the combined service with Trebanos from Swansea to Gellionnen & Graig. The refreshments, provided by Margaret and Hilary, survived the journey and were enjoyed by all.

Many of you will be familiar with the Christmas Crib which sits in the courtyard of the church in Swansea each December, along with a donations box. We are pleased to report that the good people of Swansea donated £200 to local charities. This year, the two charities to benefit from the donations were the local branch of Arthritis Research UK and the hospice at Morriston Hospital, Tŷ Olwen. On 13th March, representatives from the two charities were presented with cheques at our Sunday service.



Philippa Penry, left, of Arthritis Research UK is presented with a cheque for £100 by Hilda Dumbleton.



Margaret Evans, left, who is a volunteer at Tŷ Olwen Hospice, is presented with a cheque for £100 by Hilary Jenkins.

Photos by Julie Nedin

With our smart, new signage and plans for our hanging baskets and planters, we are looking forward to Spring and to welcoming back some members of our congregation who have been unwell recently.

Kirsteen Reed

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

Our new glass-fronted notice board has been fixed to the outside of the chapel and the daffodils are in glorious bloom. Presumably, the daffodils have spread quite naturally over the years and they now make an impressive show

St David's Day was celebrated in word and song with Lis Dyson-Jones. Sandra Beynon arrived in authentic national dress, bringing with her a box of her own home made Welsh cakes – she is a very good cook!

Service on Mothering Sunday was shared with Julie Nedin conducting and Martin Edwards giving the address. Others also brought readings.

Gellionnen members have recently attended the conference held in the Boar's Head, Carmarthen and were also present at the service in our Swansea Church when Hilda Dumbleton and Hilary Jenkins presented cheques to representatives of Tŷ Olwen (Morrison Hospital) and Arthritis Research.

We are very fortunate that one or two kind people are prepared to light the log burning stove before service. The sight of smoke rising from the chimney is always welcome, as is also the lovely, woody smell of the log fire. Moves are afoot to add a little electrical warmth.

Marian Littlepage



Sandra Beynon in authentic national dress.

Photo: Julie Nedin

WICK

Firstly, I should like to thank my friends in the District for their good wishes following my accident and rather lengthy stay in hospital. Especially I thank the members of Wick congregation, they have been wonderful and their visits really cheered me up – in particular Helen Lewis our chair person and organist, she has travelled many miles to fetch me so that I could conduct services. A sincere thank you to you all.

My very first outing on my own was by bus to Bridgend Bus Station where the undertaker met me to take me for a very sad occasion, to conduct the funeral service for Lilian Hodgson our chapel secretary for over 20 years. She has been a faithful member of Wick since she and her husband moved to St Brides. Formerly they were both members of our Gorton church in Manchester. I have known Lilian for 50 years.

We first met in Belfast during a Women's League conference. Lilian was a life-long Unitarian from Sunday School, Hucklow holidays, YPL and Women's League. She was so proud to serve as South East Wales District Women's League President. She also played a leading part in the St Bride's village life and will be sadly missed by so many people. Hucklow – now the Nightingale Centre – was close to her heart and she requested donations to the 'Send a Child to Hucklow' fund instead of flowers.

—You will be always in our hearts Lilian

Our treasurer, Mansel Lalis has also spent some time in hospital. He has had a pacemaker fitted and, we are happy to report, is much improved and feeling well.

We have held our congregational AGM and our new secretary is Mrs Marion Davies, a faithful member. We are so pleased she has accepted the post.

The village held a Teddy Bear Picnic on the green on Easter Monday and used our vestry for their committee members. It is good to be part of the village life.

Julianne Morgan

MEN'S GROUP

Our first meeting of 2016 was held in the vestry of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefn Coed. The reason for the venue was that we were to hear a brief history of 'The life of Morgan Chambers, so far'. So, after settling down with a cup of tea and biscuits provided by Ken and Morgan, we were treated to a two hour talk.

What a full life Morgan has led. It was a fascinating, humorous and sometimes poignant story. A whistle stop tour through childhood, chapels, apprenticeship, shop steward, rugby, chair of school governors, local politics, local history, environment and much, much, more. We were kept captivated and the time flew by.

After the talk we had lunch at the newly opened coffee shop, 'Scoffi' on Cefn Coed High Street. Our thanks to Morgan for a highly entertaining morning.

Tony Foster

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVENTS COVERED



Rev Lewis Rees presents the ladies from BAWSO with some of the nappies donated by Nottage congregation.
Photo: Melda Grantham



Welsh Lady, Sandra Beynon at Gellionnen with members of the congregation and Lis Dyson-Jones (left) who took the service.
Photo: Julie Nedin

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News is **Saturday, 28 May, 2016**.

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