



FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 17 March – Copy deadline for the next issue of the District News.

VISIT OF GA NATIONAL PRESIDENT

On Sunday, 29 October, South East Wales Unitarians gathered for a 11am service at Nottage Chapel, conducted by General Assembly President Rev Charles VanDenBroeder.

In an uplifting service, Rev VanDenBroeder asked us to consider what is the goal of our religion—what have we already achieved and how will we know when we ‘get there’.

The photo shows District President Diana Bianchi presenting Charles with a memento of his visit to SE Wales.

Our thanks to the Nottage congregation for hosting the successful event and for providing the excellent buffet.



Photo: Rory Castle-Jones

DISTRICT CHRISTMAS SERVICE

The 2017 District Christmas Service of Readings and Carols was held at Wick Chapel at 11am on Sunday 3rd December. The service was led by District President Diana Bianchi, with Julianne Morgan providing the music at the organ. The theme was ‘Gifts of Christmas’ and the service followed the familiar pattern of a variety of readings presented by a reader from each congregation, interspersed with carols. Arrangements were by District Secretary Lis Dyson-Jones – including the very welcome minced pies and mulled wine at the close of the service.

Our thanks to the Wick congregation for hosting the successful event.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

In the weeks leading up to Christmas most of my time seemed to be taken up with attending end of term school concerts. As you can imagine that is no mean task when you have 9 grandchildren and 8 of them were participating in various performances. I did enjoy the whole fanfare but I must admit that the one which I enjoyed most was the Nativity Story as performed by the Welsh Nursery which my grandson Cai attends. He was a shepherd by the way, and he looked the part as he marched hand in hand onto the stage with his fellow shepherds; all fittingly dressed in their Asda/Tesco satin outfits. No more striped tea towels and bits of old blankets for today’s generation of shepherds. The highlight of the show occurred when Mary, with baby Jesus in her arms and angelically singing a lullaby, proceeded to swing him around by his arm before finally flinging him back into his cot where he landed with a thud. This brought the house down as we were all in stitches. What’s that saying? ... *‘Never work with children and animals!’* Well, *‘bring it on’*, I would say. It certainly cheered everyone up and got us into the Christmas spirit.

On December 9th a group of us belonging to Côr Cochyn Caerdydd headed for Cilmeri near Builth Wells to take part in a ceremony to commemorate the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last native Prince of Wales, who was slain at the Battle of Irfon Bridge – a battle between the English army led by Edward 1st and the Welsh army led by Llywelyn, on December 11th 1282. The story goes that during the battle Llywelyn had been separated from his army and was killed as he was crossing Irfon Bridge by an English knight who was unaware of the Welsh Prince’s identity. King Edward 1st ordered that Llywelyn’s head be cut off and sent to London to be displayed on a pike on London Bridge. It was a decisive battle for the Welsh. With the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, so ended the independence of Wales. Welsh casualties have been mooted to have been in the region of 2,000 killed or wounded. On being told of their leader’s death Edward promised them safe passage home if they laid down their arms. They agreed and were

marched to what is today a golf course, where Edward's archers were laying in wait. Needless to say, not many survived the slaughter.

The choir had been invited to take part in a service to sing Plainchant in Latin at a small church not far from Irfon Bridge where, it is believed, Llywelyn had attended a mass before the battle. As we walked across the two fields which lead to the church it was snowing heavily. By the time the service was over a thick blanket of snow had settled. We made our way back to the local pub for lunch to find the place packed with people, and with music – from a harp, piano-accordion and fiddle – filling the whole place. So a merry time was had by all. We were staying at a pub in Llanwrtyd that evening and so were the musicians. The harpist, I found out, had connections with Gellionnen Chapel. The next morning we woke up to find our car buried beneath a heap of snow, and a lorry had got stuck in the middle of the town square and was obstructing all traffic. Clearly, we were going nowhere that day! So we were forced to stay an extra night at the pub. We had to dig the car out the following morning. However, all was well in the end. There are worse places to be stuck in a snowstorm. Sitting in a pub with plenty to eat and drink was a most welcome inconvenience – even though the Welsh Service at Cardiff had to be cancelled by my being stuck in Mid Wales, and Eric being stuck in Aberdare.

Unfortunately Christmas Eve on the other hand was not so welcoming. Most of the grandchildren were struck down with a bug which continued for a few days afterwards. The day after Boxing Day seven grandchildren were dragged to a pre-booked performance of Swan Lake where they sat and sniffed and coughed throughout the whole performance. Poor things! I asked my grandson Ben on our way home after the performance if he had enjoyed himself. He answered, "*heb flewyn ar ei dafod*," as they say in Welsh, meaning (*bluntly*) "No it was boring," and reached for his iPad as soon as he got home. When I asked the girls if they had enjoyed the performance, the two older girls agreed that the dancing was good, but added "It didn't have much of a story though." (*With which I agreed.*) The other three informed me that they had spent the entire performance competing with each other as to who was best at breaking wind silently. Which goes to show that we should have gone to see "Starwars" after all.

A new year is ahead of us and I hope it will be a good and prosperous one for all of our congregations. It appears that the process has already started for Cardiff and Swansea's Stephen Lingwood and Hilda Dumbleton who both take up new posts in the Unitarian movement this month. Stephen has already commenced his Ministry with Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd and the Executive Committee of the GA has co-opted Hilda to replace Gwynn Pritchard who resigned in July 2017 due to ill health. Hilda will serve until April 2019. Good luck to the both of them and a Happy and Peaceful New Year to you all.

I share with you this song which, as a child growing up in Lampeter, I and other local children would sing when we went from door to door on New Year's Day asking for 'Calennig'. My grandchildren still carry on the tradition – all be it only to family and friends – regardless of iPads and other techno things.

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chwi
Ac i bawb sydd yn y ty.
Dyna yw n'ymuniad i
Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chwi.

Diana Bianchi

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

As we begin on our plans for the coming year, it seems only appropriate that we pause and reflect on the year that has just gone, and what a year it was! It hardly seems possible that a movement as small as ours could pack so much in to 12 months. The variety of the activities we undertook, as Unitarians Wales, as members of the two District Association, as well as those that were arranged by individual congregations and members, were truly incredible, and we should be proud of ourselves. It will be quite a challenge to keep the pace up for the coming year, but I have every faith that our members are up to it.

The year began at the GA Annual Meetings and the wonderful opening ceremony. It was a great opportunity to share some of our history and values and to illustrate why Unitarianism in Wales is so unique and still so relevant today. It was also an opportunity for both District Associations to work together and to forge friendships, especially amongst the younger members. I sincerely hope that many of those who enjoyed the trip to the GA last year will consider attending again this year. We will not be putting on any sort of presentation this year, but we will have a display, so I will be looking for volunteers to keep an eye on it during break times. I'd also be grateful if you could send me any photographs of activities that have taken place within your congregations, so that we can share them on the stand.

It's also a year when we attend the National Eisteddfod, so again I'll be asking for volunteers to assist with the stand. It is an experimental Eisteddfod this year which will be held in Cardiff, and there won't be a traditional "maes". This means that there won't be admission tickets, making the Eisteddfod open to anyone who wishes to visit the stands in the bay. The competitions and ceremonies will take place in

some of the public buildings such as the Millennium Centre. It promises to be a very exciting venture, which will open the Eisteddfod up to people who would not normally attend. If you intend to visit, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can start organising. From experience, there is always a need for help on the first and last days!

One of the main areas of focus for Unitarians Wales over the coming months will be to look at the provision of activities and resources for younger members, which will be a major and long-term project. However, if we are to ensure that we do not lose the next generation, it is one that is absolutely vital.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Chair, Rev Wyn Thomas on his recent marriage and wish him and Matthew every happiness and a long, healthy life together.

A new and exciting chapter has just begun for the congregation at Cardiff, and we would like to extend a very warm welcome to Wales to their new minister, Rev Stephen Lingwood. We wish you Stephen and your congregation every success.

Finally, I'd like to wish all of you a very healthy, prosperous and exciting new year.

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chi i gyd.

Melda Grantham

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

God, please help us remember that all the darkness in the world cannot snuff out the light of one little candle.

Help us to keep lighting our little candles until a mighty torch of justice sweeps our nation and our world.

Marian Wright Edelman

ABERDARE

Women's League

I hope you had a lovely Christmas and I wish you a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year!

The Church was beautifully decorated for Christmas events by Joy and Tony Foster in conjunction with organisations from within and without our Church, including participation by local schoolchildren from Caradog Primary School. We, in the Women's League, owe a great deal to Joy and Tony, who always contribute over and above to our activities.

I am sorry to report that Mrs Celia Evans, Mrs Dorothy Jones and Mrs Anna Williams are unwell. We wish them all a speedy recovery in the New Year as we miss them in our Women's League gathering.

Aberdare Women's League hosted the District Women's League Meeting at Highland Place Church on 25th October 2017. Our National President, Mrs Celia Cartwright, gave an inspirational address to the assembly of Women's League Groups. Hospitality was then enjoyed by all in the schoolroom.

Our busy programme continued with such events as nostalgic remembrances and music, a delightful musical event with Nic Treharne from Cowbridge, a very pleasant visit to Pugh's Garden Centre to browse and to lunch, a talk on 'Old Aberdare 1923' and culminated in Christmas lunch at the Rhos Wenallt Public House in Abernant, which was very pleasant.

Unfortunately, due to icy conditions, our Christmas Carols and Gift-sharing Event had to be cancelled, with the deferment of gift-sharing until our planning meeting on January 10th 2018. We look forward to that occasion.

On a personal note, may I thank everyone for their concern and kind wishes by means of cards, gifts, e-mails and phone calls to Alun, (due to my traumatic hearing loss).

I wish to thank, particularly, all members of the Aberdare Women's League, Cefn Coed Women's League, Eric Jones and Ken Morgan for their support.

I await hearing aids now and I am fortunate that our wonderful NHS can mitigate my hearing difficulties.

Best Wishes to all,

Anne Watts

A very Happy New Year from Aberdare Unitarians to our friends across the District.

October and December provided us with the opportunity of coming together with other chapels in the District. On 29th October a small representation from Highland Place made the journey to Nottage for the visit of GA President Rev Charles VanDenBroeder, when everyone present enjoyed the positive, uplifting service. An excellent buffet was provided in the schoolroom after the service and we thank the ladies of Nottage for their hard work. On 3rd December we gathered at Wick chapel for the District Carol Service and we were pleased to have Shirley Jenkins from London, representing us with a reading. We were grateful to Lis Dyson-Jones for the very welcome mulled wine and minced pies after the service.

The windows in our church were once again decorated for Christmas by Caradog Junior School and the groups who use the church. The Flamingos Class of Caradog school made a delightful nativity scene, 3rd Aberdare Brownies made a display of Girl Guiding around the world with Christmas messages, Highland Place Meditation Group's theme was 'Light' with lanterns hanging the full length of the window, whilst U3A Gardening and Art Appreciation groups made Christmas Floral displays. We are very grateful for their contributions.

It was unfortunate that our planned joint service with the Aberdare Islamic Group on 10th December had to be cancelled due to the heavy snow on the Saturday and Sunday. This service has been rescheduled for late February/early March. We had our fingers crossed that the weather for the following Sunday would be kind to us for our Christmas concert with ReChoir. It was a very wet evening, but the church was full and what a wonderful evening we had. Although a little depleted in numbers, with choir members from Liverpool and London unable to attend, the singing was exceptional. Led by our former organist Nathan Jones, the choir went through a repertoire of pop songs, classic Christmas songs, an amazing medley of songs from the shows and the congregation joined in for two carols. The choir sang 'Tydi a Roddaist' for an encore. All the music had been arranged by Nathan. It was a sign of how much everyone enjoyed themselves that most stayed for refreshments and a chat in a very full schoolroom. Our thanks to Nathan and ReChoir and we look forward to seeing them again this December.

Our Christmas Eve service was well attended. It was a short service of readings and carols with Rev Eric Jones taking the service, and Jacob Jones gave an inspired rendition of 'O Holy Night' on the organ. Minced pies and mulled wine were served after the service.

The wedding of Robert and Amy Marsh took place on 23rd December with over 100 guests present. Rev Eric Jones officiated, Jacob Jones played the organ and Joy Foster registered her first wedding. It was pleasing to hear so many positive comments from those attending a Unitarian wedding service for the first time.

Joy and Tony Foster represented Highland Place as volunteers at Aberdare Tesco in December, collecting food for the Merthyr Cynon Food Bank. The generosity of the young people of Aberdare was amazing. Our thanks again to our members for their donations, which enabled us to take a large delivery of food to the foodbank the week before Christmas.

We miss Celia Evans from our services and church activities. Humphrey says she is progressing well and we look forward to seeing her back in the near future.

Happy New Year to all.

Tony Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDO DIAID CAERDYDD

'BLWYDDYN NEWYDD DDA' to all our District friends.

We are happy to announce that Stephen Lingwood has arrived in Cardiff and he began his ministry with us on January 1st. This promises to be a very exciting ministry with so many possibilities and we welcome Stephen to his new home in the city. We wholeheartedly support this partnership and wish him the best of experiences as he embarks on this new journey.

Several members attended the District Carol Service held at Wick Chapel on 3rd December where readings based on the theme of 'Candles, Carols and the Gifts of Christmas' started the Christmas season. Following the service, fellowship continued as we shared mulled wine and mince pies.

The Welsh service on 10th December had to be cancelled due to poor weather conditions but on the 17th the congregation met to celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights of the Jewish tradition. We created our own menorah with the Unitarian Chalice at its heart and nine readings illustrated the closeness of the Hanukkah ideals with those of our own tradition.

Gareth Evans is now living in Willowbrook Nursing Home, St. Mellons near Cardiff. He and Sally are close to our hearts as is Marjorie Collins who hopes to be able to attend service again when the weather improves.

We have recently had news of Lloyd Williams, a former Swansea Unitarian member who now lives at Ely Court Nursing Home Cardiff, close to his daughter. He is recovering from successful surgery after a fall and at 93 is alert and continues to enjoy visitors with whom he can discuss a variety of subjects including engineering, poetry, Unitarianism and his own war service.

The UNA Cardiff and District have forthcoming meetings planned for the near future at the Temple of Peace. On Wednesday 24th January at 7pm Mohammad Hamayun who is an asylum seeker from Afghanistan will speak about the work of the UN agencies in Afghanistan, based on his own experience. Then at 7pm on Wednesday 7th February, Sean Allan from the CEWC (Council for Education in World Citizenship), will speak about UN education in Welsh Schools. Parking is available in the car park and is accessed through the barrier to the right of the building.

All members of our small (but beautiful) congregation wish you successful diets, completed resolutions and a very peaceful 2018.

'New start: New hope: New friends: New journey: New Year'.

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

Before Winter set in, taking charge and making travel plans uncertain, we made two trips.

The first was to Three Cocks, or Aberllynfi, a village near Glasbury in Powys—some 12 miles or so beyond Brecon and about 5 miles from Hay-on-Wye. On 29 November we spent a few pleasant hours in the village, where we enjoyed a meal at the Railway Restaurant and visited the Garden Centre.

Then, on 13 December, we boarded a minibus and set off again along the A470. This journey was a much shorter one—just 6 miles, to the Nant Ddu Lodge Hotel at Cwmtâf where we were to celebrate our League Christmas Dinner. The venue was pleasant, the company was good (*of course*) and we enjoyed the meal. A happy time was had by all.

In one of his TV broadcasts, Sir David Attenborough comments on the hibernation habits of brown bats, "*their metabolism has slowed down almost to a stop [but] they have to wake up now and then to have a drink.*" Some jokester might say that since mid-December, these words could equally well apply to league members! Yes – it's true our meetings have been suspended, and also true that we had a drop (or two) of mulled wine after the service on Christmas Eve, but we haven't just been '*hanging around* doing nothing'—we decorated the chapel for the festive season and also took part in two congregation-led services.

We come out of our partial hibernation on 7 February when league meetings restart, and we look forward to attending a stage production of *The Sound of Music* at the New Theatre, Cardiff on 14 February.

Remembrance Sunday

On Sunday 12 November, despite some heavy rain, there was a large turnout for the Community Wreath-laying Ceremony at the village War Memorial at 11am. Those assembled then marched along the High Street to the chapel where we were pleased to have the 'regulars' join us – including Major Tudor Price, MBE and Sir Mansel Aylward, CBE. Sadly, the majority of marchers chose not to come inside. The services at the War Memorial and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd were conducted by Ken Morgan, with Major Stephen Price, MBE presenting a reading at the chapel.

Out and About

Several members attended the service at Nottage on 29 October for the visit of the GA President, and also the District Carol Service held at Wick on 3rd December – it was good to meet District-friends once again.

We were not 'out and about' *anywhere* on Sunday 10 December when the service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd had to be cancelled due to snow.

Over the Holiday Period

The services on 24 December and 7 January were conducted by members of the congregation. Following the service on Christmas Eve we gathered in the vestry for some seasonal bites and mulled wine – our thanks to Phil Griffiths for arranging this.

Condolences

We commiserate with Hetty Corcoran on the death of her brother Eric aged 103.

Sadly, we report the death of Mrs Catherine Price, aged 96. Rev Eric Jones officiated at her funeral which was held at the chapel on 4 January, followed by cremation at Llwydcoed Crematorium. We extend our sympathy to the family and express our thanks for donations received by the chapel in lieu of flowers.

Best Wishes

Iris Morris has recently undergone a course of treatment at the Royal Glamorgan and Felindre hospitals. We look forward to having her join us at service when she has fully recovered.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Firstly a long list of thanks to our members who helped to ensure that the National President's visit to Nottage was a success. To Jean and Jonathan who supplied their own hoover for cleaning duties, to Helen for the beautiful floral arrangements, to Cheryl for making sure all special diet requirements were met, to June, Janet and Siân for tea making and washing up duties, and to all of the above for their food making expertise. Diolch o galon!

As usual, the Remembrance Service Lewis conducted, was very moving, with again men who served in the Army, Air Force and Royal Navy present. Lewis supplied a radio, and so our congregation joined with people from around the UK for the minute's silence and playing of the 'Last Post'. Cheryl, Helen and myself all read pieces carefully selected by Lewis, and Lewis's service was a fitting tribute to those who served, in whatever capacity, in conflict around the globe. Our thanks to Lewis for his continuous work on our behalf.

At the District Christmas Service in Wick, the ashes of the late Caroline Williams were transferred from Nottage, where they had been since the sale of the Bridgend Church.

Caroline was a woman prominent in the history of Bridgend, well educated, a leading light to women of her day, and in 1908 made quite a 'statement' by being cremated.

She was the niece of the MP Walter Coffin, and made it clear that she wanted her remains to be in the Bridgend Church, but because it is still not clear for what purpose the building was bought, it was thought more respectful to keep her in a Unitarian premises which is being used.

Our shared Christmas lunch in Nottage was a very happy occasion, and we took the opportunity to raise gifts for the local Foodbank again. These included scarves and hats hand-knitted by members, lots of chocolates, and as many Christmas 'treats' as we could contribute! Thanks, once again, to all.

We have been delighted to welcome 'new faces' to our congregation recently, and Jeanie, is a Porthcawl lady, who has joined us in service, as have Mo and Robert's family, and Beti & Tom Williams. Welcome all!

We have also been overwhelmed to have Rose and Debbie join us. Rose has not been well enough to join us for some months, so to have her to celebrate Christmas with us has been better than any present we could have wished for.

Lewis's service on Christmas Eve, was again 'one to remember'! Part of it involved a game of 'pass the parcel' where each time the music stopped a child unwrapped a layer of paper to reveal characters for the Nativity scene in the stable! There were 30 of us there to enjoy that....what a wonderful start to Christmas!

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i bawb,

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

We hope you all had a very pleasant Christmas and we wish everyone a Happy New Year.

This Christmas the Swansea Church has tried in different ways to reach out to all people. Our new venture of a public carol service was a great success. More than 30 people attended and a really interesting service was given by Rory Castle-Jones with readers from our congregation. The refreshments after the

service was a fitting conclusion to an inspiring event. We also celebrated Christmas Eve with a thoughtful service given by Julianne. It was nice to see old and new friends present at this special time.

Huw and Sara collected toiletries and shoeboxes to support Gellionnen Chapel. They took the contributions up to the chapel and were very impressed by the amount of shoeboxes being filled.

Our Christmas Dinner was held in the Toby Carvery. We had a great time, celebrating in style. Thanks to Lynn and Margaret for organising it.

Our congregation really enjoyed the District Carol Service. There was a friendly atmosphere with some beautiful readings. Many thanks to those who worked so hard to organise it, especially the mulled wine!

Our crib collection this year is for Matthew's House. A charity helping the homeless and needy based in High Street. Mary and Joseph had a fresh coat of paint with even their lips benefitting from some bright red nail varnish. The external framework was also given a few coats of paint and fresh hay was collected from Pontyberem. Some new equipment was purchased and the crib was erected in plenty of time for the Swansea "switching on the lights" event. Our very grateful thanks to Margaret, Lynn, Hilary, Dave, Stephen and James for all their hard work.

However, sometime between Christmas and New Year somebody used the kerb-stones from the path to smash open the collecting box. We were shocked and saddened that somebody would do this. Still, they say every cloud has a silver lining.... The theft was put on Facebook and a Just Giving page set up by Rory, and we were absolutely amazed by the response. We had so many messages of support and encouragement and the total money has far exceeded the amount we were originally hoping to achieve. We had several articles and photographs in the Evening Post and the Western Mail, a Radio Wales interview and a Sky News online article. Our crib has literally hit the headlines! On behalf of our congregation may I say a big thank you to all who supported us during that time. It was good to learn we had support from friends, from other churches, both near and far, from past members – some long since moved away, from people who remembered seeing the crib as a child and many others. We are so, so grateful.



Swansea's Crib

Photo: Hilda Dumpleton

2018 has arrived. The Swansea church is now thinking of plans for events for the new year. We hope that both our Church and District will continue to make a difference in our communities and the wider world.

Hilda Dumpleton

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

The past few months have been well filled. Our Remembrance Day Service was conducted by Rory Castle-Jones—Rory's grandfather had served as an army driver during WWII and Rory shared with us a letter written by his granddad to his grandmother when he was on active service abroad, driving for long hours in convoy through terrible bombing conditions. The letter was long, and during the time away from home a child was born to this young couple. The letter had been discovered with many others in a biscuit tin, saved for the rest of her life by Rory's grandmother. It was a privilege to share this letter, written by a young man far from home.

Several of us attended the District Service in Nottage Chapel where we heard an excellent and thoughtful service delivered by GA President, the Rev Charles VanDenBroder.

The Christmas Shoe Box Appeal instigated by Rhys Castle-Jones exceeded all expectations. On a Saturday morning a number of Gellionnen attendees went to the chapel to receive shoe boxes and gifts with which to fill them. Each box was covered with Xmas paper and filled with small gifts – toiletries, socks, gloves, coffee mugs etc. People kept arriving with gifts and remained to help out, until 200 boxes had been filled. Obviously, miracles still happen.

A Special Services appeal for Christmas gifts for young people moving into their own accommodation and on low incomes was supported as a spinoff from the shoe box appeal and we received a heart warming thank you from the staff of Route 16.

Collections from our Christmas and New Year services will be shared with Swansea Night Shelter. They will be open for the cold months and have already succeeded in housing several people who came to them from the streets.

We held a morning and midnight Christmas Service. Many thanks to Martyn Edwards who at the last minute conducted the morning service because Julie Nedin had a family commitment. Both services were well attended. Our thanks as ever to the midnight musicians including Huw Jones and his three sons. Sarah Jones said it was a rare treat to have all boys home together.

But I digress. On Sunday 10th December we intended decorating the chapel, then came the message, "Stay home, the road is icy and there is a lot of snow up here." Four bold people took it upon themselves to decorate and they did it beautifully. Thank you on behalf to those of us who stayed home.

On the morning of 7th January, the Mari Lwyd team came full of good humour and mischief. Once again, attendance was good and there were new faces. The team is based in Ystradgynlais, the horse head is genuine. We are very honoured that the team include us in their busy calendar and look forward to having them back again. The service was introduced by Melda Grantham, Secretary of the Welsh Department and the meditation led by Alun Wyn Dafis.

Harri Evans Mason has been presented with a Good Citizen Award for Youth Counselling. Well done Harri. We look now to the spring and wish all of our friends health and happiness for 2018.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

We were delighted to welcome members from the District for the Christmas Service. Our organist sent her apologies – from Kuwait where she was visiting her family, so her deputy had to fill in! We had a lovely variety of readings and the singing was particularly good – reminiscent of the District Cymanfa which David Dawson conducted in Wick many years ago. Hope to see you all again soon.

Helen returned in time for our chapel Christmas service, as usual it was a colourful, warm experience with an enormous collection of items for the Bridgend Food Bank. I really must congratulate our small congregation, everyone takes part in all our efforts and the Food Bank workers really appreciate us.

We are now looking forward to 2018 and the re-emergence of our primroses and daffodils, they spread a golden welcome to anyone who would like to join us at 3pm on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.

A Happy New Year to everyone.

Julianne Morgan

MEN'S GROUP

In November we headed North on the A470 to Defynnog near Brecon. Our destination was St Cynog's church, a very interesting church with a double barrel-vaulted ceiling and a substantial tower. In the churchyard is what is believed to be Europe's oldest tree. It is a Yew tree which has been dated to over 5,000 years old. The tree is included in the Yew Tree Trail which features some substantial and ancient trees. This ensures that St Cynog's church has many visitors from around the world, as can be seen in the visitor's book. It is well worth a visit. We moved on to a local hotel where we had a very good lunch.

Our final meeting for 2017 was in December when we met up at Alfred's in Pontypridd for our Christmas Lunch. There was an excellent menu and the meal was enjoyed in good company. We are currently making plans for our next meeting in February.

Tony Foster

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News: **Saturday, 17 March 2018.**

Items for publication should be sent to:- **kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net** or

Ken Morgan, 25c Holford Street, Cefn Coed y Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2RW. Tel: 01685 379016.