



June 2015

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 5 July – District Rally: see details below.

Saturday, 8 August – Copy deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News.

RALLY 2015

Meet at 11.30am at the Mormon Church, Merthyr Tydfil (CF48 1BS) and visit the genealogical service until 1.00pm. Then to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Cefncoed (CF48 2PR) for buffet lunch 1.00 until 2.15pm. Visit Cyfarthfa Castle Museum (CF47 8RE) until, say, 4.30pm and then home.

NB – as lunch will be provided by outside caterers each congregation should inform Phil Griffiths (01685 370812) of numbers attending as soon as possible.

DISTRICT AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the South East Wales Unitarian Society was held at Highland Place Church, Aberdare on Sunday 10th May at 10.30am.

Prior to the commencement of the AGM, outgoing SEWUS President Julie Nedin led a short service of worship, with Jacob Jones providing the accompaniment at the organ.

The AGM was then held and Julie guided us through a review of the past year, following which the Annual Report was accepted – coupled with thanks expressed to the officers and to the members of the Executive Committee. Officers for the year 2015–6 were appointed, and Tony Foster (Highland Place) was presented with the chain of office and installed as SEWUS President for the term 2015–17.

Also displaying a presidential chain of office was Tony's wife, Joy who was installed as National President of the Women's League at the denomination's Annual Meetings held at Birmingham at the end of March. The couple were congratulated on their separate achievements.

(Not to be outshone by the limelight surrounding her parents, daughter Joanna is getting married next month, so 2015 is something of a landmark year for the Foster clan—we wish them success, health and happiness.)

Our thanks go to the Highland Place congregation for hosting this successful event and arranging the provision of Lunch.



Julie Nedin congratulates Tony on his presidency.



'Madam President' and 'Mr President'

Photos: Martyn Edwards

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Well, the 10th May certainly came up a lot quicker than I expected. I must say I was very honoured to take over as President of the District, and somewhat humbled when I looked at the list of past Presidents on the back of the AGM booklet. I am very grateful for the good wishes and offers of help from so many people.

Quite a lot of 'Thank Yous' were said at the AGM, but I was very remiss in not thanking all those in the district who work so hard, not only preparing services, but travelling sometimes long distances to chapels as well. I know all our congregations would want me to thank you.

For those of you who do not know me, just a few lines about me.

I was born and brought up in the small village of Penderyn, known for the well loved folk song *Rwy'n caru'r ferch o blwyf Penderyn*, but in recent years known for the well loved Penderyn whisky. I attended Penderyn County Primary School which was then under the headship of the late Dr Elwyn Bowen.

In 1963 at eleven years of age I went to Vaynor & Penderyn Comprehensive in Cefn Coed, where I first heard the dulcet tones of Mr Ken Morgan. I must have enjoyed myself at Vaynor & Penderyn, I returned to work there for over 30 years. Interestingly, I am the fourth District President who was educated at Vaynor & Penderyn, following in the footsteps of Ken Morgan, Morgan Chambers and Philip Griffiths.

I am married to Joy, who is currently National President of Women's League, and have a daughter Joanna who will be married this summer, which is the reason why Joy and I will not be able to attend this year's District Rally.

When I am asked what brought me to Unitarianism, I always say Joy. She told me to stop wasting my Sunday evenings and go with her to Highland Place. I was reluctant at first, as it is not easy to enter a church after many years not attending a religious service (something we should always be mindful of when strangers attend our services), but as soon as I went to Highland Place I knew it was right for me.

As I said at the AGM, there are interesting times ahead for the District, with all our congregations seeking ministry. During my two years as President, I shall endeavour to attend services at all our chapels in the district as often as possible. I look forward to seeing you all in the near future.

Tony Foster

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 15 & 16 MAY 2015

1. Co-option of Two Executive Committee Members

Following the open application process, we are pleased to announce that Philip Colfox and Rev Lynne Readett have been co-opted onto the Executive Committee with immediate effect. They will serve until the close of the Annual Meetings in April 2017. Philip has led the resurgence of Bridport congregation and has served on the Western Union Council. Lynne recently retired from full-time ministry with the Merseyside District.

2. Millennium Fund Grants

Three grants were awarded by the Executive Committee:

- a) Brighton Unitarian Church was awarded £780 towards the cost of architectural survey fees in connection with repairs to the Portico of the church.
- b) Simple Gifts Unitarian Centre for Social Action was awarded £5,540 to take forward "The Road Ahead" initiative with local Unitarian congregations to promote social action.
- c) York Unitarians were awarded £2,000 towards the cost of upgrading the chapel's audio equipment.

3. Red Cross Appeal for Nepal

The Executive Committee was pleased to learn that over £6,000 had already been raised for the Red Cross Appeal for Nepal via the Unitarian Clara Barton Fund.

4. Safeguarding Audit – Follow-up

The Chief Officer was disappointed to report that only 63 congregations had so far returned the completed safeguarding audit form to Essex Hall. 80% of those congregations which responded had an agreed safeguarding policy. The Executive Committee wishes to remind all congregations forcefully of the key requirement of the Charity Commission that a failure of a charity – and all our congregations are charities in law - to adopt and implement rigorous safeguarding arrangements is now considered to be a serious regulatory issue. This includes not having current and robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including appropriate DBS vetting procedures and trustees taking no, or inadequate, steps to address safeguarding weaknesses. Audit forms can still be returned to Essex Hall and advice is also available on what action congregations must take on safeguarding.

5. Vision Document Follow-Up

The Vision Document which was launched at the Annual Meetings and subsequently circulated to all congregations and Ministers, has been well-received and provoked lots of discussion and debate throughout the denomination. Comments are still welcome from individuals or congregations and should be sent through the website at: www.unitarian.org.uk/news/vision-our-future

The Executive Committee has already started work on the task of translating the Vision into practical steps that will enable us to take the key issues forward and to grow our movement as effectively as possible.

6. Nightingale Centre – Living Wage

The Nightingale Centre was commended for agreeing to register as a “Living Wage” employer; an excellent example of the ethical standards we seek to promote.

7. Copyright

Following the review of a recent incident involving one of our congregations, the legal implications of not complying with copyright law were highlighted. This is a complex issue and advice on relevant licences for various activities is available from [Christian Copyright Licensing International](http://www.ccli.org.uk) (CCLI).

8. Convenor

Robert Ince was re-appointed Executive Committee Convenor for a further year.

9. EC District Links

Link person	District
Robert Ince	Sheffield and Yorkshire
Joan Cook	Scotland and Northern
James Barry	London and Eastern
Phillip Colfox	Western and Southern
Lynne Readett	Manchester and Merseyside
Gwynn Pritchard	South and South East Wales
Marion Baker	East Cheshire and East Midlands
Jacky Woodman	North and East Lancashire and Midlands

10. Financial Review Group

The Terms of Reference for a Financial Review Group, consisting of Robert Ince (Convenor), Peter Hanley (Hon Treasurer) and Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), were agreed as follows:

- to understand the current pattern of activities and the financial implications for income and expenditure underpinning the work of the General Assembly.
- in particular, to explore the implications of the ending of financial support for the General Assembly from the Bowland Trust in September 2025.
- to consider the changing landscape for charities, particularly religious organisations, which may impact upon the finances of the General Assembly.
- to prepare proposals for the financial sustainability of the General Assembly.

Executive Committee, 24 May 2015

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Every blade of grass, each leaf, each separate flower and petal, is an inscription speaking of hope.

Richard Jeffries (1848 - 1887)

MINISTRY

Representatives of Aberdare, Cefncoed, Swansea and Trebanos attended a meeting at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Cefncoed on Tuesday, 19 May. Among matters discussed was the preparation of an up-to-date profile for each church.

AFTERNOON TEA IN CEREDIGION

On Wednesday 3rd June, Women’s League National President Joy Foster was invited, along with six members of Aberdare Women’s League, to the home of Anne Jones (WL Sec of Pantydefaid Chapel) Llanwnnen, Ceredigion for afternoon tea.

The party set out from Aberdare at 10.30am with Rev Eric Jones and Tony Foster as drivers. A pleasant couple of hours were spent in Lampeter, before moving on to visit Anne and Alan Jones.

A truly magnificent afternoon tea was prepared for the visitors, bread and butter with home-made preserves, home-made cakes of every description, in abundance and copious cups of tea and coffee. It was absolutely delicious.

After our tea we were shown examples of Anne's Sugar Craft which included delicate flowers, a hedgerow scene, a garden scene, a chalice, among many others. They were a delight to see!

Everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable day. Our sincere thanks go to Anne and Alan Jones for the wonderful welcome we received at their beautiful home.

In attendance with Joy were Anne Jones (our Anne, Aberdare), Anne Watts, Dilys Evans, Christine Roberts, Margaret Slocombe and Lis Dyson-Jones. Due to distance and illness, other WL members were unable to attend but all were invited and apologies were conveyed on their behalf.

A plant and card by way of a 'thank you' were presented to our hosts and we were thanked for coming.

Tony Foster

ABERDARE

Our thanks to everyone who travels in order to conduct services at Highland Place Sunday by Sunday. Your services are much appreciated.

We miss a number of people from our services. Iris Davies, a loyal church member died in April at the age of 95 years. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev Eric Jones. We have just received the news of the death of another faithful member, Edna Jones who died on June 9th at the age of 94 years. The funeral will be on June 18th. Our sympathy to Janis and Mark in their loss. Hazel Jones is also unwell and is now at home and being looked after by her daughter, Merrilee and son Christopher.

A Flower Communion Service was arranged for May 30th with a good congregation and as we go to Press, we are preparing for the visit of Rhodri Morgan, former First Minister of the Welsh Assembly. He will deliver this year's Annual Lecture. Later in July, we hope to welcome the Rev Carie Johnsen from Maine on a return visit to Wales. She will be conducting services in all the chapels in the South East Wales District.

The Women's League meet on a weekly basis with speaker, demonstrations, quizzes and outings and the Coffee Morning attracts people in on Monday Mornings. League members arranged a Bric a Brac Sale in April.

On April 26th, we witnessed the Naming Ceremony of Kacey Williams from Aberaman and on the 7th of June fourteen members joined the service at Cardiff and enjoyed the company of friends from Cardiff and Cefncoed.

The congregation responded to the Nepal Earthquake Appeal and sent £110 from a retiring collection arranged during May.

We are arranging a Service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Trecynon on July 19th – the first Unitarian Service there for many years. The chapel will also be open on September 26th as part of the Heritage Weekend.

We will be inviting friends from Cefncoed and Cardiff congregations for the Harvest Service on Sunday, September 27th when the Rev Daniel Costley from Sevenoaks in Kent will be conducting the service, with a Concert from the Aberdare based "Colstars" on the following Thursday. We look forward to a number of events during August and in the autumn.

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNODIAID CAERDYDD

We find ourselves at the mid-point of the year reviewing the past months and looking forward to what the second half of 2015 will bring. We have had some inspiring worship and we thank all those who have visited us and given their time to share thoughts, song and moments of quiet contemplation with us at our weekly services. We look forward to sharing our space with friends from Highland Place, Aberdare and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed on Sunday 7th June for a joint service which will be conducted by members of the Cardiff Worship Group.

Several members were able to attend the District AGM held at Highland Place in early May and we all send warm wishes to Tony Foster as he begins his two year term as District President.

It was a happy, sunny day on May 26th when our small group of Women's League members were joined by three Highland Place League members on a visit to the Cowbridge Physic Gardens. After a pleasant

pub lunch we spent time looking at and appreciating the variety of plants in the garden at the rear of the Old Hall, which is tended by a dedicated team of volunteers. The range of plants and design of the planting echoes the formality of an original 18th Century garden which had, since the 1920s been neglected. In 2005, landscaping for the present gardens began under the supervision of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust and in 2008 it was formally opened by the Duchesse of Cornwall. If you haven't discovered this treasure you might like to visit the website – www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk/

Still on matters 'Women's League', most of our members look forward to joining the rest of the District League members for the summer gathering and lunch at the Cefncoed Rugby Club on Wednesday 10th June, after which we will listen to the speaker, Dean Powell.

Cardiff Unitarians offer a warm welcome to anyone wishing to join them at Penrhiw Chapel, St Fagans on Sunday 14th June at 3pm for *Gwasanaeth Cymraeg* when the service will be conducted by Euryng Ogwen. It is guaranteed, that all will be inspired. We also look forward to welcoming the Rev Carie Johnsen, from Maine USA, who will conduct worship on Sunday 28th June.

Our thoughts and love go to Peter and Sarah Boyce and their family following the recent sudden death of Peter's father. We hope they find comfort in a gentle space.

Something to think about

'Each new morning two choices are open to every one of us: the choice to live in the joyfulness of love, or in the darkness of fear'. (Penny Quest)

'Let us create safer spaces- softer spaces- kinder spaces; moments of refuge and sanctuary'. (Jane Blackall)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOE

Women's League

Our two meetings in April weren't well attended as so many were unable to attend.

We are pleased that the downstairs of our vestry has been altered – we have much more room now.

May has been a very sad month for us all. Shirley Douglas passed away on May 12th, she had been poorly for quite some time. We are going to miss her very much. Shirley was such a loyal member of our League and chapel. She was "lovely."

At our meeting on 3rd June we at last decided to go on a trip to Barry and Cold Knap in a few weeks time.

We are delighted at having Anne Watts coming to speak to us at the end of July – she is so interesting, we can't wait.

It's nice to see Gwen Everitt back in League, and we're hoping to see Barbara Hopkins back soon.

Vera Tomsett

Sadness

It is with deep sorrow that we report the death of Shirley Douglas. Shirley, who had been in failing health for some time, passed away at Prince Charles Hospital on 12th May. Friends and family filled Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for her funeral on Wednesday, 20th May. The service was conducted by the Rev Eric Jones, and was followed by interment at Cefn Cemetery. The attendance of Unitarian friends from Highland Place Church and elsewhere was much appreciated. Shirley was a faithful member and a dear friend of all – we shall miss her very much.

We extend our sympathy to daughters Judith and Jocelyn, and their families, in their sad loss.

Building work

Work on the first phase of the rebuilding of the graveyard wall has now been completed and we are very pleased with the result.

District AGM

Several members attended the District AGM at Highland Place Church on 10th May. We send our best wishes to Tony Foster for his 2-year term as SEWUS President..

Marlene Chambers

We are pleased to hear that Marlene (wife of Morgan) is now home from hospital and making good progress after surgery for a heart problem.

Nepal Earthquake Appeal

A cheque for £250 has been sent to the British Red Cross in aid of the appeal.

Unitarian?—What's That?

On Sunday, 31st May, Peter Powell, of Brecon, celebrated four years of attending service with us on a regular, fortnightly basis. Addressing the congregation, Peter explained that he enjoys his visits and so is prepared to make the 40-mile round trip necessary to attend a service. He appreciates the freedom of thought that Unitarianism offers and feels that Hen Dŷ Cwrdd is now his spiritual home.

The remainder of the service was taken up by a Question & Answer section based on the book "Unitarian?—What's That?" by Rev Cliff Reed. This stimulated much interest and, as many questions still remain to be addressed, it is an exercise we shall return to in future services.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

We are living in hope that by September, the Reverend Lewis Rees will be our part-time minister. Finding out the procedure, salary and conditions have been a very steep learning curve for Alan Steele, who is leading this project, and we will be eternally grateful for his efforts when they come to fruition.

Lewis, Cheryl & Leila, came to 'visit' in the middle of April. Lewis conducted a lovely service, and Elizabeth Rosenberg provided the music on her flute. After the service we had a "Faith and Hope" lunch during which Lewis was able to meet the 26 people who attended. Alastair Rosenberg has a passion for Jean Thomas's chocolate cake, so went home with a big smile on his face! Thanks to all for their contributions and attendance.

Later on in the month we were saddened to hear that Rose Owen's sister, Sal Bebb, had died. All of Rose's family are, or were, Unitarians, and because their "home church" in the Rhondda has closed, five of Sal's daughters and granddaughters came to join us in Nottage for a service. Julianne Morgan conducted the service, and it was a fitting tribute to a lifelong Unitarian, much loved by all her family. When Rose lived in Swansea she attended our Swansea church, and when she moved to Porthcawl she and her sister, Lettie, came to us. Lettie had a son Tudor, and daughter Carol, who were faithful members of our Sunday School.

*Best wishes to all
Avril Protheroe*

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

April's issue of the Welsh language newspaper, Llais, showed on its front page a photograph of Gellionnen Chapel. The photograph was on a programme of music and readings to take place at the end of the month and in memory and celebration of the life of Dafydd Rowlands, bard and archdruid.

Then on our free Community Mag for April is another photo of Gellionnen, this time it is an advertisement inviting people to celebrate their same sex marriage here with us – or to celebrate any other very special occasion. The same magazine reports each month on a local walk and this comes under the heading "Going For a Stroll". In April the walkers were brought by their leader Carl up to Gellionnen where they stopped for a Sunday morning cuppa. It was good to have them and the availability of a hot drink and use of a loo can be most welcome on a cold blowy day! Also, there was a very kind report of the walk in the Community Mag.

"We followed the path to Gellionnen Chapel. [...] Dating back to 1692 it sits by itself in the middle of nowhere high above Pontardawe and the Swansea valley. It has a very special warm and intimate feel to it. We could have easily spent longer there and the chapel's hospitality certainly made a wonderful walk very special.

Once we were outside again I think the thermostat had been turned down a notch or two. This part of the walk was pretty exposed and a cold wind was cutting through us. After a couple of hundred yards or so we headed back down to the valley floor ... "

The Community Mag, May 2015

Once again, Phil Griffiths came to challenge us and Steven Wilson to do the same and also put us through our musical paces. We're hoping to see more of Hilda Dumpleton now that she's retired.

When 17-year-old Aneurin Jones is around we can expect some lovely violin music but recently he came with a *spoken* message. Aneurin had reacted to information put out by the Holocaust Education Trust and was invited as part of a small group of students to attend a meeting in Cardiff. From that introductory meeting he was subsequently to fly to Krakow from Cardiff at 7 o'clock on a cold January morning with the intention of visiting Auschwitz. And so they arrived warmly clad with boots, fleeces, scarves and thick socks, and Aneurin's first reaction was, "How could those poor prisoners of the 1940s cope in their thin clothes and on their meagre rations."

The whole experience lasted only a day, to be followed by a further seminar.

The intention of the Holocaust Education Trust is to promote:—

Awareness
Peace and Reconciliation
Learning and Understanding.

These young people now have a duty to pass their experience on and we have a duty to listen and act. Thank you Aneurin.

The Junior School Choirs Competition held at Tabernacl, Pontardawe and organised by the Lions Club was a first, and very successful too. Congratulations go to Jac Evans Mason who sang solo and to both Jac and Gwennan Evans who competed in their own school choirs.

Coming events at Gellionnen

We look forward to our Folk Service on 16th August with the Rev Alun Wyn Dafis back on his home patch.

On 23rd August we shall share a service with the Swansea congregation. This will be followed by a picnic lunch, hopefully outside in the graveyard! We have bought two new kettles and hope to be brewing many cups of tea to be drunk outside in the – sunshine.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

The bluebells are now in abundance in our graveyard so we are surrounded by a blue carpet instead of our springtime yellow one. The village fête will be held in June and the committee will use our vestry for the day. It is good to be part of the village community, we are ideally placed on the village green.

Our service on May 24th was a welcome back to Helen Lewis our intrepid organist. She had been with her choir to Patagonia to take part in concerts celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding. We heard wonderful stories of her travels and of the people she met. Welsh was spoken everywhere. She also has a treasure trove of photographs. I hope she will write an article for the District News. If anyone saw Huw Edwards's programme on Patagonia – followed the same path as Helen's choir.

We are looking forward to the visit of our American minister Rev Carie Johnsen and we hope the sun will shine for her.

Our Flower Service this year will be on June 27th. If anyone is in (or near) the Vale of Glamorgan on that Sunday do join us—a warm welcome awaits you.

Greetings to all our friends in the District, Julianne.

Julianne Morgan



Aneurin Jones (at Gellionnen)

Photo: Hugh Jones

THE EDMOND KELL UNITARIAN CHURCH, SOUTHAMPTON

I return to Southampton a couple of times each year and on the last two occasions had the opportunity not only of attending Sunday Service but also of joining with the Monday Luncheon Group. A meal is provided for local homeless people each Monday. The large, airy hall is opened, tables and chairs set out and bowls of soup provided together with ham and cheese sandwiches. The minister, Rev John Carter is American by birth, but I think well settled over here these days. Blankets and clothing have been provided on a few occasions and the regular attendance of twenty or more is encouraging. One of the men has been sleeping out on the common for a long time, one wears a wedding ring, one tells me that he and his wife have five children ranging in age from 5 to 20. One man has a very quick temper. The hall doors are meant to be opened at midday, but people are now being let in at 11.30am.

Marian Littlepage

MEN'S GROUP

On 19th May we visited St Gwynno's Church, Llanwonno – high on the mountainside between Mountain Ash and the Rhondda valleys – final resting place of legendary Welsh runner Griffith Morgan, better known as Guto Nyth Bran. We spent a while in the church and its graveyard but, as it was a chilly day, we were glad the Brynffynnon Hotel was (quite literally) across the road, providing us with a warm welcome, good food and a refreshing drink.

We plan coming down to sea level for our next jaunt and finding out “*what's occurring*” at Barry Island. We might even dare to roll up our trouser-legs, take off our shoes and socks and have a paddle.

Ken Morgan

SPONSORED WALK

The South Wales District Annual Sponsored Walk from Caeronnen chapel, Cellan to Llandewi Brefi for lunch, then on to Soar y Mynydd chapel where the Rev. Cen Llwyd will take the service. The Sunday School children will also take part.

Sunday 12th July, meet at 10.00 am at Caeronnen chapel. Sponsorship money raised will be donated to the Kidney Dialysis Unit at Glangwili Hospital, Carmarthen.

Melda Grantham

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News is **Saturday 8 August**.

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