



South East Wales Unitarian News

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November 2011

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 4th December – District Christmas Service & Gathering at Nottage Chapel. Service at 11am followed by a 'shared lunch'.

Sunday 11th March 2012 – District Hymn Singing (sponsored) to be held at Capel Y Graig, Trebannos at 3pm. (See notice below.)

BEST WISHES

We understand that the Rev Eirion Phillips is now a patient at Cefn Coed Hospital in Swansea. We hope that the treatment will prove effective and all members of the District send their love and best wishes to both Norma and Eirion at this time.

VISIT OF GA NATIONAL PRESIDENT TO SOUTH EAST WALES



Capel Penrhiw, St Fagans

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones



Rev Dr Ann Peart

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

Saturday, 15th October was a glorious autumn day – perfect for the visit to South East Wales District by the GA National President, Rev Dr Ann Peart.

We gathered at the National Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans for an afternoon service in Capel Penrhiw – the Unitarian chapel moved from its original location at Drefach, Felindre. The service was conducted by District President, Philip Griffiths who welcomed everyone and introduced Dr Peart, Mr Andrew Dixey, Estates Manager at the museum, and Dr Carwyn Tywyn, Secretary of the Unitarian Welsh Department. District Vice-President, Julie Nedin opened the service by lighting the chalice flame.

Following the opening hymn, Andrew Dixey spoke briefly about the way in which the buildings at the museum 'spoke' to the many visitors – were emotive – and it was particularly pleasing that Capel Penrhiw was again, that day, fulfilling its original function as a *living* place of worship.

Carwyn Tywyn is an accomplished harpist, as was shown by his success in the triple harp competition at the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham in August, so it was a real pleasure to be treated to a musical interlude performed by him on the (more portable) knee-harp.

In her address Dr Peart spoke of her affinity with Wales, reminding us that, until quite recently, she had spent time in both the South Wales and South East Wales districts as the link-person between the congregations and the national executive committee. She pointed out that Welsh Unitarians have held a special place in her heart from an earlier time than this – as a young person she had spent happy times at the youth camps at Llanmadoc and at Cwmwrdu, Gwernogle in the 1960s. Interspersed among these memories were the recollections of being treated to moving singing festivals and delicious Welsh teas.

In his remarks at the close of the service Philip Griffiths expressed his thanks to the guests for their contributions, to the organist, Stephen Wilson and to all who had helped in organising the gathering.

Finally, we transferred to the restaurant building to enjoy some very welcome refreshments.

A most successful and enjoyable event.

350TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISSENTING MOVEMENT

A sponsored District Hymn Singing Event will be held at Capel y Graig, Trebannos on Sunday, 11th March, 2012 commencing at 3pm. The money raised will be given to the Ministerial Students' Fund to commemorate the 350th Anniversary of the Dissenting Movement (1662–2012). It is hoped that (through this and other events) we will be able to send at least £1662 to the Ministerial Students' Fund as our gesture of thanks and support. Please come, and encourage as many others as possible to attend.

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

The interview in this issue is with Isabelle Rosenberg.

Isabelle, who recently celebrated her nineteenth birthday, has attended Nottage Chapel since birth. For her secondary education she attended Archbishop McGrath Catholic School in Bridgend. Having successfully completed 'A' Levels in Music, Religious Studies and History she is currently (since October) a student at the Birmingham Conservatoire where she is studying the Bassoon. In the short time that Isabelle has been in Birmingham her musical ability has already been noted and, because of her previous experience, she has been invited to play with students from years two and three in the Repertoire Orchestra at the Conservatoire. Many of us will miss Isabelle, who formally acted as the organist at Nottage. We wish her well with her studies and look forward to hearing of her experiences and achievements via these columns.

Ella Lewis-Jones

What do you owe to your parents?

My dad has given me the most wicked sense of humour though I have yet to master the art of comeback. To my mum I owe the skill of listening and not being judgemental.

Is it better to give or receive?

I absolutely love giving people presents, the frustration of what to buy, wrapping it up in the prettiest paper I can find, adorning it with ribbons and glitter, and the excitement of keeping it a secret, I love it!

What has been your biggest musical challenge?

Preparing for my auditions to a number of music colleges. I was practising at least 4 hours a day for two and half months beforehand!

Sum yourself up in 5 words

Funny, loyal, humble, forgiving and disorganised!

What trait do you most deplore?

Having to wait for people, however I am incredibly forgiving, as I am one of the worst timekeepers!

If you won a million pounds, what would you do with the money?

Buy myself a really old, but in perfect condition Bassoon, take my family on a horrendously expensive but fabulous holiday, and buy myself a house near the beach.

What is your favourite way of spending a night out?

As a typical teenager, I have had my fair share of nights out, however I much prefer having my friends over and having a party at my house, especially as I don't have to worry about getting home!

What is the last book you read?

The Metabolic Effect Diet, it helps you to work out how your body burns fat so you can eat food, which your body burns faster than other types of food. I'll let you know if it works!

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

The fact that I got accepted into all the music colleges that I applied for.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

You can't cram for everything, especially not music, consistent work is the key.

FUN DAYS AWAY 2011

In August, I attended Fun Days Away at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow. This was my third and final Fun Days Away. This year's theme of the week was 'What Do You Stand For.' We explored what we believe in and what is important to us in our unique lives. This year there were 20 participants in total from all over the Country. I'm thrilled to say that five of us were from the South Wales District, me Caroline Boyce from Cardiff Unitarians, Ciera Branagh, Bethan Branagh, Rebekah Thomas from Swansea Unitarians and Elizabeth Rosenberg from Nottage Chapel. Our brilliant leaders for the week were John Harley, Emma Lowe, Claire Maddocks and Sarah Atkinson.

Fun Days Away is spread over five days in August every year. The week includes games, creative sessions and workshops, outdoor pursuits, vision share, a talent show, credo groups and circle time. Fun Days Away must be praised for its trusting and encouraging atmosphere and its ability to include everybody. One of the participants of FDA once described the special atmosphere as a 'Bubble of Trust'.

Sessions

I found John Harley's sessions very interesting. He asked us to bring hats and glasses and an object that was important to us. We were asked to pick any of the items and match a suitable walk for them. It was very amusing watching how other people interpreted the props. We also choose a partner and had sixty seconds to explain to them what we believe in. It was an interesting experience to hear what my partner Annabel believed in and how she and I had different views but still supported and agreed with each other. The main message of this activity was that we're all different individuals and are welcome to have our own spiritual beliefs but still get along.

Credo Groups and Circle Time

All participants are separated into something called 'Credo Groups' which are held at the end of every evening for about half an hour. These groups are made up of members of close ages and each have a leader. In our groups we reflect on the day and have discussions that are relevant to us. The main aim of the groups is to get the chance to voice our opinions and feelings openly and to be listened to actively.

Each group had a chance to create a Circle Time (which is a short creative ritual that happens at the end of each night.) Circle Times included appreciating music and dancing in our own way to the music being played and writing anonymous affirmations. My favourite Circle Time was the final night when there was a short mediation reflecting on the whole week and a real chance to relax. Following this we had a very atmospheric bonfire, watching the flames and realising this was my final FDA was very emotional for me and I had a few tears along with others.

Outdoor Pursuits

I really enjoyed the walk to Peter's Stone. We walked in the stunning Derbyshire countryside while the sun shone on us welcomingly. It was very steep and difficult walking up the stone, but I felt a real accomplishment when I reached the top with everyone else and sat admiring the stunning scenery while the refreshing wind blew on us all. On the way back a herd of cows started gathering up together and running around one of the fields trying to stop us reaching the other side. We carefully walked at the side of the field avoiding them, but Ross came to the rescue clapping his hands madly at the cows as they ran off. As we all got over the stile, John announced unexpectedly to us "I forgot to mention those cows were actually bullocks."



The Walk up to Peter's Stone

Another great memory was the sponsored cycle ride around Carsington Water. We had to put ourselves in groups of four or five. My group had a great time cycling around the lake, but we did find some of the hills quite tough.

Vision Share

Every year participants are given the chance to deliver a workshop on their chosen interest. I was fortunate enough to have a chance to do a drama workshop. It was a rewarding experience seeing the group casting their talent and people coming out their shells for the activities. I found the group very supportive and it was a brilliant opportunity to have the experience to lead a workshop for the future. Rebekah Thomas also did an air cadets marching drill work shop which was fun to perform in lines.

Executive Committee Visit

On the Thursday we received a visit from the members of the Executive Committee, Martin Whitell, John Clifford and Robert Ince. It was a chance for the Youth members to ask many questions and have a chance to tell them what we enjoyed about the youth programme. Many interesting topics were raised such as why the youth were not in the top three priorities and why we weren't given a louder voice. We covered a lot of ground and learnt a lot from each other and took away valuable insight from the visit.

Show Time

This year's show time showcased brilliant and entertaining talent such as a composed song by George and Ross on their guitars. My personal favourite every year is John's spooky ghost story that gives everyone the chills year after year. We also had a lot of great singing acts including a duet from the musical 'Rent'.

The Trough And Bridging Ceremony

We have a leaving ceremony every year called 'The Trough' which is held at the trough in the village. We welcome the new members by a ritual which consists of putting a cupful of the trough water on their head. As this was the last FDA for four of us we had to leave in style. The leaders filled up three huge buckets of ice cold trough water and drenched us. We also had the Bridging ceremony where the new members walked across the small bridge and were warmly welcomed. The leaving members were given a speech and had to walk across the long bridge and were greeted by Emma to BUYAN



The four FDAers bridging out preparing a real send off



New Members bridge in

I cannot praise enough how much I've loved FDA and the youth programme. It has been the highlight of my holiday every year for the past three years. I'm sad I won't be returning next August but the memories of the weeks will be with me forever and I will stay in touch with the wonderful and inspiring people I've met over all the events. I'm looking forward to attending my final Seniors weekend this November and then moving on to Flagg Bridging Weekend and BUYAN.

I know it's a cliché but I do believe the youth are the future of the Unitarian movement.

Caroline Boyce

O DDESG YR YSGRIFENNYDD / FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Well, once again it's been a busy few weeks, juggling my responsibilities as Welsh Department Secretary, as a professional harpist and, most importantly, as a dad!

My daughter Heledd (age 3) has just started school, so I have had my first experience of trying to combine my two jobs with Heledd's half-term holidays – no mean task.

Some interesting things have happened since I last wrote for the SEWUS newsletter. Just this week, we have been accepted as members of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

I regard the WCVA as the main forum where Unitarians can speak out on the most pressing social issues in Wales. The WCVA represents thousands of voluntary organisations in Wales, and has real clout with Welsh Government ministers. If you want to change the world, then the WCVA is one positive way of going about it. Please let me know if there are any specific issues which you think I

could raise within the structure of the WCVA, or if you want more information on our membership of that organisation.

Earlier in the Autumn, I had an informal meeting with Rev Aled Edwards of Cytûn (Churches together in Wales), to discuss the relationship between the Unitarians and the Christian denominations in Wales. From the start, it was clear both to me and Rev Edwards that the Christian doctrine of Cytûn would make it extremely difficult for the Unitarians to make any kind of approach to join Cytûn. However, Cytûn does provide the secretariat for the Interfaith Council of Wales, and we mutually agreed that the Unitarians could have a real contribution to make on the Council (which again, carries influence with the Welsh Government on faith issues). I await further details from Rev Edwards on how to proceed with this matter.

I was of course delighted to play the harp in the SEWUS service for the Presidential visit of Rev Dr Ann Peart at St Fagans. I then had the pleasure of driving Rev Peart from St Fagans to Ceredigion. I was impressed with her detailed knowledge of Unitarianism in Wales, and other social issues in Wales. I learned a great deal from being in her company for the weekend.

I have plenty to do in the remainder of the year. My main task will be compiling the Welsh Unitarian Handbook, and will be talking to church officers about this at the SEWUS Open Day on November 12th. I will also be taking part in the Carol service at Nottage on December 4th.

Now that I have resolved matters relating to Cytûn and the WCVA, my next priority in terms of external relationships will be a meeting with a representative of the Quakers in Wales.

Outside of my work as Secretary, I am also due to lead services at Swansea, Aberdare and Gellionnen in the New Year, and will need to prepare for those services. I will look forward to meeting you as congregations.

*Gyda ddiolch am eich cefnogaeth – with many thanks for your support
Carwyn*

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 18th & 19th September 2011)

1. Budget 2011/12

The General Assembly's Budget for the year 1st October 2011 until 30th September 2012 was approved but will be subject to discussions with the Strategic Groups and reviewed in February 2012.

2. Strategic Groups

The three Strategic Groups - Local Leadership, Ministry and Visibility - have been asked to develop proposals for programmes to take forward the strategic priorities with detailed budgets for presentation to the EC meeting in February 2012.

3. Congregational Quota

The Quota has been set at £29 as stipulated in the three-year plan announced last year (this is an increase of £2 compared to £3 the previous year).

4. Congregational Development Programme

EC supported in principle a proposal for a Congregational Development Programme to make substantial funds available to support new Unitarian congregations. Further work was commissioned on how this might be taken forward.

5. New EC Member

Cathie Masztalerz, the newly co-opted EC member, was able to attend part of the meeting.

6. Nightingale Centre

Marion Baker and Stella Burnley gave a presentation on the recent developments at the Nightingale Centre and they and the Management Committee were commended for their achievements. The General Assembly's EC are the Trustees for the Nightingale Centre.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Of all the old Festivals, Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. The services of the church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring. I do not know a grander effect of music on the moral feelings than to hear the full choir and pealing organ performing a Christmas anthem.

Washington Irving.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The National Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, was the venue for the visit of the President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, the Rev Dr Ann Peart. The service of welcome at Capel Penrhiw was enjoyed by everyone who attended.

I felt privileged to stand in the old pulpit and conduct the service, a circumstance far beyond my dreams and aspirations when I was a frequent visitor to St Fagans in my student days. My thanks go to all those who attended and to those who so readily took a part in the service so that every congregation was represented in some way.

The Rev John and Barbara Clifford always try and support our District events, to the extent of arranging their visits back to Wales from Scotland to coincide with them, and it was pleasing to have them present. Barbara was visiting South Wales as National President of the Women's League.

The address by Dr Peart was truly inspirational, adding to the insight given us by Mr Andrew Dixey, the Estates manager at St Fagans, into the museum's role in preserving and recording Welsh Life, of which the buildings are just the visual remnants

Capel Penrhiw stands as a subliminal advertising beacon for Unitarianism, and perhaps we are complacent and need to make more use of it. More services and even a simple pamphlet-stand with copies of *A Faith Worth Thinking About* – for we really *are* a faith worth thinking about.

I trust the District Executive Committee's 'Away Day', to be held at Glyn Neath on 12th November, will be well supported by representatives of all member congregations. The agenda is on Constitutions, and Congregational Assessment, and Publicity. Without the latter, and an influx of new Unitarians, the former will quickly become academic. It will give Executive members an opportunity to greet, meet and question the GA Chief Officer Mr Derek McAuley on GA policy.

By the time you get to read these words services of Remembrance will have been held in our communities. These services have been a part of my life ever since, as a young cub and later as a Queen's Scout, I marched in the parade to Cefncoed's war memorial. This year that parade, and the Community Remembrance Service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, will have an even greater meaning for me. Margaret and I have only recently returned from holidaying in France where, at the request of a friend, we visited the grave of his uncle who was killed on the Somme in 1918 and is buried in Melville Military Cemetery. We also visited Mametz Wood where a rampant red dragon stands on a stone memorial marking the 100m wide strip of ploughland for which 1200 Welsh soldiers died or were injured in one day – July 14th 1916. As the inscription reads...

PARCHWN EU HYMDRECHION, PARHAED EIN HATGOFION
(*We respect their efforts, our memories will continue*)



The 100 metre width of land at Mametz Wood for which 1200 Welsh soldiers died or were injured in one day of fighting.

Phil Griffiths

ABERDARE

One of the positive outcomes from the 150th Anniversary is that we have discovered that there are members in the congregation who have talents and abilities which had not been formerly recognised. Earlier this year various support groups were formed to make better use of this resource. One of the support groups is focussed on Worship. This group takes responsibility and arranges the rota of “greeters” and the “fellowship hosts” as well as the church flowers. It is this group which also selects the themes for the congregational services and coordinates the service. Over the past few months there have been a number of thought-provoking themes including: “The riches of the Earth”, “No man is an Island” and, yet to come, “All things bright and beautiful”. The members who took part in these services have been free to make their own interpretation of the theme and the services which have been given have been innovative, drawing material from a wide variety of religious and secular sources.

There will be a Christmas Eve Service at 6pm on Saturday 24th December. No service will be held on New Years Eve.

Last year, in the depth of winter, for the convenience of the congregation, we changed the times of the afternoon services. Please note that in January and February 2012 afternoon services will change to 4pm. The 11am Service on the second Sunday in the month will remain the same.

Earlier in the year it was decided that we needed to upgrade our central heating system. Some extra radiators have been added and there is now a separate system for the schoolroom which is used more often than the church. It is a big improvement.

Our best wishes go to Gwladys Rees who has recently been in hospital. We hope that she is soon back amongst us again.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Women's League

The Autumn season is well underway and we have had two excellent talks—on Romance in Music, given by Nick Treharne, and on Flower Arranging, given by Doreen Dunley.

The South East Wales Women's League District meeting was held on Thursday 13th October at Highland Place. It was hosted by Cardiff and our thanks to the ladies of Cardiff for providing the excellent food. Cefn Coed ladies hired a minibus for the journey, and it was good to see so many attending. Our guest speaker was Barbara Clifford who took the service and gave a talk about the history of Women's League. Many thanks to Barbara for making the long trip down to us. Our thanks also go to Reverend Eric Jones for stepping into the breach and playing the piano in the service.

It's been all 'noses to the grindstone' recently, preparing for our Autumn Fayre on Saturday 5th November at 2pm. We look forward to the rest of the year with some interesting and enjoyable Wednesday afternoons.

Joy Foster

Uni-Friends Sunday Club

A UNI-FRIENDS Sunday Club for children aged 4 to 11 has been running at Highland Place since 3rd July 2011. In the beginning it was held from 10am–11am but, as I felt that the sessions were too short for the children to gain maximum benefit, this has now been extended to 11.30am. The first few weeks we had two children attending. I then decided to hold an extra session every Wednesday morning during the school holidays. This was successful and we now have eight children attending every Sunday. Sessions start with lighting the Chalice followed by a catch-up on what everyone has been doing during the week. We have Bible stories, non-religious stories, followed by activities, such as paintings inspired by the stories that have been told, crafting and cooking. We also have fun time with games. The session ends with a prayer and extinguishing the chalice.

It is hard work preparing the sessions but well worth it when I see how much the children get out of belonging to Sunday Club. Preparation is key to the smooth running of the session. The boys and girls are enthusiastic and are a delight. They adhere to the 'ground rules' of Respect and Kindness. After Halloween is done and dusted we shall be working on the theme of Remembrance Day and then on a little presentation towards the Church Christmas celebrations. Members of the congregation are pleased to see children in the church again. I hope we go from strength to strength! I am delighted to say that I applied for and received a grant from Essex Hall for £100. Hurray to them, it has been very useful to purchase things from books and paints to squash.

Onwards and upwards, I will give you some updates from time to time of how we are getting on.

Best wishes, Joy Foster.

REvolution

This is the name of the course I have just successfully completed. I am now a fully fledged children's leader. The course was the first of its kind to be run by Essex Hall and hard work to get it off the ground was put in by John Harley, Liz Hills, Margaret Robinson, Jean Mason, Lorna Hill, Mandy Richards and Dawn Buckle. A team of very dedicated and qualified Unitarians.

It was a 1-year, course consisting of coursework and 8 full-day workshops, held at venues across England. The course covered topics such as Age Appropriate Activities, Safeguarding, Child Protection, Health and Safety, Communication Skills and much more. It was a lot of work and commitment but it was an invaluable experience that has given me the confidence to take the Sunday Club forward into the future. I was presented with my certificate by Rev Dr Ann Peart at Great Hucklow. It was a very proud moment for me! I would thoroughly recommend that anyone who wants to start a Sunday School/Club in their congregation to go on the next course when it takes place. I would like to thank Rev Eric Jones, my wonderful congregation, and South East Wales District for their support and financial backing to enable me to take part in the course. Thanks also to Sarah Boyce of Cardiff congregation who shared the experience, and sometimes was a travelling companion. Diolch!

Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

The Development Officer post for Cardiff Unitarians/Undodiaid Caerdydd has been advertised in Golwg magazine and website, the GA website, Job Centre and our Cardiff Unitarian/Undodiaid Caerdydd website. We are all hoping that we will have a response to this advert. Some members of the congregation attended an update on 18th October by Heather Lamont, Client Investment Director from CCLA (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities) who came from London to speak to us on the investments from the sale of West Grove church. This was held at the home of Margaret Evans and we learnt that the investments are doing well in an ethical account and yielding a 4.8% interest. Members were delighted to wish Ivy Thomas many happy returns for her special birthday at the service with Aberdare and Cefncoed congregations on 18th September. Ivy has had a number of celebrations with her family in Wales and family who travelled from Australia to be with her. It was also a pleasure to see the children from our Children's Club attending with parents and taking part in the service at the combined service with Aberdare and Cefncoed congregations. The Children's club is now held on the 4th Sunday of the month.

The visit of the National President of the General Assembly, the Rev Dr Ann Peart was enjoyed by Cardiff members with a service and talk held at Penrhiw chapel, St Fagans on a beautiful Autumn afternoon (15th October). Our thanks to Philip Griffiths, District President and Carwyn Tywyn, Welsh Secretary for their work on making this such a successful occasion.

Sheila and Simon Cousins will be moving to near Carmarthen in December. Sheila gave a personal reflection on Unitarianism and her family's contribution to the South East Wales District on 16th October 2011 at the Friends Meeting House and then invited the congregation to join her for refreshments after the service. Sheila has contributed greatly as Chair and Secretary of the congregation, as well as Sunday school leader and has been a member with our congregation since being a child. Sheila first attended West Grove church with her parents who were life long Unitarians. Sheila's brother, Duncan and her Uncle were Unitarian ministers and her father, Arthur took services and was Treasurer at West Grove church in Cardiff. Her mother, Norah played the organ and had a central role in Women's League. We extend Sheila many thanks for her membership and invaluable contribution to West Grove Church and to Cardiff Unitarians/Undodiaid Caerdydd as well as to the district in taking services at other chapels and churches. We will miss Sheila as a friend and member of the congregation and wish her and Simon all the best for their move.

Sarah Boyce, together with Joy Foster from Aberdare, attended the last session for the REvolution Course run by the GA Education and Training Commission on the 7th-9th October. Both Sarah and Joy received certificates for completion of the course from the Rev Dr Ann Peart at Great Hucklow as Leaders of Religious Education with children also referred to as being pioneers to lead young spiritual explorers.

Caroline Boyce will be taking part in the Seniors/Inter weekend at Great Hucklow on 19th – 20th November 2011 along with other young Unitarians from the district. Congratulations to Caroline on her AS results in the summer including an A for Religious Education!

As corporate members of the United Nations Association, Cardiff and District branch, members in Cardiff are invited to a talk by Professor Nick Pidgeon on Mitigation, Adaptation and Geo-Engineering: International Aspects of Climate Change on Tuesday 25th October at 7.30pm at the Temple of Peace.

Sarah Boyce

CEFNCOED

Women's League

We still meet every other Wednesday: thoughts of Christmas are beginning to occupy our minds.

On 8th–9th October most of the League members went on our Weekend Trip to Gerrards Cross where we stayed in a lovely 4-star hotel. On the Saturday we visited Henley on Thames, and on Sunday we went to an outdoor market before moving on to Windsor. Everyone had a great time.

We travelled over to Highland Place, Aberdare in a minibus for the South East Wales Women's League District Meeting on 13th October – it was nice to meet up with Barbara Clifford once again.

We are hoping to boost our League funds at a Car Boot Sale in Merthyr on Saturday, 5th November. The hire-cost of Tables goes to Tŷ Hafan.

Our Women's League is '*on a mission*' – to bring Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Schoolroom into the 21st century. On 16th September Vera and Ken attended a 'Funding Fair' arranged by Merthyr Tydfil CBC to give advice to any organisation seeking grant-aid to fund its project. The initial response has been favourable – let us hope that it continues that way!

Vera Tomsett

Visitors

We were pleased to have a steady trickle of visitors on 10th and 11th September when the chapel was open to the public as part of the European Heritage *Open Doors* initiative. In addition to some from Cefn itself, there were visitors from Blaenafon, Bridgend, Dinas Powys, Penperlleni and Pontyclun,

Another visitor – not to the chapel in person, but to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd's pages on the SE Wales website – was Connie Dean (nee Ulyett). Connie now lives in Ipswich, from where she sends her best wishes to the congregation and to anyone who remembers her from years ago.

Nonconformist History

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, with a brief outline of its history, is included in a book that was published in September - *The Chapels of Merthyr Tydfil – A Historical and Pictorial Guide* by Stephen Brewer. Other Unitarian chapels, now closed, at Dowlais and Twynrodyn, Thomastown are also included.

Out and about

We have made two excursions recently. On Sunday, 18th September we journeyed to Cardiff for a combined service with the Cardiff and Aberdare congregations at the Friends' Meeting House, and on Saturday, 15th October we attended the service at Capel Penrhiw, St Fagans to welcome GA President, Rev Dr Ann Peart. Both events were most enjoyable.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Annette Marsh conducted two weddings in August in Nottage. The first was for Louise Redwood. She came to Nottage because her great grandfather had been one of our organists, Emlyn Evans, and she was thrilled to discover members of the congregation who had worshipped in Nottage during this time remembered him. Karen Hnyda was the organist for this ceremony, and additional music was supplied by the Porthcawl Male Voice Choir to which Louise's grandfather had belonged.

The second wedding was of Ellie and Lloyd Jones, and Julianne Morgan was the organist. Ellie began attending Unitarian services in Swansea, where the couple live, but when they discovered there was a Unitarian chapel in Nottage they decided this would be their wedding venue as Lloyd's mother lives nearby. A packed chapel witnessed the ceremony and then went to Candlestone to a marquee for the after proceedings. The only details of which we could get from Dave Marsh was about all the different colour "wellies" worn by the ladies because of the inclement weather.....thank you Dave!

It was good to join with other Unitarians at Capel Penrhiw recently. I have a real sense of "belonging" when I attend service and as we know we do make a wonderful sound when we join together to sing! Thanks to Elizabeth Rosenberg for introducing one of the hymns for Nottage, and for greatly reducing the average age!

We look forward to seeing and hearing you in Nottage on December 4th for the District Christmas Service.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

Holidays and the flare-up of a back problem have meant I've been kept a little out of touch with events at Swansea Church recently – so I have only a very brief account for this issue of the Newsletter.

For many, Harvest Thanksgiving Service is a favourite in the Church's calendar. This year's service, which was conducted by Julianne, was an inspiring occasion, fortifying us to withstand the rigours of winter.

We are pleased to hear that our most senior member Mrs Mollie Jones, who has been receiving treatment at Llandough Hospital as a result of fracturing her femur, has recovered sufficiently to be transferred to Singleton Hospital where she has been visited by Church members. We send her our love and best wishes.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

In the month of August we had two christenings. To little Ella May Murphy and Owen Lloyd Francis we offer our very best wishes and hopes for their future.

We have also celebrated a Folk Service with the help and support of our local folk enthusiasts. Congregational singing was accompanied on violin by Jamie Nemeth and Aneini Jones and on trombone by Hywel Jones. Hymns came from Unitarian, Shaker, bluegrass, American gospel and slave sources. We sang a lovely jazz version of *Nearer My God To Thee*, remembering that this famous hymn was written by Sarah Flower Adams, a Unitarian. We much appreciated the support of our District churches. Money received from the collection and a small sales table realised £304 and half was donated to famine relief.

We celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving between ourselves, this time with our two violinists and harpist Caradog Jones! We are well blessed and grateful to the small number who give of their time, effort and talent. There was a delicious shared meal afterwards and two boxes of fruit and vegetables, together with a basket of locally picked apples, were delivered to the nearby women's refuge.

Gareth Evans has retired but will remain with his firm on a consultancy basis. We extend very best wishes in the knowledge that he is taking stock of his gardening and fishing gear!

We have had a surprise visit from Lilian and Gary Dermody and another from Sandra Hayden. All in all, the recent weeks and months have been times of celebration. Our thanks go again to those good folk who come from a distance to take service and share their thoughts with us. These visits are much appreciated.

Our thoughts and good wishes go to Eileen James and Eirion Phillips.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

We are very pleased with our new much larger chapel notice-board, kindly donated by our member Mrs Eva Morgan as part of her 90th birthday celebration. It was a lovely expression of her long standing devotion to the chapel, and we appreciate it greatly.

Our chapel Anniversary Service will be held on November 6th, because this year we will be joining the village Anglican congregation for the joint Remembrance service on November 13th. Time definitely flies as you grow older - it is hard to realise that our next service will then be our annual Advent service of November 27th.

We send our best wishes to our members Glenys Pugh and Margaret Escott who have been ill, Glenys is now home from hospital, but may have to return. Their presence at service is sorely missed.

Robert Frost wrote that "Happiness makes up in height for what it lack in length," and I read somewhere that - *Happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a manner of travelling* – so, happy greetings to all our friends in the District.

Julianne Morgan

A PLACE OF REFUGE

It has been said, and I have found it to be true, that we all need a sanctuary – a place where we can temporarily escape from our everyday lives to recharge our batteries and gain a fresh perspective on our existence.

As a child I was fortunate to be brought up in the house of my maternal grandfather. The house we lived in was a four story former Norman Watch Tower. The kitchen was in the basement, the living room with its large open fireplace was on the ground floor, the bedrooms were on the second floor and at the top of the house, as my mother described it, was a large room which had formally served as the bedroom for my three uncles, and a lad who was adopted by my grandparents, who had long departed into marriage and lives lived elsewhere.

This room was my sanctuary. The top of the house also served as a storage area for unwanted items of furniture and various personal “belongings” abandoned by other family members.

There was for example an accordion which I would attempt to play, also an organ with some of its notes missing upon which I flourished my hands in imitation of the church organist. I gave parties for my dolls, rode my rocking horse for many miles, but often I simply sat. I would make myself comfortable on one of the discarded feather mattresses and look out of the window at the Black Mountains in the distance and the stream immediately below me.

Since that time I have liked the sound of the wind, hearing it outside the house and feeling the safety and protection the house afforded was very comforting. I would spend hours at the top of the house completely unsupervised by adults; I had unfettered freedom to be myself. I learned how to interest myself and enjoy my own company.

Small children these days do not enjoy such freedom with its many opportunities for exploration and self-understanding.

Very recently I have been reading a book entitled “Precious Bane” by Mary Webb. The principle character in the book is a young woman called Prue Sarn. Prue is worked very hard by her brother Gideon on the family farm and is often nearly daunted by the drudgery of it all.

Prue, despite the many calls on her time and energy, has discovered a place at the top of the farm house, where she can look out on the changing countryside and write her journal which gives her release from her difficult life. For Prue, this sanctuary under the eaves of the roof, perfumed by the smell of the apples which are stored there, is a spiritual place. Prue speaks in the South Shropshire dialect;

“I cannot tell whence, a most powerful sweetness that had never come to me afore. It was not religious, like the goodness of a text heard at a preaching. It was beyond that. It was as if some creature made of light had come on a sudden from a great way off, and nestled in my bosom. On all things there came a fair, lovely look, as if different air stood over them [...].”

“There was naught in it of churches nor of folks, praying nor praising, sinning or repenting. ... For though it was so quiet, it was a great miracle, and it changed my life; for when I was lost for something to turn to, I'd run to the attic, and it was a core of sweetness in much bitter.”

(Pages 58 and 59)

When thinking of ways to restore our equilibrium we often forget what we have long known. That a place that is quiet and peaceful, where nature can be observed, where the humming of bees and the twittering of wild birds can be heard, is powerfully restorative to the human spirit.

Although it is many years since I was in my childhood sanctuary, in my imagination I can still return there and lift my spirit with the memory of it.

Ella Lewis-Jones

LOOKING BACK

Looking through a South East Wales District report for 1911 – exactly one hundred years ago, I thought that readers may be interested in one or two snippets from the report which was printed on 24 pages of small print.

There were 17 congregations involved with fourteen ministers (Fourteen !). There were four vacancies and three retired ministers doing active work in the congregations without a minister. The Annual meeting was held at the Unitarian Church, Pentre (Glanrhondda) in April. The retiring President was Mrs Reid of Swansea with Gomer Thomas of the Merthyr Church being the in-coming President. The Treasurer was Ernest Williams of Clifton St, Aberdare and Joint secretaries were Rev Park Davies and John Lewis of Pontypridd. The Rev Rudolf Davies of Gloucester was the speaker at the meeting.

There was concern regarding the lack of finance and a lack of interest in District Affairs as well as the following comment – “Most of the churches have been engaged in building up their own congregational life rather than in extraordinary missionary efforts outside...” There was also concern that one church reported an attendance of between 50 and 60 each Sunday, but declared their contributing membership as “nil” and nine members who contributed nothing. Another church with attendance of 33, counted only two subscribers.

One church contributed just 2/6 to District Funds. On the other hand, there were robust individual contributions from members in Swansea, Cardiff, Highland Place and Thomas Street, Merthyr.

Each church had their Trust Deed in order and in safe possession after a drive from the District to ensure that everything was in place. There was a move to try and convert the closed chapel at Blaengwrach for some practical use. There was an appeal for the congregations to support each other in times of difficulty, the church at Clydach Vale being mentioned as in need of support.

Following the printed District Report is a report from each of the churches – making some interesting reading. No space for that on this occasion but maybe an addition to some future District News.

Eric Jones.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE HELPERS GONE?

Up on a ladder repairing each light,
Sorting out the electrics to put things right.
Our heating boiler never gets a mention,
Only when it's cold and it needs attention.
Repairs and servicing, must be done soon,
To maintain warmth and comfort in every room.
Why is it so lonely doing each chore?
In the past they were done by many more

Oh why! And where have all the helpers gone?
Things are deteriorating, what's gone wrong?
Cleanliness – Godliness, are the same, they say,
But no more, for they're seen in a different way.
People have changed, but still need a clean place,
We must improve, and not be a disgrace.
But have we changed and are we are getting worse?
Forgetting God's love, and hearing Satan's curse.

Join us! We need many more to do good,
Believe in Reason and Love as all should.
We need commitment, and then we'll walk tall,
For our chapel, what's right and for us all...
It will be our loving that must be seen,
As exemplified by the Nazarene!
Walk this road together and fearless be,
By helping each other, forever free!

Colin Morgan, Rhos, Cwmtawe (October 2011)

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Items for publication should be sent by to:-

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

Copy may also be e-mailed to kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net or to Philip@philipgriffiths.co.uk

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