

Westgate Chapel Report for the Year 2008-9

There has been only one change in the membership in the past year. With the resignation of Anthony Dawson, because of leaving the area, our formal membership now stands at 17. We have continued to hold services every Sunday although we have often seen attendance in single figures. We have continued to enjoy the variety of ministers and lay preachers and we are fortunate in having a number of our own members – David Arthur, Stephen Carlile, John Goodchild, Chris Pilkington, Melanie Prideaux, and Kate Taylor – who are willing to lead worship. Melanie Prideaux has conducted lively child-friendly morning services on the first Sunday of almost every month. Stephen Carlile has taken the service on the remaining first Sundays again providing something stimulating for children and well as adults.

Our historic Booth organ is now too fragile to be played so that Kate Taylor has provided music on the more modern electric organ. We look forward to the restoration of the organ in the future. The few weddings that we have had have either had no music at all or music on a portable organ brought in by organist Anthony Rudd.

The Trustees have made progress towards having the organ fully restored. The Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust has provided a grant of £10,000 from Landfill Tax with the 11% payment required by the Waste Management Group provided by Wakefield Council from its Community Chest (£500) and the Yorkshire Unitarian Union (£600). An application for the remaining funding is with the Pilgrim Trust.

Our once-a-month Tuesday-morning Westgate Forum has again met regularly except during the summer months.

As suggested at last year's Annual Meeting, John Goodchild provided a three-session course in April and May on Farming in the Wakefield District. This brought some fifty people on each occasion although it has borne no fruit in terms of subsequent appearances. Jan Millington gave a talk in December on the 'Spiritual Landscape' – the effect of landscape on the work of Barbara Hepworth, Andy Goldsworthy, Paul Nash, and Richard Long. Dr Prideaux gave a talk on 24 March on aspects of her doctoral thesis. This brought in a good and interesting audience including three Muslims and the Bishop of Pontefract.

We held two open days in July: the first of these brought only two visitors but the second, which was the subject of a news story on *The Wakefield Express*, brought over forty people.

We gained a handsome new notice board, meeting the style and colours of the General Assembly's 'consistent identity' scheme in November 2008; this was financed largely by insurance with the outstanding £50 being paid by the General Assembly's Communications Commission.

We have bought eleven copies of the new Unitarian hymn book, *Sing Your Faith* (better known as the purple book) and members of the Chapel have bought further copies individually.

Dr Melanie Prideaux represented us at this year's Annual Meetings of the General Assembly. We put forward a motion requiring the General Assembly to appoint an Information/Press officer. This was re-worded by the Assembly's Steering Committee but was then carried by an overwhelming majority. The Executive Committee have not, however, so far acceded to the request.

Miss Taylor conducted a wedding at the end of January and the Reverend Ernest Baker conducted one on 28 February.

Ernest provided a training session for four of our own lay preachers on the conduct of weddings on the morning of 22 June.

Quite a number of our services, and meetings of the Westgate Forum, have been noticed in the Societies' columns of *The Wakefield Express*.

Chris Pilkington has arranged for our website to be hosted now by the UKUnitarians network and he ensures himself that it is kept up-to-date.

We have been much concerned at the adverse effect of the work going on next to the Chapel for the new Merchant Gate development and in particular at the vast building adjoining the driveway and the Chapel grounds. It has often been difficult to get into the drive and some companies undertaking sub-contract work have chosen to block the drive altogether on Sundays. It would seem that we can do nothing about all this. However, the developers have done some very fine work in rebuilding, and indeed enhancing, a part of the wall on the east side of the Chapel,

The Chapel grounds have been maintained by Stephen Carlile and Ralph Denby. Pat Howard has tended the rockery and Kate Taylor has tended the hosta garden. The Rowan tree, planted last year, has flourished.

We have been very well served by our officers and committee. John Goodchild has led us splendidly as our president. Kate Taylor has managed to cope as secretary. Tony Scott has served again as a meticulous and diligent treasurer aided by the finance secretaries, Ralph Denby and John Goodchild. We must pay especial tribute to Tony as he relinquishes office after eleven years' service. Nancy Denison's devoted work, week in and week out, has provided us with very attractive flowers in chapel. Nancy has also served as our Inquirer secretary, ensuring that all subscribers via the Chapel receive their copies regularly. Tina Walsh has continued to keep the Chapel. Vestry, kitchen and lavatories clean and polished.