



THE WAKEFIELD UNITARIAN

The Newsletter of Westgate Chapel, Wakefield

Telephone 01924-373307

website: www.ukunitarians.org.uk/wakefield/

Westgate Chapel was opened in 1752.

Its congregation was established in 1662 and became

Unitarian in view in the eighteenth century.

**It has taken a leading part in the economic, social,
educational, political - and spiritual - development
of Wakefield and its vicinity.**

AUGUST 2011

Thought for the month

A self-imposed trouble will not allow itself to be banished. If a man lose a thousand pounds by a friend's fault, or by a turn in the wheel of fortune, he can, if he be a man, put his grief down and trample it under foot; he can exorcise the spirit of his grievance, and bid the evil one depart from out of his house. But such exorcism is not to be used when the sorrow has come from a man's own folly and sin: - especially not if it has come from his own selfishness.

Anthony Trollope in *The Small House at Allington*

Services in August at 10.30am on 7 August and at 3pm on all other Sundays

| | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 7 August | Stephen Carlile |
| 14 August | Gillian Peel |
| 21 August | Neville Kenyon |
| 28 August | Myrna Michell |

Rota of Welcomers

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 7 August | Ralph Denby |
| 14 August | Pat Howard |
| 21 August | Nancy Denison |
| 28 August | Ralph Denby |

As always, if you are unable to act as welcomer on the day indicated, you are asked to arrange an exchange.

Pulling the threads together: Yorkshire Unitarian Lay Preachers' Association, 6 August, 10.30am – 3.30pm Bradford Unitarian Centre

Those who take services already, or who would like to do so, are invited to this workshop on putting together an order of service. It will be led by the Reverend

Margaret Kirk and the Reverend Lindy Latham. A light lunch of soup and bread will be available. Immediate booking is required! Contact Margaret Kirk, m1_kirk@yahoo.co.uk

Summer Garden Party, 7 August, 3 Pinfold Lane

Members and friends of Westgate Chapel are cordially invited to the Wakefield Unitarian summer garden party on Sunday August 7th from noon (following the 10.30 service at Westgate Chapel) at 3 Pinfold Lane, Sandal.

Bring and share lunch

Games and quizzes (not compulsory!) for adults and children...

RSVP to Mel by August 1st please.

Melanie Prideaux

Wedding, Katie Stephenson and John Fogarty, 20 August, 2pm

There is to be a wedding at the Chapel on 20 August. Please leave the drive free of other vehicles from 12 noon onwards on that day.

Setting the ball rolling....

On Sunday 24th July there was great trepidation as Stephen tried to find the elusive field wherein lies Pepper Hill Unitarian Chapel....yet this wasn't the only fun to be found on the hills of Kirklees.



Elsewhere Josh was also busy with hill- related fund-raising. Some weeks ago he decided to do a sponsored event to raise money for the children's hospital. This involved being put in a huge blow up ball, getting strapped in and being rolled down a very big hill! You can get an idea of it on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q88cifsRGiU&feature=related> . So Josh, and a schoolfriend's mum were strapped into this big inflatable ball at the top of a huge hill...and rolled down. Apparently the screams were enough to deafen Josh.....yet he's made of very brave stuff and used his experience to raise £71. He then went on to have more of an enjoyable day with a visit to Kirkstall Abbey where all the parents who went to watch had an enjoyable picnic!

Unitarians and the Crimean War.

The Crimean War, fought from 1854-1856 between an alliance of France, Great Britain, Piedmont and Turkey against Russia, was the result of a “churchwarden’s squabble” over who should control the keys to the Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The French, on behalf of the Catholic Church, had had control over them since the Crusades, but following the French Revolution had rather lost their religiosity leaving a space for Russia on the behalf of the Orthodox Church to step-in. Thus when Napoleon re-asserted his ancient right to protect the Holy Places and to place a silver star bearing the French coat of arms over the supposed site of the Manger of Christ in Bethlehem, an international incident was in the offing. In France and Russia, therefore, the Crimean War was viewed as a Crusade to rescue the Holy Places from heretics; to the Turks the Crimean War was a fight for survival: they had recently suffered a crushing defeat to the Russians in the 1820s and the Ottoman Empire was in the process of falling apart. In Britain, the Crimean War had little of the religious overtones it did to her allies but instead was to protect Britain’s interests in the Easter Mediterranean and the route to India.

But what was the role of Unitarians in all this? Mid 19 century Unitarians were characterised with an optimistic outlook, both social and religious. For them ‘the truth’ was a real, tangible and a shining beacon of hope. Truth meant freedom from the oppression of tyranny, and from corrupt political, social and religious systems. They earnestly believed that they had been tasked by God to bring reform and to see and bring out the best in all people. Unitarian theology of the period suggested that God was all-loving and benevolent, and that ‘eternal damnation could not possibly exist because it went contrary to God’s purpose of promoting human progress. People were not considered inherently evil but Sin was believed to arise

from when mankind fell into the ignorance of God's supreme moral laws; heaven was also a very real place – which had to be built on Earth and not waited for in any afterlife.

From 1850 to 1854 there had been a series of international peace conferences organised by the 'Manchester School' of politics (ostensibly Unitarian, pacifist, and free-trade), Quakers and allied Churches and organisations across Europe avowedly to promote disarmament and European free-trade. Napoleon's statement in 1852 that 'The Empire is Peace' was cautiously welcomed, as were his suggestions that the map of Europe should be re-drawn on lines of ethnicity instead of might. Following the destruction of the Turkish fleet by the Russians at Sinope in 1853 a Quaker Peace Mission was sent to Russia in an attempt to avert a war that was obviously brewing. So popular in Britain was the push for war with Russia that one hysterical correspondent in *The Times* in February 1854 wrote that pacifists, Quakers and Unitarians had no place in the House of Commons and were more dangerous than one hundred Russian spies at the Horse Guards. The Russians were at least preparing for war whilst pacifists were an enemy within. The editor of the *Huddersfield Chronicle* openly attacked Unitarians and their pacifist view, suggesting cynically that they were only pacifist because war upset their 'sacred notion' of Free Trade.

Unable to avert the war, Unitarians and Quakers quickly set about trying to improve the condition of the ordinary soldier in the British army at the front. The Times famously sent Thomas Chenery and William Howard Russell to the front to report back to the eager masses at home the progress of the war and indeed it was Russell's despatches which did much to change the public's view of the British soldier as being a human being rather than, as the Duke of Wellington had said, the 'scum of the Earth'. But other newspapers sent their own 'Special Correspondents', including the *Daily News* who sent the Unitarian journalist Edwin Godkin whose despatches from the front were far more damning of the establishment than those of Russell. The *Daily News* had been founded in 1846 by the Unitarian-minded journalist, Charles Dickens, and amongst its regular contributors were Harriet Martineau, G B Shaw and H G Wells. Godkin later covered the American Civil War and founded the newspaper *The Nation* that promoted the very Unitarian ideals of free trade, pacifism, and liberal reform, and made attacks on political corruption. Godkin and Russell were singularly unwelcome by the British high command and their despatches considered 'really deliberate lies'; the response of the common soldier, was not surprisingly, the reverse. Russell et al became popular figures, someone to whom the ordinary soldier could air their grievances and expect to get them heard. And heard they were.

On the back of the horrifying reports from the front over the treatment of the British soldier, Harriet Martineau, the sister of Rev. James Martineau exposed the deficiencies of the British Army in caring for its men, in a series of lectures across Britain. In this she gained much support from Rev. William Gaskell of Manchester and his wife, Elizabeth. She later compiled them into her damning attack on the establishment as *England and her Soldiers*. Colonel George Bell of the British 1st Foot received a copy whilst on service in the Crimea and stated that she ‘deserved the Legion d’Honneur’ for exposing the ‘want of system, neglect and red-tapeism’ in the British army which was killing its soldiers quicker than the Russians. Martineau analysed the effect of sanitary arrangements, hygiene and nutrition on the ordinary soldier and claimed that the British army was starving its soldiers to death. She concluded that Britain was losing her flower of youth and that mothers, like Emperor Augustus or General Varus, should be asking ‘Where are my legions? Give me back my legions’. Harriet Martineau was in regular correspondence with her like-minded friends and fellow Unitarian-associated Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale.

Charles Dickens, founder and editor of *Household Words*, led a literary campaign against the British government’s treatment of the ordinary soldier throughout the two years of the Crimean War. He condemned all wars other than those, which were fights for national survival – and the Crimean War was definitely not one of those. To Dickens it was a rather pointless and bloody conflict and showed the folly of government taking a policy based on public will (the clamour for war 1853-1854) rather than policies based on public good. The British army system was satirised in his series of short stories entitled *The modern “Officer’s” Progress* tracking the life of a young British subaltern, Ensign Spoonbill, exposing the nepotism and lack of professionalism of the British army, especially compared with that of her ally, France.

Perhaps the most well-known and important Unitarian to be involved in the Crimean War was Florence Nightingale who was sent to the Crimea by her friend Sidney Herbert to reform the British army’s hospital system, based on the reports sent back from the front by Godkin, Russell et al. Florence was hailed by the Radical Press and by the common soldier as an ‘angel of mercy’ whilst the powers-that-be saw her presence as an unwelcome intrusion whose presence was unnecessary. Nightingale was openly attacked in the Protestant press for being non-Trinitarian or for being a Roman Catholic. Together with Sidney Herbert (the British Secretary for War) she was thought to be in league with ‘Anglo-Catholics’ and ‘Romish Nuns’, and as a result put wounded British soldiers in ‘danger’ of being converted to Roman Catholicism by the French ‘female ecclesiastics’ as the French nursing sisters (Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul who had

accompanied the French armies on the battlefield for 300 years). Florence Nightingale, however, did not trust the Sisters of Charity nor members of the 'High' Anglican Church for that matter. The hospitals became the scene of many religious disputes: ultra-Protestants refused to let their congregations send out gifts of food or warm clothing to the Crimea lest they be distributed in the hospitals by a Roman Catholic. The Bible Society sent out food and clothing to the troops but only on the condition that they accepted the [protestant] Bible sent with them. There were frequent scuffles between the French Sisters of Mercy and the French Catholic Chaplains and a group of low-church Evangelicals; the French tended to any wounded soldier irrespective of their belief and the Evangelicals screamed with outrage claiming that the French were trying to convert 'Godly Protestant Soldiers'. On one occasion different groups of British 'nurses' (actually Evangelicals who openly admitted to trying to make converts) came to blows in the hospital wards. To the low-church Evangelicals the British army was a Christian army, part of the Church-Militant and should be reformed on Christian lines. The army should only be used in the defence of [Protestant] Christianity and as such, fighting the Crimean War as allies of the Turks was anathema; fighting with French and Italian allies was acceptable as they were at least of the same religion! One Baptist minister in Leeds urged his congregation to oppose the war because it was the wrong war: Britain, France and Italy should be allied with Christian Russia to fight 'infidel' Turkey. A similar view was taken up strongly in the United States. One extreme Protestant pastor published at his own expense various tracts and a somewhat incoherent book which claimed that Sebastopol was the 'great city' mentioned in the Book of Revelation and that the 'End times were near'. Similarly, the appalling weather in the two Crimean winters which killed so many British and French soldiers was thought to be a punishment from God for either going to war or having the wrong war and not fighting the Turks! Florence, of course, rose above all the sectarian squabbles by saying that the God she served, and had been called to serve, was not the God of Protestant or Catholic, Trinitarian or Unitarian, Jew or Hindu, but the God who made everything and loved everything they made.

Anthony Dawson

H G Wells

A series of lectures on Space Travel at the Conference Centre of the British Library in London was advertised in Balne Lane Reference Library. The subject of one talk was H G Wells. Emeritus Professor David Lodge of Birmingham

University has recently had a novel published entitled *A Man of Parts* and he explained his reasons for writing it.

Wells was from my home town, being born in Atlas House, High Street, Bromley, Kent. Did that make him feel that he had to carry the world on his shoulders? Or to write *The Outline History of the World*? His childhood was spent in circumstances possibly resembling those of George Gissing, which you will understand, and there are descriptions of the town in his books such as *The New Machiavelli* and *Ann Veronica*. His apprenticeship in the drapery trade provided material for other books such as *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly*. But he studied science as a pupil-teacher at Midhurst Grammar School and then went on to further positions in schools and adult education. At the same time he was producing amazing imaginative stories such as *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* and many others.

Wells' many successes were marred by rumours of his behaviour and he lost respect but he strongly influenced people I knew who had been young, say, before 1920. They read these exciting books, not expecting so much change to come, yet many lived through two world wars, seeing how much happened, good and bad, and hoping for an ideal world to come in the future.

Professor Lodge likened Wells to a comet, blazing through the literary sky for decades and then dwindling in brightness. His last sentence is, 'There are eccentric orbits in literary history. Perhaps one day he will glow in "the firmament" once again'.

Pat Howard

Looking some way ahead –

Pastoral Visiting, Westgate Chapel Vestry, Saturday 29 October 201, 10.30am

Discussion during the Congregational Assessment weekend exposed our inadequacy in terms of pastoral care. At the Chapel Committee in July it was suggested, rather than identify a key individual or individuals to take in a pastoral role, we might initially look for some advice on making pastoral visits. The Reverend David Shaw, Minister at Upper Chapel, Sheffield, has agreed to join us on the morning of 29 October to share with us his philosophy and experiences. The session is open to all Chapel members and associates.

The Chapel Garden

There is an area near the replacement tree which is empty. Any spare bulbs would be welcome in September.

Pat Howard

Nominations for the Vice-President of the General Assembly 2012-3

The General Assembly's Executive Committee is seeking nominations for the role of vice-president for 2012-3. Following precedent, it is anticipated that the incoming vice-president should be a minister. Please let one of the Chapel's officers know if you have a suggestion to make.

John Goodchild, M Univ.

Members and friends will be reassured to know that the Chapel President, John Goodchild, was able to return home to convalesce on 27 July after a major operation on the 20th. We wish him a speedy return to the Chapel and to his Centre.

Signage to the Chapel

We were very disappointed when the local authority chose not to add signs to Westgate Chapel on their new fingerposts. Your Committee determined that we should not, as they say, take 'no' for an answer and we pressed the case with the Council Leader and the Ward councillors. The authority has now decided that, after all, the Chapel should feature on some of the fingerposts and we expect to have contact with one of the officers soon to progress this.

The wording on the projected notice board facing onto Mulberry Way

Members and friends should have received a sheet showing six possibilities for the wording on the new notice-board and will have been asked to indicate their preferences. If you have not yet returned one, please let Kate Taylor have it as soon as possible. If you never got one, but would like to consider the suggestions, please let Kate know.

The Gaskell Foundation receives a handsome legacy

A Horbury man, Ernest Steadman, has left a third of his estate to the Gaskell Foundation, amounting to £347,000. Some of the trustees met towards the end of July at Horbury Town Hall to receive the final payment from Mr Steadman's executor. The photograph below shows Nancy Denison, Christine Cudworth, Bill Ingham, Kate Taylor, and Keith Lister, standing in front of the window that was provided by Horbury Common Lands trustees to commemorate Daniel Gaskell's financial support for the village of Horbury.



Four of the Gaskell trustees are elected by the trustees of Westgate Chapel. Our other two trustees at present are Susan Bedford and Christine Hudson.

The Daniel Gaskell Foundation has its origins in the philanthropy of Daniel Gaskell (1782-1875) the owner of Lupset Hall, who was Wakefield's first Member of Parliament when it became a Parliamentary Borough in 1832. Gaskell's intention was to ensure that the children of Horbury's poor were provided with elementary education free of charge. In 1842 he built a school which children could attend without any payment. In those days there was no compulsory education. Such schools as there were, were normally denominational ones, provided by the local Anglican churches or by such other bodies as the Methodists or the Roman Catholics. Children normally paid a penny or twopence a week to attend. Gaskell's school was different. He was a Unitarian and his school was open to any child whatever the religious beliefs of its family.

When Daniel Gaskell died in 1875, the school and the master's house were placed in the hands of the trustees of Westgate Chapel, which was Gaskell's own spiritual home and where he had been a trustee. He left an endowment of £1,000 in railway stock so that the school could be maintained and the master's salary paid. The school continued as an elementary school until 1888. But by then elementary education had changed radically. Horbury had four other elementary schools, established under the 1870 Education Act which introduced secular state education. The sale of the school and the master's house formed the original capital for the present trust.

Currently the Foundation makes grants each year to young people from Horbury who are going on to University or are already pursuing courses there. The grants in recent years have been modest by today's standards, as the sums available have not kept pace with the changing value of money. The legacy will enable the trustees to make much larger grants from the additional income.

Mr Steadman, who was born in Horbury in 1922 and lived there all his life, died in April 2010. He attended Ossett Grammar School between 1933 and 1938 and the Trustees of the Daniel Gaskell Foundation believe that, as a boy, he benefited from an award from the Trust. His working life was spent in the Prescription Pricing Office in Wakefield where he rose to be the supervisor.

Tha'd niver a know'd it

Police have just released details of a new drug craze that is being carried out in Yorkshire nightclubs.

Apparently, Yorkshire club goers have started injecting Ecstasy just above their front teeth.

Police say the dangerous practice is called 'e by gum'

From Bill Humphreys

The Engagement Group

An 'Engagement Group' consisting of Unitarians and non-Unitarians, is organised by Mel and Steve from Westgate Chapel. The group meets every month, choosing a different location and theme for each meeting, but actively engaging with one another following engagement group principles (see website: <http://www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk/>).

We explore and discuss spiritual themes, and the beliefs and attitudes which shape our lives. Newcomers are welcome, and should contact Steve (boudicca7@talktalk.net) or Mel (melpx@hotmail.com), either at Chapel or by email.

The Unitarian path is a liberal religious movement rooted in the Jewish and Christian traditions but open to insights from world faiths, reason and science, and with a spectrum extending from liberal Christianity through to religious humanism. (Prologue to The Unitarian Path by Andrew Hill.)

Chairman John Goodchild, 12 Shakespeare Avenue, Normanton, WF6 1EA

Hon Secretary,
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