



# **THE WAKEFIELD UNITARIAN**

**The Newsletter of Westgate Chapel, Wakefield**

**Telephone 01924-373307**

**website: [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/wakefield/](http://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.**

## **JUNE 2011**

## **Thought for the month**

Have a go, challenge yourself, learn what you are capable of, feel differently and try something new, live...To believe in your dreams and to go for them is the most important and fulfilling thing you can do and is the biggest gift you can give. It makes your own light shine and then you can truly say and feel that you are truly alive - this can only be a good thing.

Sarah Cobham of the Northern Georgian Society and Samzeo

## **Services in June at 10.30am on 5 June and at 3pm on all other Sundays**

5 June	Stephen Carlile
12 June	The Rev Bill Darlison
19 June	The Rev Bill Darlison
26 June	David Arthur

## **Rota of Welcomers**

5 June	Nancy Denison
12 June	Ralph Denby
19 June	John Goodchild
26 June	Pat Howard

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

## **The Westgate Forum, Tuesday 7 June, 10.30am**

Can we learn from other religious groups? Bill Darlison remarked recently that there might be something to be said for the Mormon code of life (he did not mean polygamy!). Do other religious bodies have ideas and practices from which we might gain?

## **Yorkshire Unitarian Union Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 25 June at Lydgate Unitarian Chapel, New Mill, 1pm for 1.30pm**

The General Assembly's Chief Officer, Derek McAuley, will be with us for the Quarterly Meeting of the YUU on 25 June and will speak about the denomination's strategic priorities and about the coming changes to the commissions and panels. Hot drinks will be available from 1pm. There will be a short service at 1.30pm and Derek McAuley is scheduled to speak at 1.45pm.

### **Thoughts before a Chapel Committee meeting**

Let me be modest in my attitude in discussion, able to perceive at least something of others' points of view, and even able to revise my own if made necessary by new facts and interpretations. May I always be able to accommodate my own views with a consensus of opinion without feeling resentment, and in no ways to clash with others or to feel beaten if views differing from my own are adopted. Let me consider before I speak; take time to hear others as their thoughts impinge upon my own, and be constantly kindly, especially towards those with whom I disagree in essentials. May the common good of the chapel and its congregation be foremost in my consideration; may I speak and think without guile, always anxious to face the future honestly and hopefully, full of kindness and sympathy towards all the others who form this committee. Above all, may I be able to translate these my abstract thoughts into action as the pressures and heat of the evening advance.

John Goodhild (spoken at the Committee meeting on 10 May)

### **The Chapel Grounds**

The grounds were visited by two people from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust recently and we will receive a report. They made a long list of plants recognised, nothing particularly unusual, but they were impressed by our little oasis in the midst of the town. They noted goldcrests being present and found ladybird larvae. They loved looking round the Chapel.

Pat Howard

## **Westgate Chapel in 1893**

Whilst your editor was looking for something completely different, she came across the enclosed in an issue of *The Wakefield Herald* of November 1983:

**‘School sermons and annual soiree at Westgate Chapel, Wakefield.** Last Sunday the annual services were conducted in the Westgate (Unitarian) Chapel by the Rev H.M. Livens, of Bolton, who for four years was a Congregational minister in Bishop Auckland, New Zealand. The collections for the school fund amounted to £13. On Monday evening the annual soiree was held in the school and proved one of the most successful parties held for several years, the only drawback being that a considerable number of members of the congregation were detained at home by illness.....Besides the Rev A. Chalmers (minister of the chapel) and the Rev. H.M. Livens, there were present the Rev. C Hargrove of Leeds, and the Rev W. Blazeby of Rotherham, all of whom delivered appropriate speeches. In the course of the evening Mr Chalmers sketched the principal events of the year. He said that the attendance at the services had been well maintained and that of late the congregation had had the pleasure of welcoming a few of the soldiers at present stationed in the city who had attended regularly from the time of their arrival in the city. Some gratifying circumstances were also mentioned, such as the appointment of Mr Latham to the French Lectureship in the Newcastle College of Science and the fact that Miss Nellie Wood, a teacher in the Sunday School, at the recent Queen’s Scholarships Examination had taken the highest place of any in the Wakefield list....Mr J Dunnill reported that during the year the organ had been greatly improved at a cost of about £50, that amount being already almost entirely raised by the contributions of the congregation.’

## **The Foy Conference or, as the organisers put it, Confoyrence**

This was a gathering of twenty-nine people interested in discussing the subject of ‘Social Networking or Social Notworking or Anthropology in the Digital Age.’ I had met some of the members previously and knew they were a lively group, producing an interesting quarterly magazine, so I knew it would be worthwhile. We met at the Community for Reconciliation, Barnes Close, Chadwick, near Longbridge, Bromsgrove. This is a fine house set in beautiful countryside and it is connected with the Bourneville Trust. (The train passed through Bourneville Station, which is painted in Cadbury’s colours!) The conference rooms were very comfortable and the food was delicious.

After a meal we were asked to discover our personas by signing up to 'Foycebook' and Foy's very own Internet Search Engine 'Giggle.' So I realised we had a comedian among us! The evening 'thoughtfulness' was led by Helen of Foy. The short times for worship were helpful breaks from the full timetable of sessions.

Martin Croucher explored the digital world and our places in it by outlining 'The Six Tribes of Homo Digitalis.' A survey had been made which found that about 23% of us are Timid Technophobes, able to use mobile phones but wary of new gadgets. About 13% are Social Secretaries, too busy to play and experiment but using what is available, 12% are First Lifers, just beginning, 9% are Digital Extraverts, capable of using Blackberries for all manner of needs, 29% are Eager Beavers, keen to have a try, while 8% are Web Scorners.

Claire Hewerdine's lecture was about 'Growing up in a digital world,' the planned progression of digital use that a child is expected to follow, and I have a detailed programme for you to see if you are interested. Later Emily Hewerdine followed this up by thinking how adults cope having 'Grown up in a digital world,' and perhaps not completely coming to terms with it.

We were asked to consider our perceptions and perspectives. Are they being influenced by 'Twitter' and 'Facebook?' Martin Croucher produced statistics of use, and compared them with e-mail. 56% of users in the U.K. check their messages every day, showing how important these are to them. Often this is to help status awareness.

Finally we had a debate on the motion: "This House believes it wouldn't matter if Social Networking Sites ceased to exist," proposed by Josh Hewerdine and opposed by Adam Croucher, with David Warhurst in the chair. Reasons for the motion were based on the dangers involved when there is little control or checking, no age limits, no time control, cyber-bullying, identity theft, pressure to keep up-to-date, and long-term effects on health and well-being.

However those against the motion said that there have always been dangers, and we have the potential to manage these problems. There is always mischief about and young people do need to be made aware that they need to be on their guard. They need to know what is right and wrong. There is a balance, as there are so many benefits. We like the novelty of finding what is news when it happens, we like to be in control and able to search and contact those who have similar concerns, such as health issues. It can be used by minorities such as migrants, or people with HIV, or the disabled

who may be housebound. These are thrilled to find others like themselves. On an international level Twitter and Facebook are being used by campaigners for justice in many troubled areas of the world and may lead to more democracy and possibly peace.

So the motion was defeated by ten votes to six with 3 abstentions. We did not spend all our time discussing serious issues though as there was an afternoon of leisure activities and most went on a walk through woodland filled with bluebells up to the top of the hill in Waseley Country Park with distant views over Worcestershire.

Then on the last evening Colin and Joan Partington organised a Social with a variety of activities to suit us all, including a team game to name the guests at the wedding of Ernest and Marion Baker! Can you?

I should mention that the A.G.M. of the FOY Society was held and a lot of time was spent discussing the GA Zettes which are produced during the General Assembly.

I understand that the next conference is to be held at Hucklow where there is room for more people so look out for the poster about it.

Pat Howard

## **What do we regard as art? How far does it matter to us? – The May Forum**

Our small group divided between those whose love of art is sufficient to take them regularly to galleries and those who liked to have something attractive on their walls at home but did not normally pursue art with any fervour.

Since the opening of the Hepworth Wakefield was imminent, we shared our opinions of the exterior of the new gallery: none of us liked it; it was hideous, and out of scale for its surroundings. But those who had seen the interior said that the galleries themselves were impressive. There are lovely views from its windows.

Art, we agreed, was simply what the individual liked and regarded as beautiful. We noted that different cultures, and different epochs, have different ideas about what qualifies as art. One brought to show us a small and slender wooden figure, carved in Ghana, and carried as a charm by women who had suffered a miscarriage; for him, setting aside its purpose, it was a work of art. We talked about how Henry Moore had been influenced by African art.

But was art more than just a feast for the eye? We spoke of its being said to have a spiritual value – how people sat in the presence of one of Mark Rothko's abstract works and felt its capacity to enhance the soul. For some of our group such abstract art had no appeal. There were a couple of reproductions of Jackson Pollock's paintings on the table among other pictures brought to consider. Their abstract patterns seemed to have little appeal. If we were to declare preferences, works by Constable and Turner, also on the table, would gain more votes.

Some of us had been to see David Hockney's immense 'Bigger trees near Warter' on display at York Art Gallery. Made up of 50 canvases, it was undoubtedly a 'tour de force'. But it was not to be regarded as a masterpiece for other more aesthetic reasons. (And for one who saw it, there had been no spiritual impact.)

We went on to talk about the theft of works of art. They were stolen, of course, for their financial value rather than any particular beauty, but perhaps the one depended on the other anyway. Or did it depend on fashion? Some of the prices paid at auction for paintings by Van Gogh or Picasso seemed to us just amazing! This led us to consider how artists, dismissed in their own day, can later be reconsidered and given much higher recognition. L S Lowry seemed a good example.

And then back to what we regard as art: what of Barbara Hepworth's 'Genesis' which was being reproduced on invitations to the opening of the gallery. What of the 'Angel of the North' which had become a very widely known image and which dominated the skyline from a distance. What of the dresses and hats on display at the recent Royal wedding?

## **Jesus Christ in India – Guru or Revolutionary?**

Kirsteen Kim, Professor of Theology and World Christianity, at Leeds Trinity University College, spoke at a meeting in the Treacy Hall which was organised by 'Christians Aware.' I think we will hear more of this group.

Kirsteen taught at colleges in India for several years. I am trying to summarise the gist of her talk. There seem to be two different approaches to Christianity in India. One has been led by Vandana Mataji, RSJC and the other by Samuel Rayan, SJ.

Historically Christianity was introduced perhaps in the second century by the St. Thomas Christians, especially around Bangalore. Roman Catholics

moved in in the Sixteenth Century, then Protestants sending colonial missions, and Evangelicals and then Indians began to initiate churches along their own lines.

Vandana, born in 1924, with a Parsee background, and Catholic schooling, was challenged by a French monk , to live her Christ life in an Indian way. She became involved with the Ashram movement and explored Hinduism. She came to the conclusion that the Hindu Christian ashram should be centred , not on Christ, but on the Holy Spirit, and she wrote a book which begins at one end with Christianity and also begins at the other end with Hinduism. She was especially influenced by St. John's Gospel and its references to water. She is a feminist and taught Literature, and has inspired many people.

Samuel Rayan on the other hand is interested in Liberation Theology and empowering the Untouchables because he has seen how strong the Caste system still is. We may think of it as a 'grassroots' approach. He is influenced by St. John's Gospel too. He thinks of the Holy Spirit as a liberator.

These two ways of thinking and feeling do not necessarily like each other. Perhaps Unitarianism has a part to play in this.

Pat Howard

## **The Launch of the Northern Georgian Society at Westgate Chapel on 9 May**

Samzeo, a group dedicated to singing songs from Georgia, hired the Chapel on 9 May for the launch of the Northern Georgian Society, a body dedicated to promoting Georgian polyphonic singing and culture. The event brought the Georgian ambassador to the chapel as well as the Baptist Bishop of Georgia, and the Bishop and Dean of Wakefield. It also brought a large audience to the chapel, most of whom were from our own area and almost all of whom were discovering the chapel for the first time. A key figure behind the event was Sarah Cobham who has spent most of her career as an English teacher at Outwood Grange School. Sarah discovered Georgian music accidentally when she attended the One-World Festival 2006 and went to hear what she thought was going to be Gregorian chants.

‘In Samzeo there are no leaders,’ Sarah says, ‘we are all very equal and value and listen to one another carefully and with deep respect. I am however the primary force behind the action of the group - I enjoy organising events and see it as a challenge to work in a clean and pure way in a world which is often not so. I am very creative and love to start with an idea and see it through to the end. I have a high level of organisational skill,



gained, I think from teaching in secondary education for twenty years but mostly I am not afraid of taking risks and working with my instincts. My friends are very supportive. I find their belief in me inspirational and I love their reactions when I say 'I have had an idea...' it's usually 'uh oh...' but usually they listen, get caught up in it and it goes ahead. I am not afraid of ditching an idea if it's either not the right time or is just plain not right but equally I am not easily deterred if I really believe in one. This goes for all areas of my life.'



*Samzeo performing at Westgate Chapel on 9 May*

## **Theft of lead from the Vestry wall and roof**

Lead thieves struck at the Chapel on three successive nights in May. We reported the first damage to the police the day following its occurrence during the night. We also alerted the police to the fact that there was more lead to be stolen and that they would almost certainly return. Alas that the rear gate (over which they climbed) is not covered by CCTV. Thanks to the efficiency of the Trustees' contractor, Steve Willans, the roof was made watertight immediately and much of the damage has been repaired. The lead water ducts near the rear door await replacement by cast iron ones. We have subsequently heard of the West Yorkshire Police's Faith Watch scheme and have plans to meet a police officer on 29 May to learn more about it. We are told that West Yorkshire police work with local scrap yards etc in regards to lead thefts, to establish if any stolen lead is sold to these yards so that we may be able to trace, who has sold the lead and find out the relevant information. There have been a number of lead thefts taken from around Wakefield city centre in the last twelve months or so and the police do check every possible link to try to find out who is stealing the lead and where it has been sold.

## **Arty-Van in the Chapel grounds, 21 May 2011-05-26**

To mark the opening of the Hepworth Wakefield on 21 May, Jan Millington provided the smallest art exhibition in the city. This was of some of her smaller paintings and was held in her camper van in front of the Chapel. The event provided an opportunity for people to look inside the Chapel at the same time. There was some amusing publicity in *The Wakefield Express* which announced that it was not Vincent Van Gogh. As far as we can judge, however, the vast crowds of people attending Wakefield's Art Fest spent their time at the other end of town, either at the Hepworth Wakefield itself or at the Chantry where Gallery Arts had a competing exhibition. Many thanks, though, to Jan for undertaking this and flagging up our presence in the cultural scene.



*Jan Millington with some of the exhibits from her van display*

## **The West Yorkshire Forget-me-not Trust – appeal**

We have had an appeal for donations towards the West Yorkshire Forget-me-not Trust which is building a children's hospice and respite centre at Brackenhall, Huddersfield. Donations can be made simply as a one-off payment or on a regular monthly basis. Enquiries (and perhaps cheques) to West Yorkshire Forget Me Not Trust, 14b Longbow Close, Bradley, Huddersfield. HD2 1GQ

## **An Object for the Rules of the Congregation**

During our Congregational Assessment Process we were advised to devise an object for the congregation's Rules. John Goodchild proposed the following wording which was accepted by the Chapel Committee at its May meeting and will now go forward to our Annual Meeting in November:

‘To enhance the Unitarian liberal religious witness in Wakefield and its vicinity and to sustain in every way the wellbeing of the congregation of Westgate Chapel.’

## **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.

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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.)

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