

FOY NEWS

AUTUMN, 2019



The Foy Society Conference 2019
Colin
Lets Pray
Partington

The Foy Society

is a fellowship of women and men who, in a spirit of free inquiry, seek to understand the nature of present issues and problems - political, social and religious.

Founded in 1924 as The Fellowship of Youth, in 1957 we became known as the Foy Society. We had gradually taken on the role of an inter-generational group.

Despite the fact that most of our members are Unitarians, all are welcome to join and participate, whatever religious background. Our discussions and interaction thrives on a rich texture of input. Please feel free to join us.

Cover picture: At the 2019 Foy Conference, Colin Partington tests his Mandala Design skills during the stone decoration workshop

Hard Copy produced by: David Warhurst, using the GA Zette equipment

Deadline for contributions to the Spring issue: 15th February, 2020,
See back page for contacting the editor

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President's Piece



John Rowland writes

About two weeks ago as I write, mid-August by the calendar, Helen and I spent nine days at the European Juggling Convention. It's a gathering of at least 4,000 people, run by volunteers and entirely non-profit. I was inspired by the astonishing and memorable acts and shows we saw, and pleased to spend time with a great many friends. But mostly I was reminded that we are capable of amazing co-operation. Just a few people with a good idea can bring in more and more until something quite remarkable happens.

On the largest scale, from national government to international agreements, it definitely seems difficult to be optimistic at the moment. But despair is not productive. We need to take inspiration from what we have done so far to work toward what needs to be done. Mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing ongoing carbon emissions needs further co-operation and effort at national and international level - not despair. And internationally, the world has done similar things on a smaller scale in the not so recent past - limiting sulphur emissions to control acid rain, and limiting CFCs to protect the ozone layer.

Working for civil liberties and a free and open society, in the face of press scares and power grabs, will take co-operation among lovers of liberty - not despair. Even anger and rage can be a motivating force, just so long as it powers through into action.

So, the few days away from the daily news and politics was a useful reminder that people can work together in complex and co-ordinated wide-ranging ways to do remarkable things. It doesn't happen without effort but it does happen!

On a smaller scale, Foy rely on both inspiration and co-operation each year as we plan and put on our annual conference. The theme leaders lead the way, but Foy council (especially the conference secretary), the Nightingale Centre, and all our members work together to make this happen as an enriching and worthwhile event.

The theme for our Spring 2020 annual conference is Plants and People and we will be at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow. While we are booked in for Friday evening to Monday lunchtime as usual, I do have to mention that the government has moved the date of the early May bank holiday. It was not possible to move Foy's booking to follow the bank holiday date, so Monday of Foy conference will be a normal working day. We know this will be inconvenient for many people, but we hope that as many as possible will still be able attend Friday to Sunday. I've asked the theme leaders to try and make sure no core study sessions fall on Monday morning.

Since we got back from the European Juggling Convention (EJC) into reality, we've sprouted some chilli seedlings (very late but we will hope for a late frost this year (or bring them onto windowsills), potted on various cuttings, and turned the compost heap. There's plenty of redcurrant and rhubarb in the freezer to be made into jam when time permits and it's not quite so warm in the kitchen. I feel very lucky to have the space, the ability and the energy to run a garden and an allotment, even though neither are as thoroughly weeded as I'd like. Particularly joyous just now are the mints and lavenders, full of roaming butterflies and bumblebees.

May each of you also take joy in some small, particular and definite thing this season.

John Rowland

2019 Flagg Welcome Weekend



Photo: Young attenders team

I have been attending Flagg all through my life and never once have I had a displeasing experience.

The people are always so friendly; the atmosphere is wonderful, and it is the perfect place for people of all ages to relax and have a good time.

You can choose to stay in the barn, or camp on the field, you can go on the long walks, or just stay and read a book. Flagg to me is a place where I feel so free, happy, and accepted, as we are all weirdos at Flagg and that's absolutely ok. It's brilliant to have a place where I can go and everyone has the same opinions as each other.

I enjoy every minute of Flagg every time I go - and that is coming from a moody 13 year old. My personal favourite time of Flagg is always the night time, the bonfires and songs and crazy dancing, the pitter patter of rain on the tents and telling ghost stories wrapped in blankets. Playing on the field and running wildly until my legs feel as if they'll drop off. It'll do you good to have that time away from technology and civilization.

Frankly. Flagg barn provides a variety of activities for a variety of ages. And this I can promise: you certainly won't be bored. I highly recommend taking a trip to Flagg. (Be prepared to get soaked.)

Clara Vela-Mason (13)

Foy Conference, 2019



The FOY Society conference 2019 was entitled “Let Us Pray” and was superbly organised by Gwyneth Roper. We explored different kinds of prayer, many of them of the hands-on kind: Gwyneth showed us how to paint mandalas on stones (see cover picture).



Alison Thursfield taught us about Unitarian prayer beads sets; Vicky Hewerdine led us in making our own candles and prayer flags. We also enjoyed gardening, walking in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside and chanting the evening away under the gentle leadership of special guest Rev Danny Crosby.

This was my first time attending a FOY Society conference, and I have to admit that I was a little nervous at first, despite being a seasoned participant at Unitarian events and indeed a seasoned extrovert! I knew

that the FOY Society had a long and proud history, and I was worried that newcomers would not be particularly welcome. I couldn't have been more wrong. I felt very warmly welcomed by everybody, and there was a clear sense that new faces were a wonderful sight.



I also really enjoyed the truly intergenerational nature of the conference. As a Unitarian youth leader, I am a staunch advocate for including children and young people in all Unitarian events. At the FOY conference I found a refreshing attitude of not only providing some programming aimed specifically at younger participants, but also taking it for granted that children and young people would be welcome at all sessions.



A ten-year-old, a thirty-year-old and a seventy-year-old crafting, praying and relaxing side by side is something I would love to see at all Unitarian events, and I commend the FOY Society for blazing a trail in this direction.



You can tell how much my partner and I enjoyed the sense of community that was created during this conference by the fact that we joined the society on the spot and even volunteered to help organise next year's conference.



I hope to see you all next early May Bank Holiday as we explore the theme - ***Plants and People!***



Oh, and watch out for a set of Unitarian prayer flags making the rounds of Unitarian communities across the country...

Marta Pacini

Open Door in the Market Place

If you want me on a Thursday morning, you will usually find me at our local community hub, Crosspoint. Volunteers are present at a drop-in centre to help with a variety of needs. We operate a food bank and supply toiletries, host a community fridge, help people with online applications and CV-writing, point people towards specialist advisers, provide telephone access, or simply a hot drink and a safe space .

With the assistance of a grant from Tesco, we provide camping equipment for homeless people. Few of them occupy doorways here, with wooded countryside available; instead there is a campsite. Some have addictions, some have been released from prison with nowhere to go, others have simply fallen through the safety-net following family breakdown and/or redundancy. We don't judge, just help if we can. If requested we will act as a "post-restante" address for mail.

The introduction of Universal Credit has been a shambles, and we have seen the direct results on individuals. People with a variety of disabilities are stuck in a cycle of assessment and appeal. Many low-paid workers are at their wits' end how to cope. We have trained debt counsellors, but can't give legal advice as we have no one qualified to do so.

When the centre isn't open to the public, we also host a confidential low-or-no-cost counselling service for those who cannot access this through the NHS or privately, especially young people.

My home town of Westbury in Wiltshire is a small market town, so it cannot support these services separately in the way they might be provided in a city. As a result every day is different, though we have our "regulars" (and are concerned when they don't turn up). The local people are generous and keep us well-supplied with food and other donations, but we rely on grants and fundraising by various groups to stay open. In an ideal world, Crosspoint would close its doors for lack of activity, but I suspect my Thursday mornings will be taken up for some time to come.

Kay Millard

A Journey into Eastern Europe Fifty Years ago (part two)

In the last edition of Foy News we printed the first half of a report that Valerie Walker sent to Foy News from a 1968 International Religious Fellowship adventure into Eastern Europe. In Part One, they had travelled as far as the Hungarian-Romanian border and had been fined by a policeman in Oradea for driving along a pedestrian-only street. The story continues with the second half of this fascinating saga - (Editor).

We journeyed on and arrived at the Unitarian College in Cluj-Napoca (Kolosvar), joining many other Unitarians from around the world, all there for the Torda celebrations. We young people, were shown to our accommodation for the duration of our stay; we later discovered that the boys had been placed in modern apartments with showers and inside sanitation (and were even given vodka to drink by their hosts!) while we girls were in very basic accommodation, sharing beds in a small two-room apartment with no running water and an earth loo in a shed down a path, with tomato plants growing alongside to scent the air!



1968 Chauffeur...
Get that hat!
Valerie did look
where she was
driving on the Autobahn!



Our red hire car had by now gained the nickname 'Loo-Loo' because of the continuing problem of finding any such facility; Romania was beautiful (driving through the Carpathians **did not** make one think of Dracula, just what lovely scenery) but VERY primitive country then; one imagined what Britain would be like going back 150 years.

Even so the local young people seemed no different to us or any other young people we knew and they were eager to show us their town. No-one seemed to mind cramming additional passengers into the cars. We had also been joined by an American minister who was travelling independently, so our Cluj outings were often very cosy! Despite some language difficulties, our Dutch friend Paulien had an amazing ability for making our needs known by her amazing skills to mime and communicate with us all, even telling fairy stories in Dutch that somehow everyone could understand!

The main events in Romania were the service of celebration at Torda (very long in a crowded, hot, chapel) and then the visit to Deva to climb the mountain to the ruins of the castle, where Ferenc David was imprisoned; this excursion was in pouring rain, so it was very muddy and slippery (4).

Many of the 'official' visitors (including Annette and Helmut), then travelled on to Debrecen in Hungary for further meetings but on the 20th August, unable to meet up with our friends in Debrecen, I and my passengers decided to go directly to Budapest, our next main venue, a day early. On our way, we had to stop at a crossing to allow a train loaded with Russian tanks and soldiers to pass (there had been Warsaw Pact 'manoeuvres' in the area for some time. We were curious, but not unduly concerned - though we did refrain from taking photographs!). We had given a lift to a young German train-spotter/hitch-hiker (there were still steam engines in that part of Europe). He told us about an accommodation bureau at Budapest North Station, so we found rooms in two different apartments for the night. There was no common language with our hosts but Paulien's amazing miming organised much-needed baths for us (the water heated by an alarming old geyser). Ed: Not sure which type!

The next morning we met up with Marek and Andrew for breakfast in a cafe, and heard the dreadful news about the 'invasion' of Czechoslovakia. Buildings in Budapest still bore the scars of machine-gun bullets from the unsuccessful 'uprising' in 1956. It made this news more alarming.

Again, most of the Unitarian visitors had travelled on to Budapest from Romania for the Hungarian celebrations. As they had arrived the same day,

the news filtered through and caused shock and concern for everyone. Sensibly the Brits checked with their embassy and were advised to 'carry on with our visit, (don't embarrass your hosts)'. The 400th Anniversary celebrations went on as planned. There was another long service followed by a dinner in a beautiful open-air restaurant, but my main memory was trying (unsuccessfully) to find news about what was happening in Prague from the BBC World Service. We did find, on the car radio, someone speaking English, but soon realised that this was just a Russian propaganda broadcast.

We were due to return to Germany via Austria but on the road, as we had been at times during our travels, we were stopped by Russian soldiers who checked our documents (rather surprised that in a German car there were no Germans!); this time we were more apprehensive, but these very young men were more interested (seeing our British passports) in whether we 'knew the Bee-atles'!



At the Hungarian-Austrian border, a lorry in front of us was carrying a load of tree trunks, and the guards actually did climb over and put spikes down between the logs – the sort of thing one only thought happened in films. The Austrians at their border post were interested in what we had seen of troop movements, and then we aimed for Graz where we had arranged to meet up with the others.

Our last night before returning to Offenbach was spent at Mondsee at a lovely Austrian lakeside hotel, refreshing and quiet after the turbulent end to our East European journey.

Of course, each of us holds different memories of this time, often it is the

inconsequential happenings that linger; being offered the Czech 'speciality' (dumplings) at nearly every meal; the vast fields of sunflowers we saw as we drove across Hungary; the problems of finding and buying petrol (benzina); Paulien managing to mime our needs, and discover what lavatories are called in the various countries!

This was all a very long time ago. Sadly, Helen, Horst and Paulien are no longer with us, though we are still in contact with, and meet every few years, Helmut and Hans at IRF 'Oldies' Reunions.

I have attempted to gather an impression of the recollections from three of us who never will forget the experiences and memories from such a unique and momentous journey. Annette and Andrew have written more fully in their personal accounts of this memorable trip, much more than there is space for in this article. Especially, they write about the many prominent Unitarians we met during our visits (somewhat irreverently referred to as 'high monkey monks' by Helmut, a term which I still find myself using!), particularly the Czech, Hungarian and Romanian Unitarians, people who had maintained their faith throughout the times of Nazi and Communist oppression and who, on 21st August 1968, must have felt a terrible blow had been struck to their hopes of future religious and individual freedom.

I am sure both Annette* and Andrew would be willing to provide anyone interested with an email copy (5).

References 1-3 were in the first half of Valerie's report (see last edition of Foy News)

4) There was a photo of 'The Pilgrims on Deva mountain in the pouring rain' in The Inquirer 26 April 1969.

5) email addresses:

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vawalker55@gmail.com

NB. A version of this article appeared in The Inquirer in September 2018

Valerie Walker



Text and photographs
On this page and P 19
By Rev. Ernest Baker

"The Rhine flows on"

*Across the road,
the mighty river eddies suspiciously,
tranquil, yet current-laden.
The traffic buzzes past,
The heat is intense.
From my laziness, I wonder
about those active, wherever!*

*Meanwhile this is a mini-paradise
of "rien a faire"!
Vehicles apart, there is silence
Soothing, relaxing,
illusioning a peaceful world out there.
It is not so, of course,
though it might as well be.
Lucky me! For now at least!*

IRF Oldies 2019 in Germany and Switzerland

A report by Martin H. Scherrer

including some English Unitarians

organised by the Swiss IRF-Oldies from the 50s, 60s and 70s.

reported by Martin H. Scherrer (Masche), 2019 reunion Organising Committee member and Swiss IRFer from former Swiss Zwinglibund (IRF = International Religious Fellowship; see footnote).

As announced in FOY News spring 2019, page 23, our 60 people from 6 countries (CA, CH, DE, GB, NL, US) gathered in the historic castle ensemble Beuggen at the river Rhine, in Rheinfelden (Baden) Germany.

The Swiss Committee had held 7 meetings to organise everything, responding to the wishes and suggestions of the attendees to be, and making plans and programmes for the reunion week. And we learned: there were many contributions from the participants as well, such as preparing a Sunday service in the castle's chapel, providing guided tours, preparing the stunt night (the last evening before farewell), etc.



Garden Exhibition



Meeting old Friends

The arrival weekend saw a huge garden exhibition around the hotel and castle park, with free admission for the hotel guests: there were flowers, plants, bushes, berries, spices, garden fountains, decorations in wood, metal, concrete, fabric, etc., furniture, grill, lighting, stoves, and, and ...

The IRF-oldies, however, were more keen to meet friends from old times, and from the last reunion in 2017 in Berlin/Chorin, Germany. We arrived individually, but OC members provided much appreciated transport from

Basle main station and EuroAirport (we are no longer the agile case and bag carriers than in our younger period of life, enjoying a little comfort in a real hotel, with toilet, running water and shower in the room, and lift in the staircase). That was different e.g. in the 1965 conference in Wiston Lodge, Scotland, where the boys slept in (eventually flooded) tents outside the castle, and the girls in the castle with facilities “on the floor” only.

Suddenly, we felt as a family again, and if it would have been yesterday only and not years or even decades when we saw each other last time. Lots of stories were interchanged, lots of individual experiences told. And we recognized the long known personal ways of living still present among our foreign friends.



We had a day out to Basle with guided tour, including the local ferries to “the other side of good old father Rhine”, we spotted Rhine swimmers along the 3,5 km public river bank, and a dog happily balancing on one of the watertight cloth bags used to keep dresses dry while swimming down. After visiting some touristic and historic places and buildings, we ended the day with a drink in a traditionally decorated Clique Cellar, “Schnooggekerzli” (literally: “little creeping candle”), of a group of Shrovetide musicians (drums and pipes), and colourful paper lanterns.

The next day was “non organised”, but some 20 people joined a trip to Rheinfall in Schaffhouse, the biggest waterfall in Europe. A boat trip in the basin to the bottom of the fall and into the water spray followed a walk along the fall’s slope and to platforms close to the brawly waters. In the evening sing song of traditional IRF tunes out of a booklet with 50 international song texts edited and illustrated by an IRF member couple.

Switzerland consists of the Jura barrier (chalk stone mountains along the French border), the flat midland, and the Alpine mountains. We had a coffee break on Passwang (a pass as the name says); where in the 80s an IRF

conference went on; with a lovely view to the midland; unfortunately not to the Alps due to hot, thus hazy, weather.



We arrived in Berne, where after free walks, three guided city tours happened, especially one climbing the Bernese Minster, the highest church tower in Switzerland, 100,6 m, with the heaviest bell of 10+ tons, 247 cm in diameter (plus 400 kg clapper; and 2 ton oak swivel beam). With a marvellous view over the UNESCO recognized city town and the river Aare flowing in a serpentine around the picturesque old town with lovely arcades along both sides of every street, and the states' parliament and government building. Some people took the popular Marzilibahn (double cable car on a 120 m steep track; formerly driven by residual sewage), and the elevator to the parklike Minster platform, still conducted by a uniformed lift boy.

Hannes Niederer, an IRFer's kid and professional fire fighter, gave a demonstration at the Basle Fire Brigade Center of the various types of equipment, and explained the numerous tasks (firefighting is the minor part); helping with accidents, saving pets (cats on trees, dogs in gullies, catching escaped reptiles, etc.), pumping cellars empty after thunderstorms and flushes, etc. are the main incidents.

A day out to Colmar's picturesque old town, and a road train tour with audio equipment gave another authentic happening. As the temperature was still high, in fact the highest temperature ever since records are made (38.4 °C = 101.1 °F), people enjoyed drinks and ice cream in street cafés here or there, looking at people bathing in fountains and shallow water streams through the city.

Augusta Raurica, the old Roman city, with a big theatre, had, other than many known places north of the Alps, never been a fortress (no barracks found), but it was a well designed big town with an estimated 10,000 inhabitants on an

important traffic place (crossing goods roads - France to Orient, and South to North of Europe), with (toll-bridges over river Rhine). We enjoyed a guided tour by an IRFer architect researcher for historic buildings, working for decades on site.

And finally, the farewell evening, with folk dancing, auction (in favour of coming reunions), stunts, and farewell song "Should Old Acquaintance Be Forgotten" - no it wouldn't: British IRFers promised to handle the next gathering in 2021.



Hurrah! Even not knowing, how IRF or parts of it will act in the future, as the world and its possibilities is steadily changing, and (young) people are following the alterations, hopefully in a positive way. We have already started to find possibilities and solutions before IRF fades away. At least, let's facilitate people getting into contact internationally with each other and understanding the commonalities. Let's overcome and/or accept the differences in our troublesome, but in fact beautiful, world. For our children - thus the future, all our futures....

Martin H. Scherrer



Some Afterthoughts by Ern



Maybe not is my feeling
But maybe that is just it -
It is just me getting old.

Or maybe we are all getting
too personally preoccupied with our "endgames",
swotting for the final exams.

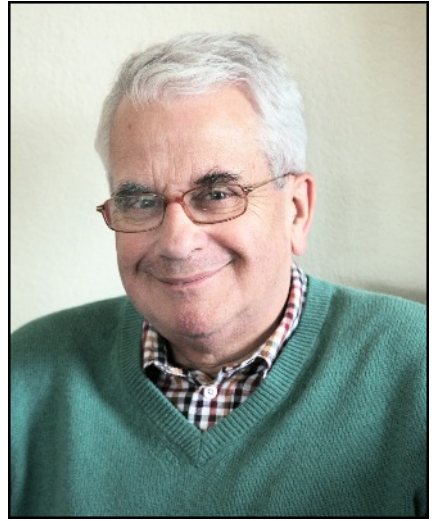
The families have gone "here" and "there"
as families do, physically and in mind.
There is a new generation,
in a new century even.
As Gibran says, you cannot enter
their new, different world, their "house of tomorrow",
"...even in your dreams".

They must find their own "Spirit",
and its embodiment,
Though perhaps we can help,
ease the way somehow.
Let's try!

Living in peace together, despite our differences,
is still needed.

Ramblings from Room 10

Idle thoughts
of a not so idle fellow



Richard Varley

Dorothy Haughton has cost me £15: all in a good cause! I was delighted to read, in the last edition of Foy News, that she had picked up on my dislike for Muzak at T20 cricket matches, albeit they don't play it whilst play is in progress! I was interested to read her account of how it was the creation of one Major General George O. Squire. He should have stuck to his day job, although I suppose that someone else would have thought of it if he hadn't. I have joined her as a member of Pipedown, an organisation which campaigns for the freedom not to have to listen to piped music in public spaces. They have a very interesting factsheet, which they published in December last year, and that may be accessed on their website: www.pipedown.info.

One interesting fact that I learnt is that, and I quote from their factsheet, "people with autism, ME, tinnitus and hyperacusis find that piped music can trigger or aggravate their condition. These people are being excluded from public spaces in a way which breaks the Disability Discrimination (Equality) Act": interesting. I am in an ongoing discussion with a privately owned tea room, about a mile from home that we often frequent as part of a local walk. If Lynne and I visit on our own, we normally read and can pretty well eliminate the piped music by switching off our hearing aids, not that we should have to. On the other hand, I find a conversation with two or three others can be challenging, particularly if vocal music is being played. Watch this space!

On an evening in June, I returned home one evening to find Lynne watching the television. Nothing surprising about that, until I saw her following a football match...! That evening, England was playing a group match in the women's

world cup competition in France. She happened to turn on the television, to discover the match in progress. It was a competition which attracted quite a lot of popular attention and what I found very interesting were some letters, from men, which appeared in the *i*. Quotes from their letters include “There is a lot of skill on show, and it is really entertaining.

The men appear to have a lot to learn from the open type of football the women play - rarely do they play negative boring football”; “No wonder women’s football is so popular: no diving, kicking the ball out and claiming a throw in, not so much chasing and screaming in the referee’s face (apart from Cameroon! – my comment). That’s how I remember men’s football was before money corrupted it” and “Women’s football is more interesting and entertaining than men’s”. It is interesting how the profile of women’s sport is being raised: it is the same with cricket. They may not have the power of their male counterparts, but the games can be just as skilful and entertaining.



and there was me
thinking an hour
Comprised
sixty minutes...

We enjoy watching and listening to quizzes and find it interesting to see how many more men participate. Ladies on ‘University Challenge’ are in a distinct minority. It is the same with radio’s ‘Brain of Britain’. TV’s ‘Eggheads’, has two teams of five being rarely formed of more women

than men. Once in a blue moon, the Challengers has comprised of an all-female team; the Eggheads, so far as I can recall, have never included more than one or two women. There are many examples in other walks of life, where men dominate for no logical reason.

Look at the government. What proportion of MPs are women? How many members of the cabinet are women? There have only been two female prime ministers. Only as recently as 2013, did Frances O'Grady become the first female TUC General Secretary. What is more difficult and contentious is how you achieve a balance. Where important decisions are being made, surely the mix of our representatives should reflect society as a whole to achieve proper representation. The subject becomes even more complicated when you factor in other aspects of societal mix: ethnic background, religion, etc. Reverting to politics, I am not convinced that all female candidate lists are the answer. Indeed positive discrimination, in any form, may lead to the exclusion of very worthy and qualified candidates: was a particular person chosen because they are the member of a less represented group? Having opened a bag of worms, I think I will leave you to ponder on the subject and move on! A possible subject for a future Foy Conference - it's a suggestion, if there is someone who would like to run with it; not an offer!

A distinct change of subject: hands up if you are able to quote paragraph 188 of the Highway Code, without looking! We have a mini roundabout near our home. As you can see from the photograph, the centre marking is positioned in such a way that if you totally ignore it, and drive in a straight line, your nearside wheels would just clip it. Many drivers do just that, also often making little attempt to reduce speed. It prompted me to refresh my memory of the Highway Code's prescribed method of negotiating one. The section in the Highway Code reads "Approach these in the same way as normal roundabouts. All vehicles **MUST** pass round the central markings except large vehicles which are physically incapable of doing so. Remember, there is less space to manoeuvre and less time to signal. Avoid making U-turns at mini-roundabouts. Beware of others doing this." The only time that I have seen the roundabout negotiated in the prescribed manner is by a learner driver, but some others do make a passable attempt. I am wary that one of the hazards of conforming totally, is that any other driver, close behind and intending to proceed straight on, without significantly reducing speed, may confuse my intention to conform, thinking that I am intending to turn

left without signalling. I have to say that, in this location, the positioning of centre marking, so far to one side, doesn't help.



Just in case you thought I was going to keep riding my driving hobby horse, breathe a sigh of relief! However, I am able to provide an update on the photograph, included on page 35 of the last edition of Foy News, which showed a 'no entry' sign displayed above a 'two way traffic' sign: the former has been removed – nothing to do with me: honest!!

Shortly before I reached the editor's deadline, came the news of the cracks in the dam above Whaley Bridge, leading to the temporary evacuation of over 1500 of the population. One especially feels the concern when you know the area, having travelled through there, mainly on journeys to or from Hucklow. You feel for those displaced from their homes and hope that the action taken by the emergency services in lowering the level of the reservoir, and strengthening the damaged area, will prevent devastating damage to their homes, should it burst. There must be great relief in that the dam did not suffer a catastrophic failure, which would have led to significant loss of life. Not surprisingly, it is headline news, especially in the first few days. It is not long before you see the topic slipping down the 'batting order' on the BBC website and further back in the papers. As with many disastrous or potentially disastrous events, the majority will lose sight of the incident. Spare a thought for those who are directly affected: they will be very grateful that they had the opportunity to be evacuated but, now that they have returned home, and to their businesses, they will have to come to terms

with living in the shadow of the dam. It is likely to raise the level of concern about the integrity of the structure, which is nearly two hundred years old. I suggest that they will take some reassuring about the remedial works which will be carried out to ensure that it is able to withstand the effects of the greater extremes of weather which we are being subjected to. Spare a thought also, for others who are living in the shadow of similar structures. There are likely to be many anxious glances at similar dams.

As with all disasters, it is all too easy to overlook the long term effects suffered by those who are directly affected. The ability of dams to withstand the effects of periods of very heavy rainfall is just one of the effects of the changes in our climate and which has brought the topic to the fore in recent months. A series of television programmes, about the use of plastic and the many ways in which waste plastic contaminates our lives, was concerning. The five pence charge on single use plastic bags has had a dramatic, and very welcome, effect. It is challenging to complete the supermarket shopping without acquiring some plastic trays and wrapping. I try to avoid them where I am able to do so. For instance, loose vegetables don't need to be put in a bag: I cringe when I see someone putting bananas in bag; they've got pretty good packaging of their own! It is a subject about which I could devote an entire 'Ramblings' about!

I will conclude by recalling a conversation on the radio about straws and their recyclability. A view was expressed as to how often one *really* needs a straw with your drink, something which, I understand, fast food outlets in particular believe you need! Most people can manage to cope with a drink without a straw...!

Richard



seen in a retirement village...

Nothing Could Be Finer Than To Be In Carolina....

Gwyneth Roper

It seems a while ago now but it was only last month I set out on an adventure to go and see Lizzie, my daughter, over in North Carolina. I can hear you all singing “ nothing could be finer”. I travelled in comfort Virgin Atlantic Premium economy. Arriving in Atlanta to be met by Lizzie who had arrived a couple of hours earlier from New Jersey where she is Director of Religious education at a UU Church in Morristown. We had a couple of days before the start of SUUSI (Southern Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute) which was being held at the University campus of Western Carolina. I have been before so we made a stop at Wal-Mart for a mattress topper as I had remembered the beds were like lying on a brick.

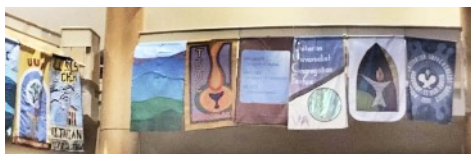
We stayed at a motel the first night, a new experience for me and, having seen motels on American detective movies, was unsure I wasn't going to get my throat slit in the middle of the night. We made it through and Lizzie decided that we would eat at some bizarre places on the way to Carolina.

“Goats on the Roof” was one of them. I thought they were stuffed animals until they all started to move as we looked for somewhere to sit. Having spent another night at The “Mountain”, a UU retreat similar to Hucklow, but on a larger scale, we arrived at the university. I was in a bed which, although still somewhat firm, was not as bad as I remember.



I was sharing a table at the artisan's bazar so spent the afternoon setting up stall and meeting new friends who were also setting up.

The first day of the conference commenced with a worship service and parading of the banners. I proudly strutted my stuff carrying our Altrincham banner up on to the stage and it was later displayed in the main worship hall. I know I am biased but ours was the best there, in my humble opinion.



The conference was entitled “Sacred Spaces” and it was very obvious that for many of the, over 1,000, people there they felt that SUUSI was one of **their** sacred spaces.

JOY WINDER REFLECTS ON THE LIFE OF ROBIN JOHNSON

It was in sadness that we heard from Robin's son and Flagg Trustee Mark Johnson that Robin has died. She had been supported at home in the years since her husband Ben died but her time had come. She was in her own bed, a place I am sure she was glad to be.

Foy members may recall Ben's 'Recollections of "A Remarkable Society" which he published in 1998. In it he details his experiences of F.O.Y. from 1937 to 1957. (it is an interesting and thorough account of the society's evolution into the Foy Society and I am sure a copy can be found for anyone who would like to read one.)

Robin and Ben Johnson on their visit to The Barn in 2010



Robin and Ben were very close but strong individuals also. I choose to share a quote from Ben's Recollections which describes his first meeting with Robin which took place at Flagg in 1948:

"At August Bank Holiday weekend (the first weekend in August in those days), JS (an Australian) turned up bringing another Melbourne University graduate who had just arrived in England. Her name was Robin Mackay and she was an actress who was trawling the West End for fame and fortune. Her clothes which would have excited no comment in the West End attracted many ribald remarks at Flagg. Johnny Quirk (later Unitarian minister in Gloucester and Canada) who was wearing his cast-off scarecrows outfit said to her "We wear old clothes at Flagg. Why aren't you wearing old clothes?" The stately reply was "I haven't got any old clothes!" Any misgivings about her competence as a washer-up were soon put to rest. We resolved to follow her career with interest."

Indeed Ben did. He and Robin married, had two sons, Mark and Ian. They were very welcoming to visitors to their home. She forged a long political involvement as a local councillor. Because it was Robin, it was as an Independent (of course!)

Robin we miss you. Memories of you wearing a gaily patterned headscarf in the Flagg kitchen waving your tea towel, and regaling your audience with stories and entertainment remains in my memory. Rest well.

Joy Winder

Janice Croucher remembers Robin as “A Good Friend”

Robin was like ray of sunshine, positive, open and interested in all things around her. I never heard her utter a cross word about anyone. She was unfailingly welcoming and gifted in friendship. Robin’s sense of humour and her laughter were infectious, shot through with the sparkling Australian sunlight which she brought to our shores.

Robin came to England to join the Old Vic Theatre Company. It just so happened that when she had time off from rehearsals, someone invited her to “Flagg.” It was there that she met Ben Johnson, a keen Unitarian from Cambridge & a staunch supporter of The Foy Society. The Old Vic lost a young actress from the Antipodes, but the Foy Society gained an icon, a lady of great personal integrity, fun to be with, forever setting people of all ages at ease.

All these, Robin’s qualities, will be much missed by her family, friends and those who knew her throughout her long & active life at the Cambridge Church where she was a member for over fifty years & later as part of the rejuvenated, restored Bury St. Edmunds congregation. That Robin lived on for some eight years without her life partner, Ben, is the greatest testament to her strength of character.

Helen Mason, Chair of the Flagg Trust adds ‘The Barn at Flagg has a long history with FOY. For those members who may not have visited before, it is a simple self-catering bunk barn sleeping nine with an adjoining camping field. It is available to let to FOY members at special rates. If you would like to enquire about availability, please contact us via our Facebook page.’



News of Members



from
Hazel Warhurst

Foy Conference

We had two young attendees at this year's conference. **Rhosie** - granddaughter of **Kay Millard**, and **Jasper Thornton** - son of **Vicky Hewerdine**. They both entered wholeheartedly into all the activities and had a GREAT time. Rhosie was looking forward to starting at her secondary school, Clarendon Academy, in September.

New Baby Congratulations

Margaret Robinson, on the arrival of her seventh grandchild. **Arthur Tyr Robinson** son of Paul and Jennie, was born on April 9th.



Lynne and Richard Varley, who are delighted to announce the arrival of their first grandchild, **Olivia Veronica**. She was born on 22nd August to **Hannah** (nee Varley) and Colin Sibley.

Jimmy and Shirley Timiney, on the safe arrival of granddaughter **Lucile**, on 31st, August, to proud parents **Andrew and Marion**.



Valerie Horsfield, on the birth of a second granddaughter. Sophie Charlotte Duncan was born on 9th September to proud parents **Emma Horsfield** and Robert Duncan – a baby sister for Jessica Louise (Jess).

More Congratulations to:

Gwyneth and Robert Roper who celebrated their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 14th April.

Katie (daughter of **Karen and Ian Hicks**), married Nigel Farrelly on 27th July.

Birthday Wishes

Elizabeth Faiers who celebrated her 70th birthday on 2nd September.

Janice Croucher who celebrates her 70th on 27th September.

Sad News

Robin Johnson, widow of **Ben Johnson**, died peacefully in her sleep on Sunday 11th August. A memorial service was held at Bury St Edmunds Old Chapel, attended by a number of Foy members.

Some of you may remember Ben and Robin being presented with a certificate of Honorary Membership of Foy, in May 2010, during the Welcome Weekend at Flagg Barn. This was in recognition of the significant contribution made by Ben and Robin to the Society over many years. See picture from this occasion and tributes on previous two pages.

Health News

Update on **Florence Dawson**, youngest daughter of **Stini** and **Alan Dawson**, and granddaughter of **David** and **Christine**. Florence successfully underwent long and complicated surgery on 1st May to remove a tumour from her left kidney. We are pleased to report that following a further spell in the Birmingham Children's Hospital she is now back home and was able to return to school with her sisters.

Our thoughts are with all Foy members currently going through difficult times with their own, or a family member's, health problems.

Membership Subscription Rates

These are unchanged at the very low rate of £7.50 for an individual and £10 for a couple.

If you feel you would like to pay more please consider making a donation to be added to the Flagg Chapel Fund which assists young people attending Unitarian events and appropriate conferences. My postal address, the same as the Treasurer's, is on the back page. Please make cheques payable to "The Foy Society".

Hazel Warhurst

John Rowland's report

as our delegate to the Unitarian GA Annual Meetings



David Warhurst proposes the Knife-Crime motion

As Foy President, I can confirm that Foy's own motion on knife crime was passed.

I believe this was with three votes against and six or seven abstentions.

This was the only policy motion laid by a society or congregation at the GA in 2019, with the rest of the business being uncontroversial Executive Committee motions. The highlights were a new affiliated society, the Findhorn Unitarian Network (FUN), and the new chief officer Liz Slade, honorary membership to Martin West, and GA's thanks to the outgoing chief officer, Derek McAuley.

We also installed Rev Celia Cartwright as President and Anne Mills as vice-president, and received the reports of the Executive Committee. I can't omit mentioning Colin Partington's report on the Nightingale Centre here, and his double-act or double-hat-double-act with Ern Baker!

Colin and Ern participate in what has now become their Nightingale Centre/SACH Publicity Spot



I'm interested to see that a really specific site-and community-based society has sought and achieved affiliated society status and I certainly hope FUN prosper. I've visited the Findhorn Community just once, many years ago - has anyone else been and does anyone plan to take up FUN's visits?

Away from the business meetings, I attended several events, including the Earth Spirit Network's workshop on the wheel of the year; the IARF presentation, in which Rev Maria Pap discussed the state of religious freedom in Romania and Hungary; the PSAP's presentation on social care, by a guest speaker and researcher, Patrick Hall; and the introduction of Unitarian College.

Next Foy Conference

Jennifer Rowland tells us how it's coming along

Next year's conference, Plants and People, is looking at how humans and plants affect each other.

We will be having some practical sessions, like a nature walk and the chance to do some gardening at the Nightingale Centre; we will spend time meditating with trees, and taste some herbs. We'll also have some theory based talks and a look at the history of domestic plants.



One of a series of photographs, adding up to a portrait of their garden, during a recent stay at Julie and Michael's new home in Devon

We are hoping to have a Beltane celebration and a service at the Old Chapel.

On the Saturday there will be a children's programme of events, led by Emma Lowe of the National Youth Programme.

As usual, we will welcome Saturday attendees as well as those who can be there for the whole weekend. Sadly, the government have moved the Bank Holiday from Monday 4th May to Friday 8th May, but it was not possible to move our booking at the Centre. We will be making our sessions on Monday relaxing ones for those who can stay on.

Why you mustn't miss it



Dot Hewerdine enjoys peace and tranquility in the gardens of Killerton Hall during the beautiful weather last August.

"In a time where our relationship and understanding of ourselves in our Ecological Environment, FOY CON 2020 takes a look at how this has changed, what effect/influence we have had on our Natural World, and what are the consequences for us as 'Micro-Societies' and Society as a whole in our 'New' and Future Environment. What can we do to save ourselves from further catastrophe?"

Tim Baker 2020 Foy Conference Programme Co-ordinator

Which name would you give it?

Do you Relate to Plants?

What's all this about spiritual-links with plants?

People/Plant relationships



Where do you stand?



Do you have Green Fingers?

I Dig Gardening



Are You a Tree Hugger at Heart?

Next Year's Foy Conference

run by the Foy Society & open to all

1st - 4th May, 2020

Plants & Us

Programme Co-ordinator - Tim Baker

Conference secretary
Joan Partington
<partingtons@gmail.com>

The Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow

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