



South East Wales Unitarian News

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April 2011

FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 15 – Monday 18 April — General Assembly Annual Meetings at Swansea University

Saturday 21 May 2011 — District AGM at Nottage at 11am

CELEBRATORY DINNER

– another event in the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Highland Place Church



Celebratory Dinner at Aberdare Golf Club

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

A Dinner, with guest speakers Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas and Roy Noble, took place at The Golf Club in Aberdare on the 3rd of February, when Unitarians from across South East Wales joined the members of Highland Place for the penultimate event in the celebration of the 150th Anniversary.

The guests were warmly welcomed by the Reverend Eric Jones and introduced to those assembled, by the Chairman of the Congregation, Humphrey Evans.

In his speech, which was given mostly in Welsh, Dafydd Elis Thomas referred to the pioneering influence of Unitarians in the fields of education, social reform and industry. He cited the achievement of Walter Coffin, the first nonconformist and Unitarian to be elected as a Member of Parliament, for Cardiff. He also paid tribute to the former Unitarian industrialists of Aberdare and Merthyr in creating work for the local population.

Dafydd Elis Thomas also expressed his affection for the creativity of Iolo Morganwg and Richard Price of Tynton who became a Unitarian Minister at Newington Green Unitarian Church in London, where Lord Elis Thomas's son currently worships. He begged the question as to where we would be today were it not for the vision and bravery of the radical dissenting movement.

Roy Noble, a native of Brynaman, reminisced on the influence of chapel life in the days of his youth. He too paid tribute to the Unitarians of the Cynon Valley, and beyond, for their innovative spirit. Finally Roy amused those present with some stories from the past.

Ella Lewis-Jones

THANK YOU

Dear Members of the South East Wales District.

I write this letter as I come to the end of my period as Secretary of the Unitarian Welsh Department in Wales. Forty Six years have passed since I was appointed to the voluntary post. During that time I have had the opportunity of getting to know a large number of the Unitarian membership in Wales as well as the opportunity of trying to help in small ways – from discussing Trust Deeds, responsibilities of Trustees, supporting requests for grant aid, young people's activities at Llanmadog, the Unitarian presence at the National Eisteddfod, publishing pamphlets and booklets, to trying to encourage congregations to take up the General Assembly's Websites and making better use of their Investments.

I would like to thank you for your support during the years and for your co-operation and patience as we discussed matters which were not easy to resolve from time to time.

I am confident that the new part time post which is being financed by the General Assembly in partnership with the two Districts and the Congregations will benefit Welsh Unitarianism in general terms, and I understand that all of our congregations have responded by agreeing to give congregational financial support to the new venture. I know that Dr Carwyn Tywyn can undertake the work with expertise and I feel sure that you will all be happy to work with him along the way.

I am sure that Carwyn will be in touch with both the Districts and each Congregation in time after he starts his duties on 1st April. He will be introduced to the Assembly at the Meetings in Swansea in April. He will be regarded as a member of staff at Unitarian Headquarters but working from his home on a half time basis.

I would like to wish you well as congregations and trust that you will do all you can to keep the Unitarian Flame alive and well in Wales.

J.Eric Jones

FROM EC LINK

Dear friends

As I approach the end of my time as your 'link' to the Executive Committee of the General Assembly, I would like to send my best wishes to South East Wales Unitarians.

At the close of the Annual Meetings in Swansea, in a few weeks time, I will complete my time as an EC member. I have been the third Executive Committee representative and no doubt you will soon know who will be fortunate in continuing that role.

South East Wales is a small district but many of its members are dedicated to encouraging creativity and initiative in pursuit of growth, in the spirit of trust and tolerance which our wonderful denomination promotes. We are less than fortunate by not having any professional Ministry currently, but we are lucky in having Lay Leadership in three of our chapels and many willing people, prepared to lead worship throughout the district. We have much to celebrate but there is still so much to do. By concentrating on the three major strategies announced following analysis of the 'Difficult Choices' questionnaire, launched in 2010, I'm sure, much can be achieved. If we can increase our *Visibility*, continue to work towards professional *Ministry* and build on strong *Local Leadership* we will reach those in our communities who are looking for a spiritual home such as we can offer.

My good wishes for a successful and growing future. It has been an honour to serve you.
Go gently, in peace and fellowship

Lis Dyson-Jones

THE REV JOHN JEWSBURY

The Rev John Jewsbury died suddenly on 27th February. He was a resident at Langton Hall Care Home near Fishguard and had been suffering from Parkinson's Disease for a number of years. He was brought up in Milford Haven.

John and I began our Theological training at the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen in 1955. At the time, he was the only non Welsh speaker at the college. There were three of us who commenced our studies at the time and I am the only one alive. John and I managed to pass the Theology Examinations three years later and both of us went to Cardiff University, John to obtain a degree in English and myself in Welsh. We shared lodgings at Connaught Road in Roath with a Mrs Olsson where our sleeping area was a very cold attic room.

John and I lost touch as he proceeded to become a minister with the English Congregationalists and later with the URC. Then, around 1975, John and wife Valerie with children Siân and Andrew turned up at West Grove in Cardiff. They were living in a very grand house in Llandaff North. John was interested in becoming a minister with the Unitarians and he went through all the procedures and became minister at Swansea, then in the Bradford group of churches and then at Brixton. I stayed with them in a rather draughty Manse at Lydgate in Yorkshire and at their home in Brixton when I was President of the General Assembly in 1990. John retired to Pembrokeshire and joined the local community there until, after the unexpected death of Valerie, he had to enter a Care home near Fishguard. I saw him just over a year ago and he was full of plans for the future including the writing of a book. I wonder if the script is still around? He died unexpectedly, leaving many memories with those who knew him and our sympathy is extended to Andrew and Siân in their loss.

Rev Eric Jones

On Thursday 10th March I attended the funeral of John Jewsbury. The service took place at Capel Ucha in Solva and the life of John was celebrated by his friend the Rev David Menday. John served our Swansea Church from 1977 to 1981, and for a short while he served Nottage too. His interests had been diverse and deep, he was passionately interested in all aspects of religion, he was an amateur astronomer, poet, playwright, lover of flora and fauna, and when he and his late wife Val 'retired' to Pembrokeshire they both showed a great love of gardening, putting in a pool, flowers, vegetables and bushes. To sit in their garden on a sunny day and watch dragonfly, bird and bee was to be in paradise. I'm told he fell into the pool a couple of times due to over zealous gardening activities.

John's love of railways caused him to celebrate one birthday many years ago in Barry Scrapyard! He will be much missed by his many friends and we shall remember him with a smile.

To his daughter Siân, to his son Andrew and to Avril we offer our sympathy. Very many people are richer for having known gentle John.

Marian Littlepage

PAUL DAVID

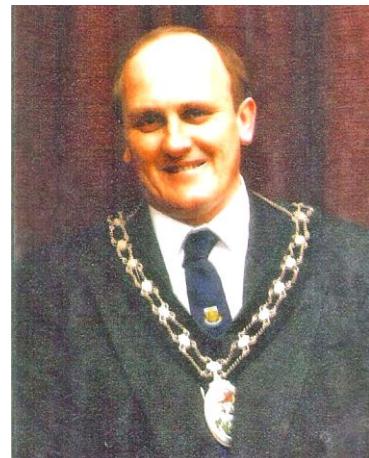
At the age of 61 years, Paul died peacefully at Prince Charles Hospital on Sunday, March 20th. He had been in hospital for some time and improving in health but suffered a relapse on the Thursday before his death.

Paul had been involved with Highland Place since he was 12 years of age and in recent years he was responsible for all the work which went on at the church, new windows and doors, bringing some meaning and purpose into the church improvement scheme, with emphasis on the disabled access. He was a Deputy Headteacher of Park Lane Special School before he retired, and had served as a County Councillor on both Cynon Valley Council and Rhondda Cynon Tâf. He served as Mayor in 1993 and carried out his duties with distinction. Paul was a good sportsperson in his youth, playing soccer and rugby and taking part in athletics.

Paul was very much attached to Unitarianism and at one time, contemplated the Ministry. He could take a meaningful Service and he had a beautiful delivery. At present, he was the Church Secretary and was about to become the President of the South East Wales District in May. He raised a large amount of money for charity by organising Pub Quizzes and he was also skilled at Crib and Crosswords. He was Chair of Governors at Caradog Primary School.

Paul achieved much and contributed immensely to the community and helped many individuals along the way. He will be missed by many.

Rev Eric Jones



Paul David

[Paul's Funeral Service was at Highland Place on March 28th, followed by Cremation at Llwydcoed.
The Service was conducted by the Rev. Eric Jones.]

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

The interview in this issue is with Lis Dyson-Jones.

Born into a strong Unitarian family in Lancashire, Lis has been a member of the Cardiff congregation for over 30 years. She is the current South East Wales District Secretary and for the past eight years has been a hard-working member of the Executive Committee. Much of her time is devoted to Unitarian causes. Her professional life was spent teaching young adults and she serves her local community as a Justice of the Peace. Lis is the mother of Samantha and Matthew and has three grandchildren, Megan, Joseph and Samuel. At the General Assembly meetings in April this year Lis will be nominated as Vice President of the General Assembly.

Ella Lewis-Jones

When were you happiest?

I have been very fortunate and have known happiness at many times during my life. Becoming a mother and watching my children become the fine human beings they are and seeing their children living healthy, happy lives, has made me happy. Very often happiness is connected to special occasions and people in one's life and I am very happy now.

What is your greatest fear?

Losing the ability to look after and think for myself.

What is your most treasured possession?

Generally, possessions and their value is temporary but if I had to choose one, it would be pictures painted by my father.

What makes you angry?

Hypocrisy and intolerance.

What do you owe your parents?

So many things but I suppose being brought up in a loving Unitarian family where I was always safe and my ideas were respected is the most important. My parents *lived* their Unitarian faith and taught me by their example.

What is the worst job you have ever done?

Whilst in the last year at school I took a summer job at Cussons Soap Factory in Manchester where for six weeks I polished tablets of 'Imperial Leather' soap with a piece of chamois leather. I can still smell it! But it opened my eyes and made me work harder in school to ensure good exam results and a place at college.

Do you ever feel sad?

I felt the deepest sadness ever, when my second daughter died at just three months old. That was over 35 years ago and some of that sadness never leaves me. But I am also saddened when I witness or hear about deliberately unkind words and actions done to others by those who should know better.

What motivates you?

I have a strong sense of purpose and a desire to make things the best I can. My motivation comes from many sources – my faith, my community, and my family, the natural beauty of the world we live in and from good, solid and loving relationships.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

There are disappointments in everyone's life and I cannot say what my biggest one has been. However, I am disappointed and sad when I see ego's getting in the way of 'right action'.

How do you relax?

Walking by the sea helps me to clear my head. Sharing a meal and good conversation with family and my closest friends. I love gardening and watching the seasons change and this renews and refreshes me.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I don't see my life as a series of achievements and so I find this question difficult to answer. However, if we are talking about my greatest joy, then I would have no hesitation in saying, my son and my daughter. No mother was ever more blessed and I'm so glad they chose me.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who appreciated the value of humour.

DISTRICT WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Hello to you all! Isn't it great that spring is in the air!

On 16th March we held our District AGM which was hosted by the Cefn Coed Branch. It was a shortened version of our usual AGM due to having a guest speaker who was invited by Margaret Evans. The speaker was Mr John Hewerdine. John showed us slides of the Annie Margaret Barr Children's Village at Kharang, way up in the Khasi Hills of India. As we all know, Margaret Barr was a Unitarian and a pretty amazing lady! John has travelled back and forth to the orphanage (set up by Margaret) for many years. In some of the slides he had black hair (now white—Bless him!) But he's as nifty as can be, and is going back there again quite soon. He is our link with the Children's Village as it is now called. The project for this past year has been for them to build a library and buy books. John showed us photos from the past right up to the present and pointed out to us exactly where on the map the Khasi Hills are. It was good to get to a deeper perspective on the subject and to see what progress they are making and what the money is spent on. The work continues and they never forget Margaret Barr. It was very humbling!

We had a 'Bring & Buy' for the said project, which raised £38. The Cefn Coed Ladies put on the usual generous refreshments; the scones were *gorgeous* by the way! However, those people who had written Branch Reports be assured, we will hear them in the October meeting along with anything else that was omitted from business. Thank you for your co-operation.

The General Assembly Annual Meetings are being held in Swansea from Friday 15th to Monday 18th April. Preparation is ongoing for the Women's League stall, and for the Women's League Meeting on the Saturday. At Saturday's meeting our present National President, Dilys Evans will hand over office to the President Elect, Barbara Clifford. We hope to arrange for a good turn out for this meeting as it is being held on 'Our Patch' this year – Wales! ☺ Let's hope the weather will be glorious for us. Branches will be contacted with arrangements, etc, as this is going to be our 'Rally' for the year (combining the two.)

I look forward very much to seeing you all at the GA Meetings at Swansea. It is always lovely to see familiar faces –and some new ones– at what is 'our' Unitarian Gathering. Being at the GA Meetings reminds me what a big friendly caring assembly of Unitarians we are—Hooray!!

Joy Foster (District League President)

GA MOTION – CHARTER FOR COMPASSION

At the General Assembly Meetings in Swansea the fourth motion to be debated is that Unitarians agree to affirm and support *The Charter for Compassion*.

But how many people have not heard of the Charter for Compassion or know anything about its origins or implications and therefore may not recognise its positive potential for the whole of humanity, the animals that inhabit our world and the planet itself.

The central principle of the Charter for Compassion is that in all our dealings, be this with one another, other animals or the environment, 'we should not treat others as we would not like them to treat us' or to put it in its positive form, 'We should always treat others as we would wish to be treated ourselves'. This is known as the Golden Rule and was developed by the Chinese sage Confucius (551-479 BC). Clearly, the Golden Rule has considerable potential for the common good as long as everyone is able to abide by it.

Karen Armstrong, in her book 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life', provides a very helpful framework for those who wish to live by the Golden Rule and develop their capacity for Compassion. Drawing on a wide range of material – ranging from the spiritualities of the world religions to the findings of contemporary neuroscience – Karen Armstrong argues that compassion is hardwired into our brains, yet is constantly restrained by our primitive instincts for selfishness and survival. We are told that, 'since time immemorial, religion has enhanced our altruistic tendencies: all faiths insist that the Golden Rule is the test of true spirituality –always treat others as you wish to be treated yourself.'

Anyone who wishes to support the motion can contact Rev Feargus O'Conner on : Ggunirev@aol.com and have their name added to the list of supporters.

The Charter for Compassion

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody,

without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

Ella Lewis-Jones

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Life

Life is an opportunity, grasp it.
Life is beauty, admire it.
Life is a dream, make it a reality.
Life is a game, play it.
Life is precious, take care of it.
Life is love, joy in it.
Life is a mystery, fathom it.
Life is promise, fulfil it.
Life is sadness, overcome it.
Life is a struggle, accept it.
Life is an adventure, dare to go on it.
Life is life, defend it.

From Mother Teresa

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4th and 5th March 2011)

1. Co-option of Executive Committee Member

The Executive Committee approved the co-option of Robert Ince to fill the vacant position that has arisen following the electoral process late last year when only three candidates were nominated for four positions. This appointment follows a public advertisement of the opportunity and is subject to approval of the Constitutional amendment by the Annual Meetings to give the Executive Committee authority to take this action in these particular circumstances. The co-option will be for two years until the next elections.

Robert is currently Chairman of Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield, where he has been a member for 15 years, and President of the Sheffield and District Unitarian Association. He has a professional background in engineering and contracting along with skills in people management.

2. Strategic Priorities

The Executive Committee focused on refining and developing the implications of the strategic priorities. More clarity was achieved on the future structure for delivery of the strategic priorities through three strategic groups and the purpose and key areas of work for each were agreed.

3. Future Annual Meetings

A report was received on options for future annual meetings following the workshops at the last Annual Meetings. These include building on what we do well, having a focus to one day with a major external speaker, celebration and inspiration and exploring moving to the summer months. Further consultation is to take place.

4. General Assembly Rolls

The recommendations of the Interview Panel and Ministry Commission were supported and it was agreed to include Daniel Costley, Danny Crosby and Bob Pounder on the Ministerial Roll with Probationary Status. Probationary Status was removed from Stephen Lingwood and Maud Robinson and Ray Seal (Lay Pastor).

5. General Assembly Directory

Changes were approved to the forthcoming Directory taking into account the views expressed in the online Survey and those who had contributed to the consultation were thanked.

Lis Dyson-Jones

FROM THE PRESIDENT

My term as District President draws to a close at the Annual General Meeting for South East Wales on Saturday, 21st May at Nottage Chapel. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the district representatives who have given freely of their time to attend the District Executive meetings and to those who hold positions of responsibility as Officers in their congregations. Thank you to Ella Lewis-Jones as Minutes Secretary, Lis Dyson-Jones as Secretary and the Rev Eric Jones as Treasurer for South East Wales Unitarian Society. Many thanks also to Keith Lewis-Jones for his work on the SEWUS website which includes pages for each chapel. Keith has also taken photographs for district events. These words would not be published without the efforts of Ken Morgan and Philip Griffiths as Editors of the South East Wales Unitarian News so thank you very much to them. The theme of the General Assembly meetings at Swansea from the 15th to 18th April 2011 is Celebrating Volunteers. Thank you also to those who are volunteers from our district in a national Unitarian capacity. Dilys Evans has served as Women's League President this year and Lis Dyson-Jones will soon be finishing her service on the General Assembly Executive Committee. Many congratulations to Lis on her appointment as Vice President of the GA for 2011 and as prospective President for 2012. Many thanks to the Rev Eric Jones for his excellent service as Welsh Secretary for a good many years.

I hope to see as many people as possible at forthcoming events such as the General Assembly Meetings from 15th -17th April 2011 in Swansea. There is no charge for attendance at the Welsh Singing Festival and Anniversary Service on Sunday 17th April. The district AGM will be held on the 21st May 2011 at Nottage chapel.

I would like to offer thoughts for the people of Japan who have been devastated by the Earthquake and resulting Tsunami. I would also like to remember all those in North Africa and the Middle East who will be suffering from the unrest and uprisings which will lead to a loss of human life.

Finally I would like to offer thoughts and prayers to those in the district who are in hospital.

*With love,
Sarah Boyce*

ABERDARE

I think most of us are pleased to feel that spring is really with us at last. The winter has been exceptionally cold and frosty with many of us confined within our homes for weeks on end for fear of accidents. The afternoon services at Highland Place were re-scheduled from 6 to 4 o'clock to enable members of the congregation to avoid being about on the darkest evenings. In April we will be reverting to the former time of 6pm.

Substantial work has been necessary to remedy the deterioration of the church floor in the area beneath the first few rows of pews. On agreeing that this work be carried out the church committee took the decision to remove these pews on a permanent basis and replace them with chairs, which can be re-arranged to suit different occasions.

Eric Jones recently took part in a Radio discussion on the issue of same sex marriages in church. This proved a tricky area for discussion as individuals often adopt entrenched attitudes to this issue.

At the 2010 Annual General Meeting of the church a proposal was discussed and accepted whereby a number of small support groups would be formed to undertake some of the tasks which are necessary for the proper functioning of the church. Throughout 2010 much of the congregation's energy and resources was directed to the enactment of The Hundred and Fiftieth Celebrations and the setting up of the groups were set aside. However, recently, with the celebrations at a close there has finally been

time for the groups to meet. The groups which have already met are Buildings, Finance, Outreach, Social, Keeping in Touch, Worship with the Administration group to meet soon.

The book "Highland Place Unitarian Church, Aberdare 1860–2010: A Story of Resilience", edited by Rev Eric Jones, is now published and copies will be for sale at the Anniversary Service on 27th March at a cost of £8.

Nina Lloyd has a chest infection, and Elwyn remains in Aberdare Hospital. Ray Thomas the husband of Jean Thomas died very suddenly. The funeral service was conducted by Rev Eric Jones. The members of Women's League and the church prepared a tea to follow the service. Unfortunately, Celia Evans, who was doing so well, has suffered a relapse. Initially she was admitted to the Heath Hospital but is now in Ward C at Aberdare Hospital. Celia is always pleased to receive visitors. Myra Gordon, after taking such care during the worst of the winter weather, had an unfortunate fall and cracked her femur. Myra is at home with the support of her neighbours and friends. Our best wishes to all those mentioned, they are often in our thoughts and we look forward to their being amongst us again very soon.

Point to Ponder: *If you are going to tolerate something, do so out of happiness, not out of compulsion.*

Ella Lewis-Jones

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

We have held our usual weekly meetings, and we have gained another new member – we now total 29! Recently, injury or ill health has prevented several members attending— we hope they are now 'on the mend' and able to return soon. We miss you all, and you are in our thoughts.

Those of us that could, went to a meeting in Cardiff at Margaret Evans's home where, along with the fund raising raffle for District coffers, we partook of some delicious sandwiches and cakes. It was all very pleasant and we send our thanks to Margaret. We ladies have also been on a trip to Carmarthen – it was a very nice day, both in company and weather.

We have held our Branch AGM and recently attended the District AGM hosted by Cefn Coed ladies. It is always nice meeting up with Cefn and Cardiff, and I hope we will forge even closer links in the near future. At present we are busy preparing for our Spring Fayre which will be held on Saturday, 2nd April at 2pm. All welcome.

'Bye for now. Best wishes... Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDODIAID CAERDYDD

The Church Committee continues its work towards the appointment of a Development Officer and it is anticipated that advertisements will be placed later in the spring.

We are also beginning to prepare for the time we will have our own dedicated Unitarian space at the Friend's meeting House. We have decided to rent a separate room upstairs where we can hold our weekly worship and create a spiritual home for ourselves. Once the current tenants have moved we can assess what needs to be done. The large room downstairs will still be available to us should we hold larger gatherings and a stair lift has been installed to accommodate the less active amongst us.

Mrs Win John has successfully moved into her new home at 31, Clarendon, Cyncoed Avenue, Cardiff CF23 6TJ. Win has retained her old telephone number. She is very comfortable and happy and although tiring, found the move much eased by the enormous amount of help from her family. A hospital appointment for her pre-operation examination of her hip, has been arranged before the end of March. We wish her well in that ordeal.

Our Secretary and others continue to visit Mr Lloyd Williams, a former member of the Swansea congregation, who now lives in a home at St. Fagan's.

A Children's Group, organized by Diana and Sarah will start in late May or early June and anyone living in the area with children or grandchildren will be welcome to join in. If you know of any family, Unitarian or not, who might be interested, please contact Sarah or Diana.

The Archdruid of Wales T James Jones will give a lecture at the Society of Friends Meeting House, Charles Street, Cardiff on Monday 4th April at 7.30pm. He will speak about the Gorsedd and lolo Morganwg. Following the talk coffee will be served. There is no charge for this event but donations will be taken on the night. All are welcome; please come and join us.

We again offer thanks to all who kindly travel to Cardiff to conduct worship for both the English and Welsh services.

Thought for Now

As Spring touches us with her soft gentle rain and returning sunshine, let us go forward under the power of the planets.- the growth of the Moon, the energy of Mars, the beauty of Venus and the speed of Mercury, the majesty of Jupiter and the glory of the sun, the silence of Saturn, the innovation of Uranus and the infinity of Neptune. Nine stars to encircle us from day-spring to nightfall. We are blessed.

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Recently we invited Debbie Wilkes of Lily of the Valley Florists to give us a demonstration on the art of flower arranging. Using daffodils, tulips, some gypsophila and greenery she showed us how to produce displays that were quite simple to achieve but looked very beautiful.

It was good to welcome our SE Wales friends to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on 16th March for the AGM of the District Women's League. We were also pleased that John Hewerdine and Rev Eric Jones were brave enough to venture into the company of so many ladies. John, who had journeyed from Lancashire to be with us, gave us an illustrated talk on his visits to the Khasi Hills. It was most interesting and gave us an insight into the work being done there.

Gwen Everitt

CELEBRATORY DINNER

Several of us attended the Dinner at Aberdare Golf Club on 3rd February to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Highland Place Church. The excellent meal was followed by contributions from two fine speakers - Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas and Roy Noble. A most enjoyable evening with convivial company.

IMPROVED IMAGE

Repeated applications of tarmac over many years raised the roadway at the front of the chapel quite considerably so that the gutter had become an unsightly ditch that collected litter. The local authority has recently resurfaced this section and provided a new concrete gutter — a much improved aspect to present to a visitor or passer-by.

ANCESTOR SEARCH

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd is often visited by people researching their family history. Some searches are unsuccessful but recently a mother and daughter were overjoyed when careful scrutiny of monumental inscriptions and burial slips revealed the final resting place of a family member who died in 1907.

IN OUR THOUGHTS

Margaret Edwards spent a short spell in Prince Charles Hospital recently—it's nice to have her back with us. We miss those members who are unable attend because of infirmity or illness and we send them our best wishes.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

We have been really pleased for the past weeks to have Isabelle Rozenberg play the organ for us. Her time as organist will be limited as she will be taking her place in the Birmingham Conservatoire in the autumn, we wish her a happy and successful time there, and are most grateful for her playing for us in the meantime.

Our congregation has been blessed for the past few months with the attendance of Lloyd Jones and his fiancé Ellie. Ellie first discovered Unitarians in Swansea, but Lloyd's mother lives in Porthcawl, and so the couple have chosen Nottage as the venue for their wedding in August. We were really pleased when Ellie contributed to our last congregational service, and at our recent AGM Lloyd put forward some practical suggestions for making our buildings 'greener' and more profitable. Thank you both.

Annette and David Marsh were once more blessed with a grandson in January, their 5th! Morgan is a much welcomed brother for Rueben and Trystan; parents and boys all doing well!

We would like to extend our sympathy to Jean and Jonathan Thomas on the passing of Jean's uncle. He was the last of a family who have a big part in the history of Nottage, they will not be forgotten.

We would also like to send our sympathies to the family of the late John Jewsbury. While John was minister in Swansea he also ministered to us, and was very well thought of by us all. We have some good memories of a tall, handsome man with a beautiful Pembrokeshire accent. God Bless.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

On Thursday evening, 3rd February 2011, four members travelled to Aberdare Golf Club to join Highland Place congregation and friends celebrating their 150th anniversary. Inside the club all was warm and cosy. We enjoyed good food and friendly companionship. Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas spoke in Welsh and I was not very successful with the headphones so I did not get the full benefit of his address, but the second speaker Roy Noble was a joy to listen to. His theme 'we had come together to celebrate our diversity' was well chosen. He stated that 'Life was a patchwork where every human being has worth'. His rich quality of voice, good command of language and a nice sprinkling of humour combined with the confidence of experience made for very enjoyable listening. On leaving the club we were nearly blown over by strong winds and driving rain. Whilst travelling through the dark, we passed rows of houses looking safe and cosy with lighted windows and drawn curtains. I thought of the joy of having a home as a sanctuary. Then I tried to imagine people on such a night looking for a doorway and a cardboard box to sleep in. The misery of it was almost beyond my imagination. Since then, Japan has been devastated by an earthquake and a tsunami when thousands of homes have been washed away – what a sad spectacle, what suffering!



Charity Cash Handover

Photo: Steve Wilson

On 27th February 2011 we held a presentation evening after service. Money had been collected in the charity box whilst the Christmas Crib was in the courtyard, boosted by a kind donation from Mrs Joan Williams who donated the takings from a concert staged by her dancing school. We had £500 to distribute. Recipients were the Alzheimer Society Swansea, the NSPCC, Childline and the Salvation Army Morriston Luncheon Club. They each spoke well about the work they did and we all felt grateful for the work done by volunteers, which links up well with the main theme of the forthcoming GA Annual Meetings at Swansea University in April.

Once again we thank everyone who has taken a service with us. One sticks in my mind. Mrs Hilda Dumpleton was inspired by the uprisings in Egypt and Libya in search of freedom. She decided that the freedom most people want is the freedom of choice. However, freedom brings with it stronger need for self discipline. Hilda read a wonderful poem called 'The Kite' which emphasised the value of the string which it always seemed to be wanting to break free from, but what happens when it did. It made one think.

We have had enough of winter and are all longing for the spring with the extra hour of daylight coming soon and hopefully some warm sunshine.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

On a cold January morning we arrived at Gellionnen and saw smoke rising from the chimney. Our thanks go to Ernie Sanford Francis who can light the new log burner in a trice despite the very complicated instructions given by the stove's handbook. And another piece of good news comes from a friend who told me that Aura magazine which she picks up at a local Tradecraft counter had recommended service at Gellionnen as something broadly based and welcoming.

Betty Williams has celebrated her 90th birthday. We wish her well and many congratulations. Betty can make the best loaf of cake I have ever tasted, she is Eirion Phillips's big sister. Eirion has not been at all well these last few months and we hope that the spring brings with it an improvement in his health. Eileen James is now residing at Dan y Bryn retirement home, she is a lovely person and a great conversationalist.

We are getting ourselves into the new purple hymn book thanks to Sandra Beynon who brought along the relevant CDs. We must by now have tackled around eight of the songs. And thinking musically, we send our good wishes to Hywel Jones, away in London studying music and look forward to a visit from him – complete with some instrument or another!

Lewis is not as yet able to return to his normal lifestyle. His progress is being monitored and we miss having him with us at Gellionnen and Graig Chapel.

We look forward to your return when you are fit and well Lewis. Take care.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Daffodils, primroses and forsythia provide a golden welcome to us all at Wick, our graveyard is awash with spring blossoms and buds, but sadly part of the wall on the lane side of the graveyard has collapsed and will be the first of our rebuilding efforts. This part is around the ancient stile where for years family members have entered to place flowers on graves, especially on *Sul y Blodau*.

At our annual meeting after service on 13th February we heard of the various reports from structural engineers, builders and insurance assessors and were much reassured to learn that we were now fully insured and the building is in a better shape than we feared previously.

Our former treasurer Joyce Davies has returned home from hospital but is still poorly. Margaret Escott has undergone more tests and Glenys Pugh has been unwell. We send them our love and best wishes.

Mansel Lal is our treasurer has had two short stays in hospital but we hope he is now much better, although unable to drive for some months.

Our member Eva Morgan has reached an important milestone. She celebrated her 90th birthday on 2nd March. She was inundated with cards, flowers and visits and thoroughly enjoyed the party arranged by her family in the Lamb and Flag.

Eva was born at Cae Caradog Farm a well-known location in the Vale, and she and her family have been staunch chapel supporters for many years. The only occasions that Eva's usual pew has been empty was when she was in hospital.

With her usual care for our chapel she has invited donations for the chapel building fund instead of birthday presents.

She is a treasure and we send you our love and thanks Eva.

The village will be holding a fête on the green outside our chapel and we have been invited to staff a stall. This is the first one for many years. We used to share a stall with the local choir. We hope for a good day.

Mother Teresa wrote...

There should be less talk.

So, what do you do then?

Take a broom and clean someone's house.

That says enough.

Our greetings to all our friends in the District.

Julianne Morgan

ILLNESS

Firstly, may I say a big thank you to everyone for the kind words, good wishes, cards and prayers that I have had during this period of ill health.

For those who may not know, Cheryl woke up in the early hours of January 14th to find me having a fit in bed next to her. The upshot is that I have a large cyst on my brain, as well as a problem in which air is somehow getting into my brain cavity – so, whilst I wait to see what neurology, neurosurgery and ENT plan to do about the problem, I am on a course of anti-epileptics to hopefully prevent any further seizures.

There is a distinct possibility that I will require brain surgery, but this will all be confirmed in the weeks and months to come.

My current situation got me thinking – and I came to realise that when dealing with the issues of ill health one inevitably must deal with feelings of helplessness and resign oneself to not being in charge of the situation.

Yet, not being in control gives one the opportunity to mull over other ways of looking at life.

When you acknowledge the fact that you must place your trust, and possibly even your life, in someone else's hands, it is possible to live your life in a sort of serenity, free of worry and regret, and to instead concentrate on allowing joy and love to fill your heart and soul.

Blessed Be

Lewis

AN IRISH BLESSING

from Life Prayers From Around The World by Elizabeth Roberts

May there always be work for your hands to do
May your purse always hold a coin or two
May the Sun always shine upon your Window Pane
May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain
May the hand of a friend always be near you and
May your God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

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