



South East Wales Unitarian News

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August 2011

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 15th October – Visit of GA National President - Rev Dr Ann Peart. Short afternoon service followed by tea. Time of service and more details available soon.

Sunday 4th December – District Christmas Service & Gathering at Nottage Chapel. Service at 11am followed by a 'shared lunch'.

DISTRICT SUMMER RALLY



At Aberdare Park a group of rally supporters listen intently as Rev Eric Jones gets the mini-tour underway.

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones



District President Philip Griffiths welcomes guest speaker Mr Wilf Owen at Ebenezer vestry.

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

The District Summer Rally was held at Aberdare on Sunday 3rd July – the location having been chosen as a tribute to the late Paul David. We are grateful to the members of Ebenezer Welsh Congregational Chapel for the use of their vestry, and to Highland Place ladies for providing hospitality.

(Details of the event are given below in the Aberdare news.)

UNITARIAN RITES OF PASSAGE

At the most recent District Executive meeting, I made an offer to arrange some training sessions for individuals willing to consider conducting Rites of Passage Services (Funerals, Weddings, Blessings, Child Namings) within our District. I am now taking many Unitarian Rites of Passage services in a number of churches, but if I was not available then there could be some difficulty. We *do* have some who already conduct such services very well, but it seemed to me that we needed younger people to familiarise themselves with what is needed and be able to take such services in emergencies.

Already, I have had two enquiries and would like to hear from others who may want to know a little more and not commit themselves at this stage.

I am not thinking of those who are already doing this and I am thinking of younger people who may have the time and energy to cope, sometimes at short notice. It will involve three or four meetings at the outset, with a suitable location (or two) depending on the location of those who get in touch with me. Telephone me on 01685 873440 or e-mail eric.anne.jones@gmail.com

Rev Eric Jones

DISTRICT PULPIT PLAN

We are fortunate in having more than twenty volunteers who regularly give of their time, energy and talent to ensure that all of the congregations in the South East Wales District are able to participate and share in worship most Sundays of the year. They undertake a commitment to plan, prepare and lead our services and we are all greatly indebted to them for the time it takes and for their willingness to travel, sometimes, over fifty miles each way, to wherever they visit.

Some of those leading services have been extremely generous in not accepting the Pulpit Preaching Fee (£40 or £45 depending on Ministerial training). However, I feel that despite this, all visiting service leaders must be offered the fee. Should they wish to decline acceptance and return the fee to the visited congregation is a matter for them, but in the present economic climate and considering the cost of travel, we should be mindful of the personal costs involved.

I would like to thank all of those loyal people who regularly conduct worship in our chapels and who make my life easier by their co-operation when I contact them, twice a year, to confirm their availability.

My thanks and good wishes

Lis Dyson-Jones

“A BUSY START” from the Welsh Department Secretary

I am delighted to be able to contribute to the South East Wales Unitarian Society Newsletter for the first time, and I am very grateful to Ken Morgan for inviting me to contribute.

Time seems to have flown by very quickly since I started my work as Secretary on April 1st. I think this is an indication of how much I am enjoying my new role, and how busy the work has kept me!

I started my work with two separate interviews for BBC Radio Cymru. I was given the opportunity to explain my role as Secretary, and on a slightly deeper level, to explain why I had shifted to the Unitarians over the last few years, after being brought up in *Yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg* - the Welsh Congregationalists.

A few days later, the GA in Swansea was upon us. I have noted the very positive mood which came out of the General Assembly meetings. I was particularly struck by the high level of warmth and respect which our fellow Unitarians in England and Scotland obviously hold for us here in Wales. I think we can take a great deal of heart from that, as we try to deal with some of the challenges that face us all as Unitarians.

I have started on the work of meeting with Unitarians across Wales, including at Bangor. I was grateful to Philip Griffiths, and everyone else who was present, for their very warm welcome when I attended the recent meeting of the South East Wales society at Aberdare in July. Rev Eric Jones continues to be an important source of information and advice as I come across matters that are new to me.

Unfortunately, my personal situation has been clouded by the sudden death of my father in May (aged 67, through natural causes). I was touched by the messages of goodwill that I received from my Unitarian colleagues. You may be interested to know that whilst my father was a committed atheist, he became interested in Unitarianism through me, and became an individual member of the National Unitarian Fellowship. Earlier this year he even stated “Unitarian” as his religion on the 2011 National Census Form – which came as a big surprise to me! Otherwise, I’m pleased to report that my bereavement has not had a negative impact on my work as Department Secretary.

Communications

In the first few weeks of my new role, I spent quite a bit of time developing our communications on “Twitter”. (I’m still getting the hang of it myself, but search for “Undodiaid Cymru” or “Unitarians Wales” on Twitter and you should be able to link up to our news feed).

I am also developing my personal Blog as Secretary (www.blogdodwr.blogspot.com). The title is “Blogdodwr”, which is a play on the Welsh word “Undodwr” (a Unitarian person).

Both of these new forums are places to promote, advertise and broadcast ALL Unitarian activity in Wales. We already have over 125 people and organisations following our news on Twitter, so I appeal to you as a society, and as individuals and churches, to send any news to me for wider coverage throughout Wales and beyond. I think this is important in showing the outside world that we are a proud, active and friendly organisation, that offers something of interest to anybody who is interested.

Eisteddfod Public Meeting

At the time of writing, I was finalising a public meeting to be held on behalf of the Welsh Department at the National Eisteddfod field in Wrexham. The theme of the meeting is "Wales and the "Big Society"", with guest speakers from Bangor Unitarians, Oxfam Cymru, Christian Aid and the WCVA. Hopefully the meeting will have been a success in showing Unitarian concern for social issues at a time of real economic hardship for so many people in Wales. On a symbolic level, I am proud that we will have a Unitarian presence at an Eisteddfod in north Wales for the first time in recent memory.

Working Schedule

As Department Secretary, I am employed part-time, for 2.5 days per week. As a rule, I intend to spend every Monday at my (home-based) office (1 day). I intend to spend another ½ or a full 1 day "on the road", either conducting or attending a midweek meeting, or attending an individual congregational event on a Sunday. I then propose that the remaining 0.5-1.0 day of work remains more flexible, depending on my duties on any given week.

My other 2.5 days of the week will then be turned over to my work as a self-employed harpist. I have also found that my work as a harpist has been advantageous as a means of getting around Wales to meet individual Unitarian officers.

Contact

As Department Secretary, I am at YOUR service, and I hope you will feel able to contact me to discuss any Unitarian matter, large or small. Here are my details:

Mobile telephone number: 07973 851590. Feel free to phone at ANY time on this number, please leave a message if there is no answer.

Office phone number: 01554 833194. Usually available on MONDAY on this number.

E-mail: ctwyn@unitarian.org.uk I check my emails regularly 5 days a week. I may be able to respond to brief enquiries at short notice. However, longer enquiries may have to wait until the following Monday.

Diolch yn fawr i chi gyd am eich cefnogaeth – Thanks very much to you all for your support.

Carwyn Tywyn – Welsh Department Secretary

LLONGYFARCHIADAU – CONGRATULATIONS

We are pleased to note Carwyn's successes at the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham. He was second in the John Weston Thomas Memorial Competition for triple harp, and was the winner of the competition for 'Blog over the course of a month'.

NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT TREASURER AND SECRETARY

Several months have passed since the appointment of Dr Carwyn Tywyn as the new Welsh Department Secretary and in September the yearly fee for that post will be due.

Since being with us, Carwyn has represented Welsh Unitarians on various bodies in Wales – something which previously we have been unable to do. To make the initial contact with many of these organizations takes a lot of time.

Providing a Welsh voice on General Assembly matters, he represents us as a staff member at Essex Hall, the headquarters of the Unitarian Movement.

His attendance and participation at the GA Annual Meetings in Swansea was applauded and appreciated by all.

He has worked closely with both Welsh District Associations, in Ceredigion and in South East Wales and has visited the new Unitarian congregation in Bangor.

Carwyn has advertised our events and presence on various websites, 'Twitter' and on his personal Unitarian Welsh Secretary's Blog.

He needs to know what is going on in our churches and districts and would very much welcome contact from anyone who has news to spread. His Email address is ctwyn@unitarian.org.uk

He has been a Unitarian presence at the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham, where he organized and arranged a meeting, inviting eminent speakers to discuss 'The Big Society' in the name of Unitarianism.

Carwyn could never be described as a person who shirks work. He has been very active in spreading the Unitarian message in addition to the administrative work a new job inevitably brings. The two and a half days which funds the post soon passes and he has chosen to spend Monday at his desk dealing with administrative matters and the other time out and about making himself known to individuals and organizations throughout the Principality. He hopes to meet each of the 22 congregations in Wales, as soon as it is practicable. This post is entirely new and it will take time to settle into a pattern for the future.

This half-time post became possible through the generosity of the General Assembly which contributes two thirds of the funding.

This arrangement is on the understanding that **our congregations pay the other third between them**. Currently, this amounts to **£258 per congregation with some extra funding provided by the two District Associations**.

This is a small amount for our congregations to pay for an official Unitarian voice in Welsh matters. It is actually £5 per week for each congregation – a significantly small amount in comparison to the Preaching fee, which is paid Sunday after Sunday (£40-£45)

Welsh Unitarians are committed to this post and, in fairness, all congregations have agreed to support the venture.

Carwyn's job is to give voice to the Unitarians of Wales, to bring us into the public arena and hopefully create greater interest in our existing congregations and possibly assist in creating new groups in one or two areas. He has more than demonstrated his capacity and dedication to apply himself to the task but on a half-time appointment, Carwyn can not be expected to do this on his own. He needs the support, encouragement, trust and vision of each member in our various congregations.

So, can we remind all congregations to pay their contribution to the Treasurer, as soon as possible in September or October. Should you choose to pay monthly or quarterly, this is possible and appropriate forms have been distributed to all congregations.

Let us all think 'Unitarian' and give thanks for the opportunity we have, to raise our profile and dedicate ourselves to the true service of Humankind.

In fellowship

Eric Jones & Lis Dyson-Jones

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

The interview in this issue is with Morgan Chambers, affectionately known as 'Mog'. Now in his eighth decade Mog was born and bred in the Vaynor district of Merthyr Tydfil where he has lived for the whole of his life, apart from the first year of an apprenticeship with Hoover Ltd in London.

Married to Marlene since 1961, they will celebrate their Golden Wedding in October this year. They have three children, Huw, Richard and Catherine and six grandchildren, three boys and three girls aged between 2 and 15 years.

Mog has a wide range of interests including, heritage, the environment, politics, sport and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. Currently Mog is chair of the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Regeneration Trust and the Trefechan Communities First Partnership. He is also trustee/committee member of Cefn Coed Rugby Club, in addition to being a member of various historical/heritage groups. Finally he is both Secretary and Treasurer of Tabor Chapel Centre in Cefn Coed.

Mog is an approachable, friendly person who has been active in many different roles both as an elected councillor and within the local community where he has acted as a catalyst for a number of initiatives.

Between 2003 and 2005, Mog was President of The South East Wales Unitarian Society; he regularly takes services in the area, and is a loyal and energetic member of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Were you always a Unitarian?

I suppose so. I would attend Hen Dŷ Cwrdd morning and evening with my father and also Sunday school in the afternoon, where my father taught. However, once or twice a month I would accompany my mother on a Sunday evening to the local Wesleyan chapel, but always see myself as a Unitarian. I consider myself to be a Unitarian Atheist.

What did you learn from your parents?

I look back on a lovely childhood, wonderful parents, and supportive brothers. Mam & Dad were chalk and cheese, she was very quiet, very gentle and always there. He was very outgoing, very interested and involved in the community, politics, the trade union movement and the chapel, often working long hours especially during the war. What with work and being a Home Guard, not always there but never in the pub! They were both very fair minded people, slow to judge and committed to family and friends. I hope that I have learned from them in many ways.

What motivates you?

I like to feel that it is a belief in fairness and equality. My father had a saying 'You are no better than anyone else and nobody is better than you'. It has been a big help throughout a longish public life and allows me to face up to people who see themselves as important and stops me feeling too important myself.

A few years back you acted as Chairman of the North Glamorgan Trust, what challenged you most in this role?

Doing the job for a couple of years or so after the former Chair resigned, my first act was to have the sign that gave me a designated parking space, removed. Instead I parked in the general car park, not always easily. As Kipling says in his famous poem 'If', "don't look too good, nor talk too wise". I also had an open door policy, if anyone wanted to see me the office door was literally open. I would also allow, and encourage, my office to be used by anyone who needed a space, which is often a problem in a busy organisation. I felt that the challenge was for staff and the public to be able to put their trust in someone appointed by a Minister, which is why I believed openness, was the best policy. The job was a pleasure. I was lucky to work closely with a Chief Executive who was also in an 'Acting' role and who had similar views on openness. The North Glamorgan Trust had a very successful last couple of years and I had the enjoyable privilege of working with some wonderful people, learning so much about our great National Health Service.

What are the qualities which you most admire in other people?

One would have to be the quality of commitment, so many show a lack of commitment to anything or their commitment is short-lived. We could achieve so much if people just 'kept at it'.

Another quality is tolerance; we do need to see the other person's point of view and learn where they are coming from. However, not so tolerant that one is afraid to speak out against intolerance and cruelty that too often is around us.

You take an active part and have an interest in local history, what fostered this interest?

History, especially local history has been a passion all of my life. My father loved talking about the past and especially about the locality and he would chat with me on many walks about the area. He was also a mine of information on the natural history of Vaynor. It is becoming a family trait, my son is a History graduate and his son seems to be following him, must be in the genes.

When were you happiest?

As a depressive, a hard question to answer. I indicated earlier about my childhood being happy and throughout my life I have had highs and lows, but increasingly, and perhaps it is to do with getting older, I feel more content. I am informed by an expert (my wife) that I am much more easy-going than I was. In other words I don't answer back! I must admit to having been pleased, if not happy, to have been accused of still being a rebel by a leading Councillor – not bad for seventy two.

Would you say you were a political animal?

I enjoy politics and hate it. I did have political ambitions for some years, but not the drive and inclination to 'bend the knee' to achieve it. I am called a political animal by friend and foe alike. I do seem to read the political nuances of situations and act or advise accordingly. A friend says I have the political cunning but not the political drive.

Do you have any weaknesses?

I am awkward, arrogant, dogmatic and outspoken.

Choose three or four words to describe yourself.

Ignoring the previous question. I am generous, tolerant, outspoken and can tell a very good story.

What do you value most in your life?

My family, my friends, my pets, my community, my nation (Wales), my rugby club and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Having been involved in public life for over fifty years there are a number of things that I have achieved, usually with others, either they supporting me or me supporting them. Little is ever done alone.

There is one thing that I initiated that I am quite proud of. In July 1966, forty five years ago, I called a meeting in Cefn Coed with a view to starting a village rugby team. It was to be a rugby club that would also sponsor and support other community ventures. We started in September 1966 with one senior team. A year later we had a first fifteen, an athletic fifteen and a youth fifteen and were already negotiating the purchase of a clubhouse. We still have three teams plus mini and junior teams. We have, over the years, also run soccer teams, ladies hockey and rugby teams, cricket elevens. We have also helped another local rugby team to start up. Thousands of people over the years have enjoyed the benefits of being involved, many have continued to work hard to keep the club going and solvent, that's commitment.

I cannot claim all of the credit for what has been achieved, but I did call the first meeting.

NEWCASTLE AND BETWS

When the Bridgend chapel was sold the money was invested and the interest is shared each year. If any chapel in the District would like to be considered for a share of this to improve their buildings would you please put this request in writing to be sent to me for consideration for our September meeting.

*Avril Protheroe
Chair of Trustees*

HIGHLAND PLACE ANNUAL LECTURE

On 30th June a very good audience attended Highland Place Church, Aberdare, for the Annual Lecture. The speaker this year was Dr Chris Williams, Professor of Welsh History at Swansea University, and his subject was 'Robert Owen and the Development of the Co-operative Movement'.

Chris told us about Robert Owen from his birth in Newtown, Montgomeryshire in 1771. Robert left Newtown early in his life and, at twenty eight, bought the New Lanark Mills in Ayrshire. The enterprise in New Lanark continued to grow over the next twenty four years and became the largest cotton-spinning business in Great Britain. From about 1812, Owen started to argue that the educational and welfare reforms that he had introduced in Ayrshire were applicable to British Society generally. He had restricted working hours, provided medical care and established a school for the children of his employees. These schemes, which he called Socialism, were favourably received but he became very critical of the institutions of family and religion and fell out of favour.

In 1824 he abandoned Britain for North America where he invested his fortune in an estate in Indiana establishing the community of New Harmony which was run along Owenite Socialist lines. The venture ended in acrimony in 1827.

Having returned to Britain, Owen became a leading figure in the trade union movement between 1829 and 1834. From 1835 to 1845 he became the focus for Owenite ideals, communities and publications. He visited Paris during the revolution in 1848 and became a spiritualist.

Robert Owen returned to Newtown, a very infrequent occurrence, in 1848 and it was there, in that year, that he died. He is buried in St Mary's Church in Newtown.

After the lecture, a number of questions were asked by the appreciative audience. The vote of thanks to Chris Williams was given by Anne Watts. Anne said that she had seen, in a recent copy of The Observer, the need to take a co-operative approach to present day life. She thanked Chris for his well informed and very well presented lecture.

Keith L Lewis-Jones

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 14th & 15th July 2011)

1. Strategic Groups

The Executive Committee continued its work to develop the strategic priorities in light of feedback from the Movement.

The following appointments as Chairs of the Strategic Groups were approved:

Ministry - Rev Stephen Lingwood

Local Leadership - Dorothy Hewerdine

Visibility - Melanie Haberstroh, Angela Maher and Meredith Moss to co-lead the development of the Group.

Chairs will work closely with the two Executive Committee members allocated to each strategic priority during the transition period until 30th September 2011.

2. Co-option of Executive Committee Member

The vacancy for an Executive Committee member, following the resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby, has been filled by the co-option of Cathie Masztalerz, a life-long Unitarian active in youth and RE activities and with the Unitarian Women's Group. She is a Headteacher.

3. Youth Participation

Three members of the Executive Committee are to meet young people attending the Fun Days Away event on 11th August 2011 at the Nightingale Centre to hear their views and answer questions.

4. Roll of Lay Pastors

It was agreed that Kath Forder and Nicky Jenkins be added to the Roll of Lay Pastors with probationary status.

Derek McAuley dmcauley@unitarian.org.uk

MINISTRY TRAINING

Thinking of training for the Unitarian ministry or lay pastorate?

Applications for training beginning in autumn 2012 should be received by Tuesday 4th October 2011. Short-listed applicants will be called for interview at Oxford on 4th – 5th January 2012.

For further information please contact: Mary-Jean Hennis at Unitarian General Assembly, Essex Hall, 1 - 6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY Phone: 020 7240 2384 Email: mhennis@unitarian.org.uk

To discuss applying, please contact:

Rev Linda Phillips Phone: 020 7240 2384 Email: lphillips@unitarian.org.uk

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

The endless grass, the endless leaves,
the immense strength of the oak expanding,
the unalloyed joy of finch and blackbird;
from all of them I receive a little...
To be beautiful and to be calm, without mental fear,
is the ideal of nature.
If I cannot achieve it, at least I can think it.

Richard Jeffreys (1848 -87)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I ended my last message with a plea for Growth that must come from individual actions in each chapel and meetinghouse. So, it was good to take the service at Aberdare recently and see the freshly painted and upgraded chapel. There were greeting stewards on the door and a general atmosphere of welcome. Their membership is increasing (or rather, they are attracting new members) and their outreach and leadership is gaining dividends.

The congregation at Aberdare have really grasped the opportunity presented by their anniversary to publish books, hold lectures and generally reach outwards into the community – a good example to us all. *(Coming from a native of the long-time-rival-town of Merthyr Tydfil, this is praise indeed!)*

We were fortunate to have excellent weather for our Rally on 3rd July as we gathered at Aberdare Park and made our way to Trecynon, though the turnout was rather poor. It was also a disappointment that we were unable to gain access to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Chapel. However, the forthcoming lecture at the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on Saturday the 10th September at 10.00am by Leslie Davies, author of the newly published 'They Love to be Dissenters', will afford us all an opportunity to view the building and listen to the talk on Unitarians in Aberdare and Merthyr. (Or should it be, 'Merthyr and Aberdare'?!)

Although I am all for the conservation of buildings, I believe society can only preserve those buildings that have a functional need or have world heritage status. Unfortunately it was ever thus, and it will be interesting to view and evaluate the restoration of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, but note the 10.00am start.

Leslie Davies comes from a long line of dissenters, his four-times-great grandfather, the Rev David Owen Davies was ordained as the minister at Sion Chapel Twynyrodyn, Merthyr Tydfil in 1788, and was sent in 1795 to preach to the hill people of Breconshire – founding Bethel Baptist chapel at Ynysyfelin, the village and chapel submerged in 1924 beneath the Llwyn Onn Reservoir. I had the privilege of hearing Leslie Davies speak at the anniversary service of the New Bethel Baptist Chapel, Cwm Tâf, which I attended with my wife who is secretary and organist there.

As this issue of the District News goes into print, time and space will not permit other than a brief comment regarding the Pontardawe Folk Service at Gellionnen Chapel on Sunday 14th August. For the present, suffice it to say that it was good to be there, and I congratulate the Gellionnen congregation on organising such a successful and worthwhile outreach event.

Finally, many thanks and congratulations to Lis Dyson-Jones. Thanks for once again setting out the Pulpit Plan for the next six months, a far more difficult and complex task than the end result of an A4 print out might suggest. And congratulations on her engagement to the Rev'd Martin Whitell, the minister at the John Pound Unitarian Church in Portsmouth. We will soon be looking for a Pulpit Planner proficient in computer spreadsheet skills.

The next Pulpit Plan affords me the opportunity to visit six out of the eight chapels in the district and I look forward to meeting each congregation separately.

Phil Griffiths

ABERDARE

The 2011 Summer Rally for the South East Wales District Society took place in Aberdare and was supported by Unitarians from most of the Unitarian churches in South East Wales.

The theme for the rally was to celebrate the life of the late Paul David. One of Paul's ancestors, a carpenter from Gilwern in Breconshire, had come to Aberdare in the mid 19th century and was involved in the building of some of the many chapels which were erected in the town during that time. Paul was very proud of his ancestors and maintained an interest in the social and industrial history of the region throughout his life.

Beginning at the Gorsedd Circle in Aberdare Park, the Rev Eric Jones related the history of the establishment of the park and the role which notable Aberdare Unitarian, Rees Hopkin Rhys (Blind Rhys) played in that. Along with other prominent citizens Rees Hopkin Rhys recognised that the rapid expansion of Aberdare had created substantial public health problems due to the total lack of sewage facilities and an insufficient supply of clean water, and the urgent need to set aside a public area for leisure and recreation. Those assembled moved on to take a look at the partially restored Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Unitarian Chapel where once again Rev Jones related something of its history.

Finally, at Ebenezer Chapel in Trecynon, former Aberdare College lecturer Wilf Owen spoke briefly about the part that Unitarians in the Merthyr and Cynon Valleys had played in identifying and promoting the steam coal that was mined in the Aberdare area. This trade led to the rapid development of the Cynon Valley. Steam Coal was proved by the Admiralty to be the most efficient fuel to power their warships and was also used for other forms of steam power. All those who had made a contribution to the Rally were thanked by the President Philip Griffiths.

The family of Paul David have donated a number of his books to Highland Place Church. About forty of them, which contain suitable material that worship leaders might find useful, have been labelled and are available on loan.

Elwyn Lloyd, a faithful supporter of Highland Place over many decades, passed away in the last week of July with his family at his bedside. The funeral, conducted by Rev Eric Jones, took place at Llwydcoed Crematorium on 5th August. Following the service, tea was provided in the schoolroom at Highland Place. Sympathy is extended to Nina, Elwyn's wife, and to the other members of the family.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Women's League

On the 22nd of June, Highland Place Women's League made a trip to the Caerphilly Garden Centre and Llechwen Hall. The day out was spoiled by the very disappointing 'Afternoon Tea' provided at Llechwen Hall. Marian Whippey put pen to paper and wrote a splendid letter of complaint to the management on behalf of us all, but as yet we are still awaiting a reply.

For the last meeting of our summer programme we had a trip to Cardiff Bay and Penarth. It was a beautiful day and a nice time was had by all.

Our weekly Tuesday afternoon craft club is successful and continues throughout our league summer recess. Our ladies are busy making items for sale in our Christmas Fayre.

We are also planning to knit squares to be sewn together to make blankets, which will be donated to animal charities i.e. Battersea for cats and dogs and The Dogs Trust.

We are all looking forward to the Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy, 10:30 am on August 15th, hosted by Anne and Eric Jones. The proceeds of this event will be shared between the NSPCC and the African Famine Appeal.

We are also very much looking forward to our Women's League National President Barbara Clifford visiting us for our District Meeting in October.

Hot on the heels--- the Autumn programme begins! Wednesday August 31st at 2 pm, with Hazel's Quiz.

A full and varied programme it is too. Anyone wishing to attend or who would like a copy of events please contact me on 01685 876597.

*With love from Aberdare,
Joy Foster*

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd send best wishes from the congregation to Lynne Davies who had an extended time in hospital following heart surgery but is now recuperating and recovering at home. We wish Win all the best following her hip replacement surgery and wishes are also given to Margaret Evans who has been unwell over the last few weeks and to Gareth Evans. We thank Anne Bunford who has played the piano for us at services in place of Lynne. It has been difficult to hold Women's League meetings recently due to member's health.

Congratulations are given to Lis Dyson-Jones and the Rev Martin Whitell on their engagement. Lis has been busy recently in her role as National GA Vice President.

Caroline Boyce from Cardiff and four other young people from the district will take part in the Five Days Away course at Great Hucklow as part of the Unitarian Youth Programme in August on the theme of 'What do you stand for?' The bilingual Children's group at the Friends Meeting House is now being held on the 4th Sunday of the month from 4pm till 5pm and will be led by Diana Bianchi and Sarah and Caroline Boyce. At the last meeting on 24th July the children all joined in with making a banner for Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd with felt and material pictures of their faces. Please could you let anyone know who may be interested in this group. We are very pleased to welcome Diana's two daughters, Heledd and Rhiannon with their children (six in total), and new parents to Cardiff Unitarians, Helen with a twin boy and girl and Franciska with her daughter, as well as Jane Dicomedis who used to attend at West Grove who came with her son. We are also hoping a lady called Sarah will attend with her daughter as she is seeking a Unitarian baby naming/christening for her daughter possibly at Penrhiw chapel before Christmas

We will be having a committee meeting this week to discuss issues such as accommodation and a possible Development Officer post. At the last committee meeting it was raised that Cardiff members were being encouraged to prepare a history of West Grove and Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd. It was decided that the first step would be to ask present members to lend any photographs to be copied as a resource and to interview members for reminiscences about the congregation. At the last Welsh service Rhiannon Williams gave a presentation on reminiscing about her Welsh childhood chapel. Rhiannon is doing her PhD based on the role of the chapel and its culture in the community (past and present). She hopes to return in the Autumn to work on a project with our Church members

Many thanks are given from the congregation to Diana Bianchi, Betty Evans and Keith Lewis-Jones for the production of the new bilingual Cardiff website www.ukunitarians.org.uk/cardiff.

Sarah Boyce

CEFNCOED

Women's League

Our Branch summer outing took place recently. We enjoyed a good lunch at The Old Forge near Brecon, then spent the afternoon at Abergavenny where we stopped for Afternoon Tea. We were very pleased to have our oldest member Mrs Nancy England join us on our trip. Good Food; Good

Company; Good Weather—and a Good Time enjoyed by all.

League and chapel member Margaret Edwards celebrated her 87th Birthday on 2nd August. We send her our best wishes.

On Sunday, 5th June we were all very much involved in the service conducted solely by league members, and we have also taken part in a number of other 'congregational' services—some are getting quite a 'taste' for it. (I'm toying with the idea of funding Vera on a Lay-Preacher training course!!)

Gwen Everitt

Visitors

Mr Peter Powell has attended services at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd several times recently – on one occasion presenting a Reading. Peter, who lives in Brecon, says he'd like to continue to visit us – possibly on a monthly basis – other commitments (and weather!) permitting. We look forward to his future visits.

On 26th June we were very pleased to welcome friends from Aberdare and Cardiff congregations to a service on the theme 'Being Connected'. Worship was conducted by nine of our members who presented readings or provided the music. Chapel members collaborated en masse in providing refreshments.

Learning of the past

A number of us visited Highland Place on 30th June for their Annual Lecture, expertly delivered by Prof Chris Williams (Swansea) on the subject 'Robert Owen and the Development of the Co-operative Movement'.

Three days later a few more of us were again at Aberdare - for the District Rally, with further well-presented history – this time relating to matters a little closer to home, with Wilf Owen and Rev Eric Jones speaking knowledgeably about the achievements of some of our Cefn and Aberdare Unitarian predecessors.

... and the past in stone

Cymraeg – *Welsh* - 'the language of heaven', was once again the 'language of **Cefn**' (well, one small part of it anyway) on Tuesday 2nd August. The tranquillity of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard was interrupted by the arrival of a group of eight researchers from Canolfan Soar, Merthyr Tydfil. Their visit was part of a project investigating the dialect changes that have taken place in the Welsh-language of this area over the years. Armed with notebooks and digital cameras they spent a pleasant afternoon in the sun, carefully writing down or photographing whatever Welsh inscription caught their attention from amongst those that are still legible on the weathered, and lichen and ivy covered, gravestones.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Julie Nedin, our next District President, came to Nottage to take a service recently. Julie is no stranger to Nottage and came to our services frequently when Beverley Littlepage was our Lay Pastor, but this was the first time she had conducted a service for us, and we would like to thank her for a much enjoyed hour with her, we look forward to more.

Annette Marsh conducted a wedding blessing for us in June which was very well received. The local young couple had married in America, and wanted something their friends and family could share in, and so approached Annette who put a memorable service together while Delydd McAdam provided the music on the organ. After the blessing the guests toasted the happy couple with champagne in the schoolroom.

Julianne Morgan has come to our aid once again and conducted some of the services Annette has been unable to take because of poor health, we are so grateful to Julianne for her care of Nottage.

Our much loved President, Gwladys Howell, celebrates a very special 90th birthday this month. Gwladys started to worship in Nottage 70 years ago when she married Les Howell, and has missed very few services until this year when poor health has stopped her attending as regularly as she would wish. She is a shining example to us all - always ready with a kind word and a smile of encouragement. She might not be able to come to every service, but she is always waiting for a report on who was there and what was said. Happy Birthday Gwladys, with love from us all!

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

Our thoughts are centred on our most senior member Mrs Mollie Jones who, at 94, is loved and respected by all and who is now in Llandough Hospital. Mollie fell at her home and fractured her femur. We understand the difficult repair operation was a success and we all hope Mollie will make a good recovery. She is missed very much on Sundays.

Once again Mr Brad Williams has worked his green finger magic and transformed our forecourt into an oasis of flowering troughs and beautiful hanging baskets which lift our spirits as we enter church.

During the summer months our services have been enriched by visitors. First a mature American husband and wife, and then two young American female students who came for several weeks at the end of their year at Swansea University. We were amazed to learn that Wisconsin has four Unitarian churches with some congregations so large they have to hold several services to accommodate them all. Recently two young men came whilst camping at Oxwich, Gower. They were from Bristol. All the visitors enjoyed a chance to socialise and chat over tea and biscuits and we enjoyed their company.

We are grateful for the variety of speakers who have come to take our services. Rev Eric Jones introduced a new format in which we had five hymns with very good readings in between rather than one longer address. It was very well received. Our annual flower service is always a delight and we had spray carnations to take home, thanks to Julianne. Mrs Hilda Dumpleton's service had the theme 'Chancing your Arm'. It was delivered just before Hilda departed on a new adventure to a 'Boot Camp for Girls'!! We haven't seen Hilda since. We just hope she survived.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

We still have a few foxgloves in bloom and we are definitely in the pink with willow herb and clover adding their colour. Next will come the heather. The long grass immediately around the chapel has been strimmed by Julie Nedin and Martyn Edwards. It was a big job. The remainder is gorgeously long and a sight to see.

June and July services have been taken by Martyn Edwards, Colin Morgan, Alastair Rosenberg and daughters, Sarah Boyce, Eric Jones and Philip Griffiths. All were exceptional services and much appreciated. The remainder were celebrated amongst ourselves.

The District Rally was attended by Julie Nedin and Marian Littlepage. Aberdare Park is magnificent and well used by all ages. To see Hen Dŷ Cwrdd (Trecynon) was a great pleasure and it is reassuring to know that this treasured and interesting building will now be safe. The following lecture was well worth hearing and made us well aware of the richness of the background from which we have come. In all it was a very good day.

Rosie Evans dropped in to the Swansea Valley for a couple of days on her way from New Jersey in America and over to France! Come for longer next time Rosie.

Of late, special birthdays have been celebrated by Elizabeth Bevan, Mair Evans and Colin Morgan. Congratulations and good wishes to you all.

Dolores Morgan is now up and running again after a bad fall which caused a holiday to be cancelled.

Wendy and Wayne Francis have attended recently with little son Owen Lloyd and his big brother Rhys.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

This year Wick Village Fete was re-instated after a lapse of several years. It was held on the village green, just opposite our chapel. In the past, when I first went to Wick, cricket matches were played there, and many of our Sunday afternoon services were accompanied by the sounds of "Howzat!?" and friendly cheers.

Sadly village cricket is not so popular nowadays, but the village fete was a great success. It began in beautiful sunny weather, slightly interrupted by a few showers but altogether a very happy occasion. Our chapel held a book stall, staffed by Julianne with welcome assistance from Eva Morgan's son Roger, home from Nottingham for the weekend. We had been donated a wonderful array of

paperbacks and nearly all were sold.

Helen Lewis, our treasured organist, has been in Canada for some time, visiting her brother and sister-in-law. Helen's brother has been very ill and sadly died while Helen was there. We send our love and sympathy to Helen and family.

It was lovely to welcome Helen back for our flower service, the last service before our August break.

This August break was started over a hundred years ago. Wick chapel is in the centre of a rural, agricultural area and members were needed in August to bring in the harvest. This is why our September Harvest Service has always been a particularly joyous one. This year it is to be held on 25th September at 3.00pm. A warm welcome to anyone who is able to join us.

Our congregation was devastated to learn of the death of our well-loved member Joyce Davies. Joyce was our long-serving treasurer until her failed eyesight forced her to retire. She was also an enthusiastic committee member of Wick Pensioners and the local choir, and despite poor health a regular chapel attender. Her funeral service in the chapel and Coychurch Crematorium were conducted by Julianne and very well attended. Joyce's ashes have been interred in the chapel grounds with those of her late husband, Danny. I will miss a personal friend as well as a loyal chapel member. Joyce's later years were lightened by the birth of her only grandchild, Daniel. We send Michael, Lorraine, Carol and Jeff and their families our love and sympathy.

Our members Eva Morgan, Margaret Escott and Glenys Pugh have been quite poorly these last months and we look forward to seeing them when we return after our August break. Our oldest member Phyllis Rose has celebrated her 97th birthday and is in wonderful spirits. She keeps me up to date with Wick news—I don't know how she does it.

Our greetings to all our District friends.

Mark Twain once wrote, "Humour is mankind's greatest blessing." And I read the other day, "My mother used to say, 'The older you get, the better you get ... unless you're a banana.'"

*Enjoy the holidays,
Julianne Morgan*

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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