



South East Wales Unitarian News

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August 2014

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 12 October – Rev. Ashley Hill, President of the General Baptists will visit Nottage (at 11am) and Wick (at 3pm)

Saturday 18 October – Visit of GA President Marion Baker to St Fagans during afternoon/early evening. (Marion will conduct a service in Ceredigion on Sunday, 19 October.)

Saturday 25 October – Copy deadline for the next issue of South East Wales Unitarian News.

Sunday 14 December – District Christmas Service at Capel Penrhiw, St Fagan at 3pm.

RESIGNATION

We are sorry to report that Keith Lewis-Jones intends to stand down from his roles on the SEWUS Executive Committee. He will however continue to maintain the DUWIT websites on the Internet. We have come to rely on Keith a great deal and thank him for the hard work he has put into District matters.

The three posts relinquished by Keith are:

District Secretary; Publicity & IT Officer; District Representative on the Welsh Department.

The posts are open to any nominated member of our congregations in the SEWUS. There is an urgent need to appoint, even if in an interim capacity, and nominations should reach District President Julie Nedin by end of day on Monday 8th September.

For further details please contact Julie on 01792 865679.

ANNUAL DISTRICT RALLY

To begin at the beginning...

On Sunday, 6th July a motley flotilla of cars carrying SEWUS members and a contingent of friends from Ceredigion arrived at Swansea's Maritime Quarter for a 'Dylan Thomas'-themed rally. It was late morning as we gathered in the car park at Somerset Place – ideally placed for the first stage of our visit. It was 'Sunday', but none of us was dressed in bible-black or Sunday-best – it was a warm, sunny day and we were attired accordingly.

At the Dylan Thomas Centre we enjoyed a welcome cup of coffee and were given a short introductory talk before wending our way through the main exhibition room and another that contained some of Dylan's early notebooks and papers – the many crossings out and revisions giving comforting reassurance to any would-be creative writer having doubts about his/her ability.

Soon it was time to leave the Centre to make our way to the marina. A short stroll took us to the Swansea Yacht and Sub-Aqua Club where we had booked our Sunday Lunch.

The dining room was reserved solely for our party so we were able to enjoy a good (and plentiful) meal and have a chat with friends free from any interruption, and be reminded by the Rev Wyn Thomas that Dylan's great-uncle, the Rev William Thomas (*Gwilym Marles*) had been minister at Llwynrhydowen Chapel in Ceredigion.



View from the upstairs lounge of the Yacht Club

Photo courtesy SY&SAC

Having now been well 'fed and watered' we were ready for the next stage – a visit to Dylan's birthplace 5 Cwmdonkin Drive.

Maps were consulted, satnavs programmed, and we set off for the short trip across the city.

A police motorcade escort would have been helpful for some – but we all eventually arrived at the house where Dylan spent his early years.

We were conducted on a well informed tour by two enthusiastic gentlemen and supplied with a very welcome cup of tea and Welsh cakes by the 'lady of the house'.

So ended an enjoyable day as...

*to each other we all did bow,
and say, good-bye—but just for now!* (With apologies to Dylan.)



Outside 5 Cwmdonkin Drive
The wall plaque bears the legend:

DYLAN THOMAS. A man of words. 1914 – 1953. was born in this house

Photo: Dylan Iorwerth

UNITARIANS AT THE NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD

What a week! The National Eisteddfod has been and gone and life returns to normal once again.

Despite all the worrying and running about like a headless chicken the Unitarian stand proved to be a great success, and even proved to be very enjoyable in the end.

Visitors came to the stand from every corner of the world – some because they were Unitarians, some because they had family connections, some because they wanted to know more. Some had specific questions of a practical nature such as the times and locations of services in Cardiff, others were searching for a more general discussion, but the overwhelming majority had a deep respect for our movement and surprised me with the depth of their knowledge.

The volunteers were magnificent, providing a genuine welcome, a cup of tea, and the opportunity for people to discuss their views and to learn more about us.

I'd like to thank all the members of SEWUS who participated and I hope that you all enjoyed the experience. I would not normally single anyone out, but on this occasion I do have to mention the Rev Eric Jones, without whom it could not have happened. His experience, wisdom and calm common sense sustained me not only during the event, but in the weeks leading up to it.

The National Eisteddfod proved to be a very valuable opportunity to raise the profile of Unitarians in Wales, to get people talking and to show people of all or no faiths what we can offer them. The media coverage that we received was also encouraging and we even managed to get the Unitarian stand mentioned on a BBC production showing the highlights of the week!

Melda Grantham, Secretary of Unitarians in Wales



Rev Cen Llwyd (r) discussing the finer points of Unitarianism with an interested visitor at the Unitarian stand at the National Eisteddfod in Llanelli.

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES JULY 2014

1. Safeguarding

The Executive Committee is acutely aware of the widespread media coverage of matters relating to historic cases of abuse involving individuals and institutions. The need for all congregations to be compliant with best practice in safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults was emphasised. This is set out clearly in the Safeguarding Policy "Safe and Sound" which has been circulated to all congregations and is available on the GA website. Last week the "Golden Rules" were circulated in a Mailing along with a draft policy statement. An audit of compliance with basic standards will take place this autumn.

The protection of children and vulnerable adults must be our top priority and all congregations have been asked to give this their urgent attention. Assistance is available by contacting Essex Hall.

2. IT and new General Assembly Website

The new General Assembly website has gone "live" as a key element of the upgrade of Information Technology services. The new site has much improved functionality and has a cleaner and fresher design. The new structure should help users find the information they are seeking. Work will continue to populate the new site and introduce new elements which will improve communications and administrative systems. The new site integrates with the new CiviCRM database and the new accounting system Aquilla which hopes to go "live" during July. The new IT systems are supported by external professional companies and hosted on the cloud with good security systems. Martin Sarbicki and all staff involved in what has been a major project were thanked for their contribution to its successful delivery. Any observations are welcomed to the IT Officer.

3. Ministerial Roll

The Recommendations of the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel were approved. We are pleased to announce that Rev John Carter and Rev Shammy Webster, having completed their academic requirements, have been added to the General Assembly Roll with probationary status.

4. Local Leadership Strategy Group (LLSG)

The outcome of the strategy day held on 14 June at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester was considered. Louise Rogers and Derek McAuley were thanked for arranging the event. New terms of reference for the LLSG and four action groups were approved. The action groups will cover Running our Communities, Growth and Development, Personal Spiritual Development and Responding to Challenges. Louise Rogers, who has announced she will not be seeking re-election to the Executive Committee in 2015, was appointed as temporary chair of the LLSG. Anyone interested in contributing to the work of the LLSG and/or the action groups should contact Louise or the Chief Officer.

5. Ministry Strategy Group Presentation on Ministerial Training

Ministry Strategy Group members Wendy Sudbury and Rev Daniel Costley gave a presentation to the Executive Committee on progress on the review of ministry training. The contribution of the two Colleges and many individuals to the development of thinking was acknowledged. Further significant work is required to firm up definite proposals.

6. Finance Update

The current financial position was reported as generally positive being under-budget at the end of April 2014. It was, however, emphasised that the General Assembly continued to face significant financial challenges and faced a major potential deficit for the new financial year beginning 1 October 2014. The budget for 2014/15 will be approved at the September Executive Committee meeting, which will include the level of congregational quota.

7. Vision Day

The arrangements for the Vision Day planned for Saturday 6 September 2014 were discussed. It was stressed that the event was the start of the process to develop a shared vision for the future of the wider Unitarian movement and the role of the General Assembly in the lead-up to the Annual Meetings in 2015.

8. Visibility Strategy Group – Badge Making

A proposal from the Visibility Strategy Group for a badge making service was agreed and purchase of equipment approved. Further details would be circulated in due course.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Change is a recurring theme in our lives.

A deep understanding of the impact of change is often only brought home to us when particular events take place which touch our day to day life. These may be dramatic or may take us quite unaware. They certainly give us cause for reflection and can make us realise how we are guilty of taking life (and people) for granted.

Such an experience has happened to me recently as in the loss of two very active members from our congregation Gellionen & Graig who have moved home to a different part of the country.

Gareth and Sheila Evans have served with vitality and generosity for 20 years and have moved to be closer to their family. They have 'de-cluttered' their lives and, as a terrible hoarder myself, I am full of admiration!

I have reflected on the need for us all in our spiritual and church lives to be less conservative and look forward to a future of change-embracing it rather than resisting.

Dorothy Haughton in *The Inquirer* of 2nd August touches this theme in her article " 'Church' is a lot more than just a building." The lesson for me from recent experience is to celebrate a friendship rather than mourn its loss. Dorothy challenges us to look to planning the future needs of our congregation by focusing on our spiritual needs more if we are to survive as a community and in our community.

Julie Nedin

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Let your mind be quiet, realising the beauty of the world and the immense, boundless treasures that it holds in store.

Edward Carpenter (1844 - 1929)

ABERDARE

Greetings from Highland Place

Women's League is having a Summer break and I, for one, can't wait to restart on 3rd September. Before the break we had a very full few weeks, Lis Dyson-Jones gave a most interesting talk on Magistracy and the following week Dilys Evans treated us all to a delightful garden party at her home – the weather was good; the company first rate and the food absolutely delicious - what more do you need?

On 23rd July we closed with a lunch at the Golf Club where we were joined by members from Cardiff. Cefn Coed were unable to join us owing to Nancy England's funeral being held on that day. Our condolences go to all who knew Nancy, and special thoughts to Marian Lewis, her daughter.

Anne Jones held a coffee morning early in August where £230 was taken for charity – half to NSPCC and half to Water Aid. Anne's coffee mornings have become an annual event which we all look forward to.

It was lovely to see Edna Jones in church again, she has been sorely missed, Iris Davies is still unwell and would welcome visits or phone calls – being on oxygen she is unable to go out. Our best wishes go to Mark Jones (Edna's son) on his retirement and congratulations on receiving a special honour, at the Coliseum, recently for his contribution to School Sports - well done Mark!

The Men's Group met in July at Aberdare Country Park. I understand it was a good day and had a special feel about it – I wonder what they talked about?!

Tony has been wielding his paintbrush in the church, after the scaffolding was taken down. Thank you Tony and Joy for keeping the church and schoolroom spotlessly clean – what would we do without you.

Best wishes to all our friends and hope to see you soon.

Marian Whippey

Uni'Club Sunday School

Hello everybody

Hope you are having a good summer. As well as our usual activities we have visited Green Meadow Riding School in the Dare Valley Country Park, for the children to see the farm animals.

In July we enjoyed our 3rd Anniversary Annual Outing. Co-leader Joan Harlow and I took the children (over 5 to 11) to Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, where we were blessed by good weather for the day too! We enjoyed the exhibitions, especially the models made by local Merthyr school children. They were very exciting and well done.

We then had our packed lunches together on the grass and some in the band stand out of the sun. We spent the rest of our time there in the 'splash area' right at the top of the grounds. The children put on their swimsuits and enjoyed themselves in the variety of fountains and 'drenchings' available. We all had a very nice day. We went by minibus hired with the proceeds of Joan's knitting!! (£120 raised by selling knitted snowmen at £1 each) Well done Joan.

We have been continuing to meet every Sunday except the second Sunday of the month, when we all have a little respite and Joan and I are able to join the morning service.

In September we are holding a parent's evening. The children seem to enjoy their mini version of our Unitarian service at the start of each session. We hold this in the church itself then have our usual activities back in the school room.

We await to see if the 'long termers' who have been coming for a long time will continue to attend now they are going off to High School in September – change is always inevitable but we have lots to be pleased about. Thank you to everyone who supports us with their good wishes. If anyone can spare some time, even if once a month, to play the piano for some singing and dancing, please don't be shy. You don't have to be a Mozart. Volunteers are always needed for walks when scheduled.

As we try to squeeze out the most we can of what's left of the Summer, may we all be always grateful for each and every day. With hope and prayers for peace in the world.

Our love to everyone
Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

The Joint Summer Service of three congregations was held in Cardiff on Sunday 20th July. The Rev. Lindy Latham, recently retired Minister from Frenchay Chapel and UMB Bristol, conducted a lively, thought provoking service about the beauty of imperfection and failure. It was good to have our friends from Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Cefn Coed and Highland Place Aberdare with us and to have members of each of the three congregations share in the readings. Chatting during the fellowship tea which followed was a delight. (The singing wasn't bad either!)

With the approval and agreement of the congregation, the church committee, has taken the decision to look at the possibility of a single Ministry for Cardiff.

We were pleased to welcome Robert Davies and his wife to one of our services in July. It is always good to see them when they pay return visits from their home in Sweden and we look forward to Roberts's lecture at a joint meeting of the United Nations Association and Cardiff Unitarians at the Temple of Peace, Cathays Park Cardiff on October 23rd. The subject of the lecture will be a history of the UN Association and Work Camps in the city.

The visit of the National Women's League President, Mrs Shelagh Stott will take place on Wednesday 8th October at 2.15pm and will now be held at the United Reform Church, Windsor Place, Cardiff. Further details will be sent to District League Branches.

There will be no Children's Club during August and the Welsh Language Services will resume after the August break, when Gwasanaeth Cymraeg will be held at Penhriw Chapel, St Fagan's at 3pm on 14th September.

The Cardiff congregation send deepest sympathy and loving thoughts to Betty Evans following the recent death of her brother Keith.

A few, who were able, visited the National Eisteddfod, held this year in Llanelli.

We continue to be grateful to all the visiting Worship leaders who have presented their services in line with our chosen new style and we look forward to sharing further successful worship with them in the future.

A thought to ponder

'A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.' (Herm Albright)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

On 8th June we celebrated Women's League Sunday with League members conducting the service. I was not able to be present myself, because of illness, but I've been told that it was very well received.

July started off with the very sad news that Mrs Nancy England passed away on Saturday the 5th of July. We all loved her and she is going to be missed by us all.

Our first of two League meetings in July was on the 9th July – a normal meeting, I was away on holiday. We didn't meet on the 23rd as that was the day Mrs England got buried.

We are now in August and I'm delighted to tell you all that Mrs Margaret Edwards celebrated her 90th birthday on the 2nd – she received 110 cards and many gifts. It has been one long celebration for her—starting in July. She managed to fit us in on our first League meeting on the 6th, when we all enjoyed a nice Birthday Tea.

Marian Lewis has just become a grandmother again – a lovely baby girl called Hollie Rae. We send all the family our best wishes.

On Wednesday, 13th August we are treating ourselves to lunch at the Tŷ Newydd Country House in Penderyn. Looking forward to it!

Vera Tomsett

Sadness

Sadly, on Saturday 5th July, Mrs Nancy England passed away peacefully at Prince Charles Hospital, having been admitted there just an hour or so earlier—she was aged 97 years.

Despite her advanced years she was, to the end, a mentally alert lady with a remarkable memory, and maintained her interest in life's 'goings on' by being kept up to date through the company of visitors – which she very much appreciated and enjoyed.

For family reasons Nancy's funeral was delayed until 23rd July when the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was full to overflowing for a service conducted by Rev Eric Jones – followed by burial at Cefn Coed cemetery.

Nancy held her family and her chapel close to her heart and will be sorely missed by all. We send our deepest sympathy to her daughter Marian and to all members of the family.

Out and about

On Sunday, 6th July we joined members from other SE Wales congregations for the District Rally at Swansea. We enjoyed the meal at the Yacht Club and the visits to the Dylan Thomas Centre and Cwmdonkin Drive. Some of us also enjoyed an unexpected 'mystery tour' to parts of the city other tours don't reach!

We thank Lis Dyson-Jones for agreeing to bring forward the time of her service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on Sunday, 13th July. This meant that members of the congregation were able to attend a Cymanfa Ganu at Bethel Chapel, Cwmtâf – the family chapel of Margaret Griffiths (Phil's wife). Bethel overlooks Llwynon reservoir which now covers the submerged site of the original chapel. The Cymanfa celebrated the centenary of a similar event in 1914 that marked the opening of the (then) new chapel.

Our summer peregrinations came to a pleasant end on Sunday, 20th July when we, along with friends from Highland Place congregation, attended a Joint Service hosted by Cardiff Unitarians and conducted by Rev Lindy Latham.

Visitors

Over the summer period we were pleased to be visited by a few friends who join us at service now and again. On 10th August, we welcomed two new friends – a young couple planning to get married. We enjoyed meeting them and look forward to future visits.

Recovering from surgery

Following a successful knee operation Gwynfa Bowen is now receiving physiotherapy, necessitating frequent stays in Cardiff. We are pleased however that she still manages to attend chapel regularly. It's good to report that, after several stays in hospital, Thelma Davies has now undergone surgery and is doing well. We look forward to seeing her in chapel soon.

Naming Ceremony

On the afternoon of Sunday, 10th August there was a large congregation for a Naming Ceremony conducted by the Rev Eric Jones. The star of the event was Aria-Jo, seven-month-old daughter of proud parents Sammie-Jo and Bleddyn Craze who live on the Gurnos Estate at Merthyr. Bleddyn comes originally from Trefechan, as does Aria-Jo's great-grandmother Barbara Craze, whose family had connections with the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

It was good to meet with other Unitarians at the Summer Rally – the sun really did shine on the righteous that day! Thanks to those who organised it as well as those who attended for their interesting company, and those who spoke to us for their enthusiasm.

Every year we are joined in Service by a lady called Sandra from Cardiff. She attends Albany Road Baptist Church when she is at home, and while on holiday in Porthcawl joins us. This year she was with us for a congregation service and was quite happy to join in and read for us, what a welcome change.

We are very proud of Shaun Steele, who has been awarded an Adult Learners Certificate by Bridgend County Borough Council. His enthusiasm in everything he does is a credit to him. Well done Shaun.

The members of Nottage voted on whether to hold same sex marriage ceremonies in our church, and the majority voted No.

Gethin McAdam, Delydd's son, attended church for one of Julianne's services recently, and treated us to a beautiful solo of "High Hopes" and "Catch a falling star", which he had learned at Mini Music School in the Cardiff College of Music and Drama. I have NO doubt that he will become a chorister too at Bristol Cathedral in the future!

Gwladys Howell is doing well in her residential home. One of her neighbours is from the Midlands, and has very few visitors, so when Gwladys is taken out she buys something for her as a treat. At 93 she is still thinking of others, what a wonderful example to us she continues to be.

Jennifer has discontinued her chemotherapy, but remains positive and interested in Chapel's happenings, we do miss her, but keep in touch, and light a candle for her wellbeing every week.

On the 3rd of October we will hold our annual Macmillan Coffee Morning.

On the 6th of October at 2pm we will restart our Spiritual Healing Group.

On the 12th of October Rev Ashley Hills, General Baptist & Unitarian minister, will conduct our Harvest Service at 11, and Wick's Harvest Service in the afternoon. Donations of dried or tinned food for the Porthcawl Foodbank, please.

All welcome!

Avril Protheroe

TREBANOS

CAPEL Y GRAIG

Where there is a *will* there is a *way*...

There are often many ways of obtaining a desired result. I realised the truth of this when I was asked, "In how many different ways has the grass been cut at the front and side of Capel Y Graig?"

My earliest memory was seeing Dan Davies, a local farm worker, cutting the grass with a scythe and I enquired of my father why was Dan spending so much time sharpening his scythe and less time at cutting the grass. My father always replied to my questioning with a sensible answer and said that all farm and gardening work would be difficult if tools were not sharpened.

I can recall David John Bowen, Lawrence's father, frequently cutting the grass at the side and front of our chapel with a large garden scissors which he, too, kept sharp.

Possibly, the easiest way since the Graig was opened in 1893, was the loan of a neighbour's goat which was tethered by a long rope which was staked near to the entrance of the old vestry. The rope was long enough to enable the goat to graze the whole area, which was completed after two days of grazing.

More recently of course, Flymos and petrol driven machines are being used. But on the last occasion, this summer, when the grass was cut it was done single-handed with an old fashioned sickle by our organist Lawrence Bowen. The sickle too, was kept sharp!

Pipe Organ Music from the Graig

To see and hear our magnificent Binn's Pipe Organ – go to Google and enter '*Organ Music at the Graig Chapel Trebanos from U Tube*'. Then sit back and enjoy!

Colin Morgan

GELLIONNEN

Recent months have been very eventful. Seven of us were at the District Rally, we all much enjoyed the companionship of a shared chapels/churches event and also a shared meal. Walking around Dylan Thomas's house was like taking a step back in time with the added bonus of an enthusiastic guide.

We do not often hear Sheila Cousins at Gellionnen, her service was therefore much appreciated. She was subsequently followed by her nephew Stephen Wilson. We have always thought of Stephen as a man of music rather than a man of words, but there he was bringing *both* to us! Thank you and please come again. Also, he quoted from one of his father's favourite books. Stephen's father, the late Rev Duncan Wilson ministered at our Portsmouth Church.

The Ceredigion Walk was attended by Julie Nedin and Martin Edwards who came back bringing glowing reports of the day.

The concert performed by the Village Quire from Glasbury was a huge success. Many people turned up for the picnic tea beforehand and those of us who did had the pleasure of being entertained by Aneurin Jones and friends.

The performance by the Quire and by actor Phil Smith was very special. To anyone wishing to hear them again, they will be at Pontardawe Arts Centre on 6th December. Two of the choristers said our building was the best they had ever sung in, and they do sing in some very special places!

Our most recent visiting speaker was Lis Dyson-Jones on the subject of *DOUBT*. Lis had not been with us for some time, she always brings a beautifully assembled service – plus this time a CD with which we sang lustily.

Gareth Evans has handed over his immaculate treasurer's books to Robert James. Gareth and Sheila have supported Gellionnen greatly over many years, we wish them well in their new home in Uckfield, East Sussex. Moreover, Robert will take over his new duties with a will and vigour that we only see in very busy people. He can be assured that when ten-year-old Gwennan Evans is in the congregation she will jump to it and take the collection plate around. Thank you Gwen.

We are still looking for a secretary. Bronwen James has very kindly volunteered as minute secretary so things are slowly coming together. Our numbers are few but our hopes are high.

At midday on 29th July we took the Gellionnen and Graig banner and stood on Pontardawe Cross to observe a short Peace Vigil. We are aware that several of our congregations did the same.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

After a lapse of some years, the Wick village cricket team has been revived, and the committee asked if they could use our chapel vestry for their tea-breaks. Helen Lewis our chair-person – and organist – undertook the mammoth task of, shall we say 'reorganising' the vestry, and it is now almost unrecognisable. It is very good to feel that our chapel is still part of the village scene. This year of course it will be our turn to hold the village Remembrance Service and we look forward to welcoming the Anglican church members to it.

Our last service in July, before our usual August break, was a very special one. Family members of our late member Rose Williams were over from America for a family wedding and asked if Rose's great-granddaughter could be christened in our chapel. This was a delightful occasion. Five-year-old Emily Hazel was duly christened by Julianne and her young brother read a charming poem. We sang American words to a Welsh air and all enjoyed tea and cake afterwards. It was heart-warming to see the chapel so full.

Our next service will be on Sunday, September 14th, with our Harvest Service on September 28th when we will be again receiving goods for the Porthcawl Food Bank.

We are looking forward to welcoming Rev Ashley Hills to conduct our service on October 12th. All would be very welcome to any of these services.

Our best wishes to SEWUS members.

Julianne Morgan

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News is **Saturday 25 October 2014**.

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