



South East Wales Unitarian News

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August 2019

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday, 31 August – Strawberry Tea at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon from noon to 4pm.

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 September – ‘Open Doors’ Heritage Event at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Cefncoed. Sat 2–4pm; Sun 2:30–5pm with a service at 6pm celebrating the 272nd Anniversary of the chapel’s founding.

Sunday, 15 September – District bilingual service at Capel Penrhiw, Sain Ffagan at 3pm.

Saturday, 19 October – Copy deadline for the next issue of the District News.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT



At the Aubrey Arms, Bonvilston



Photos: Julie Nedin

This year, the District Rally took a different format from that of previous years. It was decided that we should have a traditional Sunday Lunch followed by a service.

The lunch took place at the Aubrey Arms, Bonvilston and 21 people attended. It was pleasing to see some members, who had not previously attended a District Rally before. The delicious meal and the convivial company were enjoyed by all. I would like to thank Lis for organising it so efficiently, as always.

Her instructions to locate the Aubrey Arms were excellent and I should have followed them to the letter. However, I did manage to arrive at the destination in time despite my sat nav taking me down the country lanes to Pendoylan. In the end, I had to revert to the tried and tested way of asking directions from a local, of course!

The meal was followed by a service at the Friends’ Meeting House in Cardiff, the home of Cardiff Unitarians. The service was conducted by their minister Stephen Lingwood, who delivered a very uplifting service, in which Julie Nedin and I participated.

Everyone agreed that it had been a very enjoyable day.

Before the middle of September, I plan to visit the congregations at Swansea, Nottage, Cefn Coed and Gellionnen.

We can all look forward now to the 15th September, when the District will hold the regular service at Penrhiw Chapel in St Fagans. I hope to see as many people there as possible as it is a joy when we come together from all parts of the district and enjoy fellowship and each other’s company. Fuller details of this service will follow in due course.

The District still does not have a Vice President; so if anyone is interested in this post could you please contact myself or the Secretary Lis Dyson-Jones.

Alun Watts

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 15 JULY 2019

Find out more about the EC on our website: www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/governance

1. As part of the process to review and refresh the General Assembly's strategic plan, the Executive Committee and Chief Officer shared their personal motivations and visions for the denomination. Factors in our external context (e.g. changes in social trends; partners we might work with) were also reviewed, along with the movement's strengths and weaknesses, and the impact we currently have. This will inform the planning process ahead of the next EC meeting at the Nightingale Centre in September.
2. We would like to invite you to contribute your vision to this stage of the planning process. Details from Audrey Longhurst (alonghurst@unitarian.org.uk).
3. Applications are welcome for new members of the Stipend Review Committee. This group makes a recommendation on the proposed minimum stipend paid by congregations to ministers and lay pastors, along with guidance on manse allowance, expenses and parental leave. We seek diversity on this committee, and all applications are welcome, and should be made by email to the [Chief Officer](#).
4. The Executive Committee congratulates the Nightingale Centre Manager and Management Committee for their concerted efforts in improving the Centre's ecological footprint. The Centre is regularly assessed for its green credentials and proudly displays its Peak Park Environmental Quality Award. Full details of the Centre's environmental and sustainability achievements can be viewed on its [website](#). Currently being explored is the feasibility of installing solar panels and an electric car charger.
5. The Chief Officer gave an update and shared her reflections on her first four months.
6. There was discussion on the need to improve the way that the GA makes itself known online, in order for our message to reach more people.
7. The Ethical Investment Policy was discussed, and the need for further work on it was identified, before an ethical policy can be implemented.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Always be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. *Plato (c.427 BC – 347 BC)*

ABERDARE

Women's League

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you all that Celia Evans passed away on 23rd July.

We have lost a dear friend, who has been a stalwart and long-standing member of our League. Celia suffered her long-time illness with courage and fortitude, never grumbled and was an inspiration to us all. She was not only a pillar of Women's League but also, of our Church. She was so committed that when her eyesight diminished, she would sing hymns from memory! A remarkable lady loved and respected by all.

Jean Rees has been discharged from hospital and Dorothy Jones continues to be hospitalised. Diane Jones has been transferred to Tegfan Care Home in Trecynon, Aberdare.

After hospitalisation, Betty Evans was able to enjoy her 90th birthday at home and a surprise birthday tea with us on 17 July. Congratulations on your 90th birthday, Betty!

On 22 May, we had a successful Branch meeting with all officers confirmed in their roles.

Members' CD choices provided a pleasant musical afternoon on 29th May.

We had an entertaining meeting with members' favourite poetry and readings taking centre stage on 5th June.

On Sunday, June 9th, our Women's League Service took place with the theme, 'Women who have inspired us during our life.' It was a thought-provoking service with stories and personal memories from those who participated.

We undertook 'Craft Knit & Natter' session on 12th June, which was very enjoyable.

On 19th June, Julie Nedin gave an excellent talk on her 250 mile pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago and hopes to complete the pilgrimage in September!

On 26th June, we enjoyed our regular quiz supplied by our quizmaster, Anne Jones.

Members met socially for tea in the Mountain Centre in Libanus on July 3rd.

On 10th July, Jennifer George gave us a talk on 'Alaska,' with its beauty, history and wildlife. Thanks to

Joan Harlow for operating the Powerpoint presentation.

Our visit to Nantgarw pottery, which was arranged for 24 July 2019, was cancelled due to the loss of our treasured friend, Celia.

Our planning meeting will take place 11 September. Enjoy the summer break.

Anne Watts

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Celia Evans, wife of Humphrey, on 23rd July (Rev Eric Jones writes further in this issue). The funeral which took place on Monday 5th August was held at Highland Place Church and Llwydcoed Crematorium with Rev Eric Jones officiating. Friends from across the district attended. Our sympathy and thoughts go to Humphrey and family.

Also causes of sadness over the past few weeks were the deaths of the following people connected with Highland Place:

Jimmy Rees of Cwmdare, brother of Carol and Hazel Jones; John Battenbo of Clydach – John and his wife Mattie were active members at Highland Place when they lived in Llwydcoed; and David Cowdry of Hirwaun, formerly of Tŷ Fry and Llwydcoed, who died on 29th July at Prince Charles Hospital after an operation – David was 71 years of age. He was very fond of Highland Place and never forgot the years he spent at Sunday School and in the Youth Group. He contributed financially to the church funds over the years and the family have presented the church with a Vase in memory of him. The funeral Service was conducted by the Rev Eric Jones at Llwydcoed on 13th August.

Our sympathy goes to all the families.

The wedding of Frances Howells and Thomas George took place at the church on 25th May. Rev Eric Jones officiated, and Grace Jones played the organ for her first wedding. We wish Frances and Thomas every happiness.

Our All Present Service and Flower Communion was held on May 26th. There was a good congregation for the service, but unfortunately some members were away as it was a bank holiday weekend.

The Highland Place Annual Lecture was held on July 5th, which was delivered by Rt Hon Ann Clwyd, MP for Cynon Valley. It was unfortunate that this year it was held on a Friday evening which meant there were fewer attending, but we were grateful for the support shown by friends in the District. We listened to a very interesting talk with Ann recalling her earlier life in Flintshire and Chester. She spoke of her work at the BBC in sound effects on 'Watch with Mother' and Mrs Dale's Diary. Ann later became a journalist with the Guardian, and she related how she was the first journalist at the Aberfan disaster. She also had interesting memories as MEP and MP and her campaigning for the miners, the NHS and Iraq. Alun Watts chaired the meeting and Humphrey Evans gave the vote of thanks and presented Ann with a bouquet of flowers. Tea and biscuits were served in the schoolroom, with interesting discussions with Ann Clwyd. Our thanks to Alun Watts for arranging the event.



Humphrey Evans presents a bouquet to Guest Speaker Ann Clwyd MP.

Photo: Joy Foster

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon has had some visitors from across the country recently. During May there was a visitor from Carmarthen who is writing a book on the life of Tomos Glyn Cothi, who was minister at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and died in 1833. The book will be launched at Carmarthen. Two gentlemen travelled from Hampshire on Bank Holiday Monday to take photographs of the chapel. They have promised to send us some copies.

A reminder that a Strawberry Tea will be held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd on Saturday 31st August. This event is arranged by the Friends of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, to help raise funds for further development of the centre. We look forward to support for this event and further details will be available from Rev Eric Jones.

CELIA EVANS

I first got to know Celia just over 50 years ago. Humphrey & Celia were to be married at Highland Place. I don't remember much about the wedding, but it had snowed heavily in the night and Humphrey's cousin, John Morse and others came along early in the morning with shovels to clear a path from the road to the church.

Celia immediately joined in the activities at Highland Place, and became a Sunday School Teacher. She would help with parties and join us as a leader when we took children away for a week's holiday in Cwmwrdu. She became a President of the Women's League, supported along the years and worked hard for Sales of Work and joined in the fun at Socials and entertainment evenings.

Because she was confined to a wheelchair for so many years, there is a danger that we may forget the 'earlier' Celia, full of energy, brightness and enthusiasm.

We will all miss her for many reasons. Celia never complained, she never took umbrage, she never pouted. I don't remember any kind of unpleasantness or difficulties or awkwardness. She was 45 years of age when she was diagnosed with M.S. but she was able to carry on normally for at least ten years afterwards but there was a slow deterioration and for the last 10 years, she was blind and confined to a wheelchair.

Even then, she remained positive and greeted everyone with a smile. She was never bitter and never complained. Up to a couple of weeks back, she would attend the church on three occasions every week without fail – on a Sunday, for Meditation Group on a Monday and the Women's League on a Wednesday. What is more, she looked forward to attending, enjoyed every minute, felt better for having been, and everyone else enjoyed her company.

Celia was a ray of sunshine both in her healthy years and in her years of illness. She was a star and the place will be darker without her.

She gave everything, appreciated everything and kept a positive attitude.

Our sympathy is extended to Humphrey, to daughter Alison and son Jonathan in their loss as well as four granddaughters Jessica, Megan, Emily and Lucy.

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

In June I took part in a charity walk for Wales' Children's Hospital around the churches and chapels in Cardiff City Centre, Grangetown, and Butetown. At each church there was a hymn and a prayer and it was interesting to see inside the many and varied communities in central Cardiff.

June also saw the one hundredth anniversary of the racist riots that happened in Cardiff, Barry, and other port cities in 1919. Ethnic minorities in these cities feared for their lives as white mobs roamed the streets, particular targeting mixed race families. In June there were a series of events in Cardiff to commemorate this, including at the Cardiff Story Museum, and I was very interested to learn about these events. Cardiff has a long history of being a multicultural city but it's good to remember it wasn't always easy and there is a legacy of racism that still needs to be faced up to.

July saw the Extinction Rebellion Summer Uprising with a big green boat blocking Castle Street for three days to make as loud a demand as possible to the government to act on the climate emergency. As part of my involvement in Extinction Rebellion I helped to organise an interfaith event beforehand with speakers from Anglican, Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Quaker, Hindu, Pagan, Muslim, and Unitarian speakers. It was a beautiful ceremony and helped everyone there to think about what motivates them to change the world.

We were delighted to host the district for the summer service this year. After a lovely pub lunch we gathered in the Meeting House to worship together.



Extinction Rebellion

Stephen (4th from left) with fellow Faith leaders

Photo: Max Davies/Extinction Rebellion

Thanks to everyone who helped to organise this and everyone who came.

I will leave you with these words from that service from John Buehrens:

There is a unity in which all... of us now on this planet are all involved. A unity, universal and eternal... The religious and reflective task is to become more aware of this reality, then to embrace it more gratefully and make it more manifest in the choices we make and the lives we lead... We Unitarian Universalists... carry in our very name a call to make that unity clearer."

Stephen Lingwood

CEFNCOED

Women's League

Our annual Women's League service was held on Sunday, 9 June. The service was conducted by League members who presented readings by UK and US Unitarian ladies which included articles on the Objects of the League and on the lives of Rev Margaret Barr and Rev Rosalind Lee. Some of our congregation remember Margaret Barr – many years ago – on one of her occasional times away from the Khasi Hills, speaking at a Sunday morning service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd to raise support for her work in India.

Our summer outing to The Old Barn Tea Room at Ystradgynwyn, originally planned for 7th August, has now been postponed.

Out and about

During July and August, members were present at the District Rally at Cardiff, the Annual Lecture at Highland Place Church and, sadly, the funeral of Celia Evans also at Highland Place Church.

Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Graveyard

With the profuse growth of grass and bramble the graveyard had become a no-go area for all, with the possible exception of the likes of television survivalist Bear Grylls. So we are very grateful to Huw Griffiths (son of Philip) for cutting down the engulfing vegetation—a task made extra difficult by the proximity of many of the graves with each other. Thanks to Huw's efforts visitors can now reach all regions of the graveyard unhindered.

One (unwelcome) visitor, however, would not have been deterred by any amount of undergrowth—having entered the graveyard by *air* !

On a blowy night early in July, a strong gust of wind lifted up a large inflatable 'body' from wherever it peacefully lay and transported it to the graveyard where it became lodged in the upper branches of our ancient yew tree. Over time it gradually deflated, and it now hangs limp and lifeless—motionless until prompted by the breeze to give a wave to passers-by. Hopefully, a future storm will bear it off to a more suitable, and less visible, final resting place.

Belated Birthday Wishes

By the time this newsletter appears two events will have already been celebrated.

On 2nd August Margaret Edwards will have celebrated her 95th birthday and on 10th August Arthur Saunders will have celebrated his 80th birthday. We hope these happy occasions went off well and we wish "Many happy returns" to them both.

Ken Morgan

SWANSEA

It was really nice to see Margaret back in church after a few weeks absence, following her hip replacement. She has waited a long time for this and it is good that she is improving so well. Hopefully she will be in far less pain.

On a sad note Margaret's brother Alan Lewis passed away on 25th July 2019. He attended the Sunday School and became a member of our church. He joined the church's Dramatic Society and enjoyed the competitions that were held within the District and UK. His first job was a reporter for the Evening Post but then joined the RAF. He met his wife Maureen and returned to Swansea for a short while but then moved to Crewe, his wife's home town. He always remained in contact with the church and we all have fond memories of his time with us.

It was good to attend the district rally in July, meeting others from the district and sharing a meal. It was

followed by a moving service by Stephen Lingwood. Many thanks go to all those involved with the organisation of the event.

Our church is looking very colourful this year with overflowing baskets and pots. The flowers have been tended by Lynn and they are a picture of yellow, reds and blues. Our thanks to him for all his efforts.

The graveyard at the back of the church has had some attention, courtesy of the Unity in Diversity. They have been hard at work clearing the undergrowth and even making a flower border at the side of the graveyard.

The gas stove in the kitchen has been serviced and the hob and the oven are both fully operational. We now have the facility to give out free breakfasts if we choose!!

Thanks to the lay preachers during the last two months. We have had several visitors to the church including 2 Americans from Boston. It was a happy coincidence that Lis Dyson- Jones had been to the Boston Church and was able to share her experiences with them. It is interesting how many visitors we have coming to the church during the summer months.

May we wish you all a happy summer.

Hilda Dumpleton

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

The mountain litter pick went well. Our local community police officer joined in, bringing a group of eager youngsters, and people living in the immediate area were glad to lend a hand.

Branwen James, Julie Nedin and I have all had big birthdays – needless to say, mine was the biggest.

Lynne and Steve Williams have become first-time grandparents to lovely little Henry Robert Williams. We share in their obvious excitement and pride and wish young Henry every blessing.

We were happy to know that Douglas Alexander had been accepted into the Duvant Male Voice Choir and then very impressed when he told us that they had sung at the recent wedding of Hannah Stone and Bryn Terfel.

Our visit to the Swansea Institute on a sunny Saturday afternoon was a delight. It is an old fashioned museum with glass cases and bookshelves to the ceiling – not much in the way of sophisticated electronics. Our guide was helpful and enthusiastic. The museum also holds a large collection of more recent memorabilia which goes out on loan to schools for handling and discussion. There were flat irons, glass milk bottles, scrubbing brushes, big black telephones and fountain pens. The museum is happy to receive anything of this sort.

Our visit was followed by a gorgeous old fashioned tea in the Front Room in Mumbles – Men's Group please note, but you will have to give yourselves plenty of time for the museum and the tea, and to take in deep breaths of salty sea air.

Meeting up with our other chapels and churches is always a great pleasure. It was good to see new faces as well as the old ones at the District Service in Cardiff.

On the last Sunday in June we discovered that the notice cabinet on an outside wall had been vandalised and that our water tank was empty, then our keyboard gave up the ghost – all this when the Rev Mike Shepherd was taking service. Our accompanist has a fine singing voice so all went well and we now have a new keyboard. Our water supply is available once more and Robert James has repaired the notice cabinet. Big sigh of relief!

Katy Clark and Siân Evans have graduated from Aberystwyth and Swansea Universities respectively. Congratulations girls, and all good wishes for the future. Katy's younger sister Megan continues with her studies in Cardiff.

During his July service Dr Rory Castle Jones welcomed into membership Rachel Evans, Megan Price and Hayley Rowden-Cooper. Our registrar, Sandra Beynon presented each with a certificate. We are glad to be joined by these three thoughtful and active people. One week later Rachel opened her home for afternoon tea and raised £75 for Women's Aid.



Julie Nedin presents Marian with a cake to celebrate her birthday

An American family, the Powells, were walking up on Gellionnen on a Sunday in July and they joined us for service. Owen Powell, his wife Jennifer and daughters Rhion and Bryn have connections in the area,

grandmother Mrs Annie Evans lived on Glynmeirch; Owen was delighted to tell them that he had known their hen mamgu when he was a child and remembered her house as it was then. This is a small world.

Once again we must thank our pulpit plan speakers for their welcome visits and also our own Martyn Edwards, Julie Nedin and Rhys and Rory Castle-Jones.

Our combined services where everyone is encouraged to make a contribution seem to be doing well. Perhaps there are many who are happy to give a little and therefore make one whole service.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Our Annual Flower Communion service was very well attended. The flowers were varied and beautiful – as was our congregation, with a wide range of readings and some new tricky questions about flowers. The grass in our graveyard had been cut, and our chapel looked lovely in the sunshine. We have welcomed worshippers from as far afield as Llantrisant, and Llanelli as well as our usual members from Bridgend, Neath, Wick, St Athans and Swansea, quite a large network.

We have no services in August, a tradition because as a farming community originally, the Harvest took up the month. Our Harvest Thanksgiving Service will take place in September when we hope our members will have all returned safely from their holidays.

We may be small but have you heard this saying by Betty Reese?
If you think you are too small to be effective—you have never been in bed with a mosquito.

Our very best wishes to all in our District.

Julianne Morgan

MEN'S GROUP

The group ventured north of Cefn Coed to visit St Gwynno's Church at Vaynor. We were met by the organist Mrs. Anne Jones who opened the church for us. Philip Griffiths provided each of us with a printed history of the church and we saw the grave of the ironmaster Crawshay, owner of Cyfarthfa iron works. The tombstone, measuring 11ft by 7ft, weighs nine tons and bears the inscription 'God Forgive Me'.

Philip then guided us down a track to the site of the original Norman church and the surviving tower, now much overgrown. A very unusual tower, that was well worth seeing.

We then stopped off on our way for lunch at the nearby Aberglais Inn at the 'Berdydd' locally held to be a burial mound associated with the Battle of Maes-y-Vaynor in 1291, or the site of a Motte and Bailey castle located in Cae Byrraf Dydd 'the field of the shortest day' possibly then the 5th January under the old calendar. Our thanks to Philip for arranging the visit.

On the 15th August we met at Aberdare museum to see an exhibition on the South Wales Jewish community. The exhibition was very detailed with newspaper articles, quotes and many photographs of synagogues around South Wales, the Jewish cemetery at Cefncoed, the setting up of Treforest industrial estate, Jewish sports teams and much more. A very interesting exhibition giving information on all aspects of Jewish life in South Wales. This was followed by a tour of the museum and lunch in the café.

We meet next on 19th September for a visit to Morlais Castle, the Norman fort associated with Vaynor Church followed by lunch at Morlais Castle Golf Club.

Tony Foster

FURTHER RALLY PHOTOS (Julie Nedin)



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News: **Saturday, 19 October.**
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