



FOR YOUR DIARY

15-18 April – Annual Meeting of the General Assembly at Chester.

Sunday, 17 May – District Service at Nottage conducted by outgoing President, Lewis Rees at 11am prior to the AGM of the SEWUS at 2pm.

CONGRATULATIONS

The election for the new Executive Committee resulted in Lis Dyson-Jones being elected to serve on the eight-strong body. We congratulate Lis and are very pleased with the outcome.

DISTRICT SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS

The annual District Service of Readings and Carols took place at Capel y Graig, Trebanos, at 11am on Sunday 7th December 2008.

We were welcomed by our President, Lewis Rees (on his 'home patch') and he then guided us through the mix of English and Welsh carols which were introduced by Readers from the separate congregations. The Readings were drawn from many sources and were, as always, varied and interesting.



Photo by Keith Lewis Jones

Graig Organist Lawrence Bowen provided the accompaniment for our singing and treated us to a musical interlude that further demonstrated his expertise. We also appreciated the contribution by the talented Nemeth family, with Sandor providing his own backing on the guitar, and Angela accompanied by their son Jamie on the violin.

We were again pleased to welcome Rev Dr Ann Peart to a District event and are grateful to her for leading us in prayer.

The collection was shared between the District and the President's selected charities - Wales Air Ambulance and Handicap International.

We were unexpectedly blessed with glorious sunshine and enjoyed the short stroll to the nearby Goshen Hall for a shared lunch, beginning with a warming bowl of hot soup. We express our thanks to the Graig and Gellionnen congregations for hosting this successful event.

OUR PUBLIC IMAGE

Unitarians have had a great deal of attention in the Welsh Language Press recently. In the autumn, it emerged that someone has been walking around the village of Cribyn, posting some pamphlets through doors, warning them against the influence of Unitarians. Rev Cen Llwyd got front page cover in the

Cambrian News and a week later in "Y Cymro". It must have helped to raise the profile of Unitarianism in the area.

Cen Llwyd also featured in "Y Cymro" a few weeks later in response to a comment made by a gentleman from Pontardulais who was concerned that a new web page created by some retired Congregationalist and Baptist Ministers was Socinian in theology. Socinian is another name for Unitarians and we used to be referred to as "Sosiniaid". As far as I understand the matter, the ministers involved are reacting against the evangelical nature of so many people who profess to speak in the name of Christianity. Gruffydd Thomas from Pontardulais is very concerned.

Wyn Thomas has not been idle either, and appeared on Television in regard to the closing of Post Offices in Rural Wales and the plight of the Farming community facing the present financial squeeze.

J.Eric Jones

P.S. It occurs to me that all of us need to have a spate of attacks in the Press so that we can learn to defend ourselves in today's "don't care" climate. A little opposition now and again would do us a world of good.' *JEJ*

GA QUOTA

Quota Membership of the General assembly has now been sent away, the figures received were as follows:

Aberdare 24; Cefncoed 24; Trebanos 20; Cardiff 19; Nottage 13; Swansea 12; Wick 10. Amount sent was £2806.00 Total Membership of General Assembly is 122 for the District. Undoubtedly, each congregation will have its own category of membership also.

Eric Jones (District Treasurer)

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

The interview this month is with Hilda Dumbleton who has been involved with Unitarianism all of her life. She has two sons, Huw and James, 30 & 27 respectively. Hilda was widowed aged 45. Originally a mathematics teacher, she is now Deputy Head of St. Michael's, an Independent school. May I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who have already completed an interview. I am aware that the questions are sometimes challenging and certainly take a great deal of thought and effort to answer.

Ella Lewis-Jones

When were you happiest?

I get this feeling bubbling up inside me when I am really and truly happy. It can be triggered by the family getting together, or enjoying the sea lapping on the sand or when with friends sharing a meal together.

What is your greatest fear?

My 2 sons live away and I am always afraid if they do not answer their phones for a day or two. I always think the worst and wonder what has happened to them

What is your earliest memory?

I can remember sitting on the floor in the infant school hall in front of a radio. It was a huge square shaped board with a small loudspeaker in the middle. I don't think I listened very much as I cannot remember what the programme was about.

What is your favourite word?

It has to be food, though chocolate comes a close second. All my life, I have loved eating and for most of the last 40 years I have tried to limit my indulgence. I try to make sure that I have my 3 meals a day or else.....beware!!!!

How do you relax?

I enjoy reading books, gardening, walking, travelling, DIY. Relaxing for me is to get away from the pressure of school and do something else. I admit that I cannot sit still for long, I have to be doing something.

What or who is the greatest love of your life?

My car is my greatest love! I love driving my Honda. To me it is not a piece of engineering but a part of me. It is now 10 years old and I am still entranced by its shape and thrill when I can drive it fast.

What does love feel like?

I think love is so important in our world. People need to feel love for each other. This is the warm glow we get when we love others. It is love which helps a neighbour, love that tends the sick, love that cares for family and friends. And when we experience the love of others, it makes us feel we are part of that circle of caring.

To whom would you most like to say sorry?

To all those people who write me letters and have to wait ages for a reply.

What is the worst job you've done?

Most of my job is interesting, challenging and rewarding. But occasionally I have to cope with extremely irate parents and staff. It takes much diplomacy and careful handling to cope with these situations.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

I suppose my biggest disappointment was Huw developing arthritis at such a young age. He suffers so much pain and so many difficulties, I wish that it could have happened to me instead.

If you could edit your past, what would you change?

It would have been very nice if my husband could have been alive to see our sons growing up and share my pride in their achievements.

What is the closest you've come to death?

I was driving in Florida and suddenly we were in the middle of the most awful storm. There was thunder, lightning and rain so torrential that I could not see anything out of the windscreen. I was very concerned that we would either be hit by lightning or another car would drive into us.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

I would like to have a 48 hour day. Then I could work the 12 hour plus school day but I would also have time to complete all my grand plans. I have this vision of a weed free garden. I dream of long walks around the Gower peninsula. I could do more DIY in my sons' houses, the list is endless. On second thoughts perhaps it should be a 72 hour day!

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I think bringing up my two sons on my own is one. But I am also pleased that in the last few years before retiring I have managed to have 4 promotions to reach the position I am at the moment.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

I have learnt much in my 60+ years. I think we have to accept that life is like a journey into the unknown. It can also be a series of ups and downs but we have to make the best of it. We need to accept those things that cannot be changed but persevere with those that can. And if you can smile as well then that is a bonus. I usually take a deep breath and go for it!

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

You should nurse your dreams and protect them through bad times and tough times to the sunshine and light which always come.

Woodrow Wilson (1856 - 1924)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I had intended to write a message that would be an inspiration to you all as we head into another New Year. However, I came across the following, written by Richard S Gilbert that articulates all I wanted to share with you far more succinctly.

Welcome to the land of beginning again.

I hold in my hand a calendar, a simple piece of paper with words and numbers.

Some see living as tearing away the pages from the calendar, throwing them away, always looking to pages remaining, the future. But that is a limited perspective.

Living also consists of filing them away as experiences, memories, which can never be lost

The life we live has its own fullness, its own memories, now stored in our hearts and the hearts of those who love us, for as long as we, and they, shall live.

Still, there is a vague sense of something new in the air. The calendar now in my hand is thick and clean. It won't be long before it will be full of scratchings, calls to return, appointments to keep, mistakes to correct. But for now, I haven't yet made a mistake. It's a clean slate.

Welcome to the land of beginning again.

As we look forward to a New Year full of possibilities and challenges, particularly the exciting future ministry project that may provide us with a professional ministry that will hopefully reinvigorate our district, I wish you all health and happiness.

And welcome once more to the land of beginning again.

In Peace / Mewn Tangnefedd

Lewis

ABERDARE

The services which took place at Highland Place on the last Sunday before Christmas (21st December) and on the Eve of Christmas were enjoyed and appreciated by all those who attended. Both services, conducted by the Rev Eric Jones, also included readings and personal reminiscences from individual members of the congregation. The sources of the readings were quite diverse and included the Bible and secular sources e.g. the Times. An important theme which came through in the Christmas Eve service was to reiterate the 'true' spirit of Christmas with its emphasis on care and compassion towards each other and particularly towards those less fortunate than ourselves. Arthur Saunders & the Rev Eric Jones sang, unaccompanied, traditional Welsh Christmas music which, we were told, is still a feature in eastern Montgomeryshire.

Those of us who attended the District Christmas Service at Trebanos and the delicious lunch that followed, very much enjoyed ourselves. Many thanks for your hard work to the Trebanos congregation.

On Christmas week a new kitchen was installed at Highland Place. We have needed this for some time and, unlike the central heating which took an age to sort out, seemed to happen relatively quickly. Once again, we have the Rev Eric Jones to thank for pulling the whole thing together and finding an excellent carpenter.

2008 was the 80th anniversary of the founding of Women's League in Aberdare. Throughout the year various initiatives have taken place to celebrate this anniversary, these have been referred to in back issues of South East Wales News. Our final initiative will be to put together a 'Time Capsule'. In assembling the time capsule, which will be opened on our centenary in 2028, we wanted a collection of items, which illustrate the sort of society that we occupy in 2008. Women's League is a source of comfort, friendship and fulfilment to all its members and we sincerely trust that this tradition will continue.



Photo by Keith Lewis Jones

The Christmas Dinner took place, this year, at the Aberdare Golf Club and was appreciated by all those who attended. Many thanks to Betty Evans for making the arrangements.

Ella Lewis-Jones

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDO DIAID CAERDYDD

Early in December, members of the congregation were delighted to be able to attend a Christmas get together organized by members of the Society of Friends, for users of the Meeting House. It is always good to have the opportunity to share fellowship and ideas with others.

Several members of the congregation were pleased to be able to attend the Christmas District Rally held in Trebanos on the 7th December.

A service of carols and readings based on the 'Colours of Christmas' was held during December. This was led by Lis and gave several members the opportunity to participate. Many thanks to all, for their varied and delightful choices.

The Christmas Eve collection has been donated to the homeless of Cardiff. The service, again conducted by members of the congregation was organized by Sarah and Sheila.

We are indebted to those who agree to travel to Cardiff to conduct our services and look forward to the wide variety of content and style, giving us food for thought.

It has long been the practice in Cardiff, to support charity and our 'Charity Box' is always available to enable contributions to be made. Our current charity is for Sightsavers, the National Women's League charity for this year. The work undertaken by them during the past 50 years includes screening and treating those in the developing world with eye disorders. The aim is to rehabilitate those with visual impairment and encourage improving standards in the developing world, where 75% of blindness is treatable. In November, Margaret Evans held a cheese and wine evening at her home, when £200 was raised in support of Sightsavers.

Additional thanks go to Margaret for raising £70 towards District funds through a Sale of Table and Raffle held at her home in December. Members of Aberdare joined Cardiff members for this occasion.

Several members were very happy to join Sarah (our Secretary) celebrate her 50th birthday in early December, at the Cardiff Rowing Club. It was a very happy occasion to begin the Christmas season. We send congratulations to Sarah on passing two modules of the MA postgraduate course she is studying in Education and also to Caroline, her daughter, who achieved a distinction in a LANDA examination for Acting. Well done to both.

Congratulations also, to Alan Cohen on the publication of his book 'Science and Spirit Reconciled' and to Lis on the birth of her second grandson (Samuel William Amos Brown) on the 14th December. Sam is the second son of Matthew and Elizabeth and a brother for Joseph.

We are pleased that Win is beginning to feel better after a period of illness. She and Margaret have been able to visit Peggy Roberts who now lives in Cartref, Lakeside, Cardiff. Peggy was pleased to see them and is looking well. We send our warm wishes to Lyn's sister, Olwen and hopes for better health in 2009.

Representatives of the congregation will join others from our district chapels at a meeting with two 'fm' consultants to discuss future ministry in the area.

We hope to send a delegate to the Annual Meetings in Chester in April and others have indicated their wish to attend the meetings.

The next United Nations meeting is on 18th February at The Temple of Peace, when Dr Edwin Edege will speak on World Organisations and International Peace. If anyone is interested, please get in touch with Sarah Boyce.

All members of the Cardiff congregation send their very best wishes to District members, for a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year.

Thought for Now

*May we enlarge our souls and make room for others.
May we be given new words of peace with which to create a new community.
Words that will bring healing and a belief in the future.
May we learn to live with each other and for each other.
Travelling together, we are bigger than alone.*

(Adapted from the words of Johanna Boeke and Stuart Coupe)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Our Christmas Concert was a big success this year again. We collected over £400 for Tŷ Hafan and LATCH. Thanks to Bobby for her hard work in organising the concert and to the League members who decorated the trees for the Christmas Tree Festival.

Vera ran the Christmas Raffle yet again and raised for £141.00 for chapel funds.

Due to the very cold weather we cancelled all the League meetings in January. We are now looking forward to a restart in February with renewed strength after our hibernation.

Gwen Everrit

CHILDREN TOGETHER

On Remembrance Sunday, 9th November, the children attended the ceremony at the village War Memorial and the Public Service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd that followed. Their poppy collage was displayed in the chapel and they presented a joint Reading. The ceremony and service were conducted by Ken Morgan.

Emily, Kirsty and Sophie conducted the Christmas Service on Sunday, 21st December with a contribution by two older 'girls' - Gwen Everrit and Vera Tomsett.

DECEMBER SERVICES

On Sunday, 7th December several members attended the District Service at Trebanos and then rushed back to attend the Charity Concert at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in the evening.

The service on Sunday, 21st December was conducted by Children Together, and on Christmas Morning the service was conducted by Four Wise Men – Arthur, Philip, Morgan and Ken.

AND THEY LISTENED EAGERLY (Mark: 12.37)

The long-awaited installation of a loop and sound reinforcement system has been completed. No longer will the pearls of wisdom cascading from our pulpit fall on deaf (or 'hearing impaired') ears.

NEW WALKWAY

The path leading from the chapel forecourt to the side gate has now been levelled and paved.

BEST WISHES

We send our best wishes to all who are unable to attend services, and especially to Eirwen Evans, now a resident at The Daffodils Nursing Home, who celebrated her 90th birthday on 19th January.

NOTTAGE

Christmas celebrations at Nottage were many and various. Julianne Morgan conducted her Christmas service with us on November 30th, and after a moving thought provoking service, gave those in attendance a Christmas tree gift. Julianne often takes more than one service a month for us and we really appreciate her help in keeping the pulpit supplied with speakers who care for our congregation.

On December 3rd the annual Christmas service for cubs, beavers and scouts was held. The chapel was full. Annette conducted the service which included readings from the children, and the carol singing was inspiring. Particular thanks are offered to Jean, Siân and Jonathan who not only decorated the chapel in readiness, but cleaned for us and prepared the boys and girls for the event. A collection was taken, and as a result £105 was sent to a fund for children with leukaemia.

On December 7th six of us made the journey to Pontardawe for the District event. Thanks to the folks of Graig and Gellionnen for their welcome, service, soloists and then going the 'extra mile' with the food.

Our own Christmas Service was conducted by Annette on December 21st with Delydd McAdam playing the organ for us. Aisha read for us and Caitlin sang, it was a lovely service and afterwards 24 of us went to lunch in the Salthouse ... and a good time was had by all!

At 8.30am on Christmas day 21 friends and members joined in worship to give thanks for all of our blessings. Annette is one of them, and we sincerely thank her for all of her work on our behalf through the year. Karen Hnyda is another, who (I'm reliably informed was still in bed at 8.15!) came to make our organ 'sing' for us. David Marsh is another, he prepared and served us with communion. He does so much in the chapel and it is appreciated.

God bless you all.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

New Year greetings to everyone. May you be healthy and happy in spite of 'doom and gloom' forecasts.

Warm memories of Christmas still remain starting with the SEW Christmas service at Graig Chapel, Trebanos on 7th December. Although there were not as many present as on other Christmas services due largely to flu and colds, it was a delightful service with some enjoyable readings and soloists. It was held on a bright winter's day with a brilliant blue sky and a sharp frost that had turned green grass to white spikes. The Swansea Valley looked beautiful.

It was good of Dr Ann Peart to travel such a long way to be with us, to lead us in Prayer and join us afterwards for a delicious lunch. Hot soup as a starter warmed us all up. Our thanks go to the Graig congregation for hosting such an enjoyable event. The District events offer a great opportunity to socialise and I hope will continue.

At High Street we enjoyed the rest of Advent with some meaningful services followed by mince pies and a chat. We also enjoyed a congregational dinner at Olchfa House.

During this cold spell, our one thought is to keep warm and avoid slipping on any ice. It is a good time to read Rhian's holiday experiences in the Pyrenees [see below] and maybe start thinking about holidays to brighten us up.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

Last year we were very glad to receive a batch of hymn books from the Portsmouth Church. They are the old Hymns of Worship and we've taken pleasure in using them for some of our carol singing. Our copies of Sing True came from the Southampton Church. *Diolch yn fawr*. At Gellionnen we have never had hymn books before! I guess, in the old days people would put a hymnbook in their pocket before setting off on the uphill walk to the chapel. Not only that, the small portable organ would be carried up also. For many years we sang from old Cymanfa Ganu booklets and they have served us well. We are still using them, many of the songs have stirring words and beautiful tunes.

Out thanks go to Jane Carpenter who took out her paint brushes and touched up our lovely old nativity group. Then on Christmas Eve we had a musicians' gallery for midnight service. We had two 10-year-old violinists and a couple of others who refused to divulge their age. Also there was Tomos on the cornet, Josie on the tenor horn, Hywel on the euphonium and Caradog on the flute. They were all held together by Sara and we are so grateful to her. It was fun, it was deeply meaningful. Thank you also to Chloe for her lovely Christmas medley played on the cello and to soloists Sandra and Lynnford Jones our sterling regulars. It didn't leave Lewis much time but he did us proud.

Congratulations go to Ruth Clark, daughter of Elizabeth and John Bevan, mother of Katy and Megan. Ruth travelled to Dublin to run her first marathon and sponsor money raised was donated to Barnardo's Cymru.

Bethan Bevan (same family), and daughter of Edward and Margaret Bevan, has recently performed at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art to help raise money for the Mullany Fund. Bethan is an accomplished harp player.

We were saddened to hear of the death in Blackpool of Sammy, brother of Eirion Phillips, Betty and Thelma. Our thoughts are especially with you and the rest of the family.

The first Sunday of the year is often reputed to be the least well attended. Not so this time. Philip Griffiths arrived hot foot from Cefn Coed and, expecting half-a-dozen, he actually saw a well filled chapel! Philip's address went down well, it was thought provoking and challenging. This was followed by Lewis Rees's short service of blessing for little Rhys Tomos. He was as good as gold. May love be with you for all the days of your life Phys.

Sandra Beynon is recovering well from her knee operation. We look forward to seeing her back at service soon.

GELLIONNEN RESTORATION UPDATE

Trebanos and District Mixed Choir held a benefit concert in the Graig Chapel to support the Gellionnen Restoration Fund. The choir's connection with the Graig is still a close one. The collection reached £210 and we are most thankful.

John Alderslade from Trowbridge gave up his Saturday to do a benefit at our local folk club which meets in the Ivy Bush, Pontardawe. The room was given free by the landlord and John earned £200 for us. He is not a Unitarian but often joins us for the Folk Service when we have our Ponty Music Festival and has frequently taken part.

OBITUARY

I recently attended the funeral of Mrs Margaret Howells. At one time she had been secretary of the Gellionnen and Graig chapels. She was the widow of Dic Howells who had served both as SE Wales President and Chairman at one time.

Theirs was a delightful household, filled with books and music. Margaret had a spinning wheel and a loom also. She had a degree in German and between them she and Dic also spoke Welsh, French and Italian. For many years Margaret taught in a school for pupils with learning difficulties. She found it challenging and took great pleasure from her teaching abilities.

Margaret was a great cook and very hospitable. Despite failing sight and painful hips she always remained positive and looked forward to receiving the District News Sheet. On several occasions she told me that she'd met with Unitarianism on the Eisteddfod field at the Unitarian tent and through the late Hazel Morgan.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

A very happy and healthy New Year to all our friends in the District.

Looking back over 2008, Wick had a good year. We ended the year with some very well-attended services, which have given us hope for the future. The Village Remembrance Service held at our chapel was a particularly friendly joint service, and we look forward to visiting the village Anglican church for this year's service.

The Welcome and Dedication Service for Lili-Perl Arnold was one of the highlights of our year, the chapel was full, Lili-Perl was a darling and her little sister Enfys Haf who has been attending chapel since she was a baby was so proud to share in her sister's day. All our members joined the family and friends for a buffet meal afterwards.

Our two Christmas Services were a joy for us all, with lots of surprise items and visitors. Our gallery has been in use this year to take extra worshippers. We always remind people that it has been there for over 200 years and we need to 'try out' its strength now and then.

At our New Year Service Tanya Bhanaut brought some thoughts she wished to share with us – and they fitted in with the service theme so beautifully that you would have thought it had been rehearsed — but it was completely spontaneous. Well done Tanya, we look forward to hearing from you again. As usual Enfys Haf and Lili-Perl delighted us all. There is a truly family feel about our services.

We are looking forward to the wedding of Mike Davies and Lorraine Phillips in our chapel in February. Mike is the son of our former treasurer Joyce, who unfortunately had to resign due to failing eyesight. This will be a very happy occasion for Joyce and for us all.

Here's to the Old year – and here's to the New,
Here's to visions and dreams coming true -
A world filled with harmony, peace for humankind
With bounty for sharing, and want hard to find.

So, we join with all our friends in a toast to the future...
With love, faith and hope.

Julianne Morgan

WALKING IN THE SPANISH PYRENEES WITH PIERRE AND ADILE

From time to time I go on a walking holiday with a French company and in September I joined a group at Tarbes railway station. Seven of us women and Pierre, the guide, waited for the last member to turn up. We were stunned when she appeared – a small figure with a stick, and obviously disabled. The trip was rated of medium difficulty with steep long climbs on rough terrain. How could she possibly cope? How would it affect us? We then realised that her physical condition was a surprise to Pierre too.

No one said anything about it, but busied ourselves with packing the minibus and getting to know each other on the long roundabout drive through the mountains to Benasque in Spain. Francoise talked loudly and non stop, had seemingly been everywhere and was knowledgeable about everything. We arrived early enough to have a short walk through some woodland and meadow following a small river. Odile fell early on, stumbling over tree roots on legs she could not fully control. Pierre then helped her over the steeper parts and boulders. Progress was slow, but there was time to stop and look at flowers, lizards and birds.



At the briefing in the evening, Pierre confirmed that the days' walks would have to be adapted. Instead of circular day walks we would leave Odile at the point she could climb no further and pick her up on the way back. Francoise wasn't happy.

Next day we meandered up the wide valley past whistling marmots in sunshine, Odile trying to keep ahead and hardly stopping, determined with huge effort to show her capability. From higher up we saw a river of perhaps 500 sheep being driven down for the winter and our hotel far below. We reached a ridge and saw the Pico de la Maladeta (3308m) opposite with its glacier, and Aneto at 3408m the highest mountain in the Pyrenees just beyond. Odile had climbed the best part of 1000m and could go no further. It was only a short climb to the Porto de Benasque, a traditional pass for pack animals on the Spanish/French border but she could only see the view on our digital cameras. Four of us climbed on to the stunning summit of Sauvegarde (2738m). On the way back, Pierre taught us how to 'run' down a steep and sloping rough rock face with little short steps.

Pierre taught us all various mountain walking techniques but most of all he taught Odile. One exciting day we were caught out at the base of a final ascent to a viewpoint over one of the spectacular gorges in Aragon. A threatening thunderstorm had curved round and attacked us with sweeping heavy rain and piercing hailstones – legs were covered in tiny bruises after it. Other walkers were retreating rapidly down the mountain, but even without Odile we'd have been hard pressed. The weather engulfed us; Pierre flung our metal walking poles aside and made us crouch to the ground in a drenched huddle. When it eased a little, we still had to descend, through mud, wet rocks and streams that were not there on the ascent. For part of the way, Pierre lifted Odile on to his back and ran on down with her while between us we carried their packs. She was exhilarated – even better, because she had originally decided that she was too exhausted to come with us that day.

Pierre was an outstanding guide. By the end of the week, Odile's walking had improved remarkably. And Odile was an extraordinary person. She could easily have been the odd one out, but Francoise was the least integrated by far, not happy that she was often voted out when we made group decisions.

Odile had amazing courage and determination and pushed herself to her limits. We shared her disappointment when she achieved so much but still wasn't able to reach some high points of the trip. Most of all we realised how she was trapped in a body that wouldn't work like ours, and the implications of that for her daily life and in other people's attitude towards her. How fortunate we are.



The holiday was not at all what we had anticipated, but unexpectedly bound us as a group, and nearly all of us made the most out of an unusual experience. Our goodbyes were emotional and tearful, but there has been a flurry of emails with photos, so some of us will keep in touch at least for a while.

Rhian Evans (Rhian is a member of the Swansea congregation).

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Whilst visiting one of our churches recently, I happened to see on the Notice Board a list of lay people and ministers prepared to take a service at the different churches in the District and was amazed at the number of people prepared to help. There were at least 21 of them and I calculated that if each one conducted just two Services a year in each church, it would just about cover the needs of our churches. However, I know very well that in practice, things don't work out as easy as all that. It would be interesting to find out the age profile of those taking part, how long they have been doing the work and if any training is arranged from time to time.

Assuming that there is some payment being made to those taking the services, it is still a huge commitment from each individual to give the time to prepare and travel to our different churches. It's not just taking the service but what has to be done beforehand - not to mention trying to meet the expectations of each congregation. They do differ widely, don't they?

The District Executive must be aware of the contribution that is being given by these people and I was just wondering if there is any way that they can be recognised for the work they do. Of course, someone may be planning such an event right now and when it takes place, I think I would like to come and be part of the praiseworthy occasion. I hope it will be well advertised and even I will get to hear of it!

The Golden Eagle

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy for the **South East Wales Unitarian News** should be sent by to:-

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The deadline for the next edition is **Saturday 21st March 2009.**

South East Wales Unitarian Society members receive a copy free of charge.

The annual SEWUS membership fee remains at **£5.**
