



South East Wales Unitarian News

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January 2011

FOR YOUR DIARY

As a result of the snow in December, the 150th Anniversary service at Highland Place had to be postponed. A new date is now fixed for **March 27th** at 3pm. Once again, we are hoping that members of the District Congregations will be able to support this event and turn out in force. Please take this as an official invitation for this event. The President of the General Assembly, Neville Kenyon is able to join us on this occasion.

Highland Place is also holding a Celebratory Dinner on **February 3rd** (7pm) at the Aberdare Golf Club. Members of the South East Wales District are invited to join on this occasion also. It will be a Beef Dinner with options for vegetarians and the cost is £15.00. Please ring 01685 873440 to book a place. The guest speakers will be Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas, Presiding Officer at the Welsh Assembly and Roy Noble.

GA ANNUAL MEETINGS AT SWANSEA 2011

The 2011 GA Annual Meetings will be held at Swansea University from Friday 15th – Monday 18th April, the Booking Forms have been sent to each church secretary.

If anyone is interested in staying the whole three days or for part of the time, make sure that the form is returned to Essex Hall by 20th of February. It would be good if each congregation were to pay for one delegate to attend or subsidise the cost in some way. Ministers and Lay Leaders should be paid for attending as part of their contract.

On the Sunday, we are hoping for a good attendance from all of our Welsh Congregations. There will be a session of Hymn Singing at 2.30pm at the Brangwyn Hall, followed by a tea with Welsh Cakes. We are appealing for trays of Welsh Cakes from all of our congregations. The Anniversary Service will commence at 4pm when we look forward to having a record attendance. Please note that it will not be possible for Day Visitors to have a meal at the University

J Eric Jones

UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT SECRETARY

Croeso!... We are pleased to welcome Dr Carwyn Tywyn who will take up his appointment as Secretary of the Welsh Department on 1st April. Although Carwyn will be new to most Unitarians, he has been an individual member of the National Unitarian Fellowship since 2005. He will be formally introduced to the Denomination at the Annual Meetings in Swansea.

During 2006-07, Carwyn was the National Assembly correspondent for GOLWG magazine, reporting on politics and current affairs in Wales. Previously, he worked as a postdoctoral research assistant at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth University, and has since worked in the voluntary sector for Keep Wales Tidy and the Disability Law Service. In 2010 Carwyn was the author of a major report on advice services for disabled people in Wales.

Carwyn is well-travelled: he was born and raised in Leicestershire before moving to Aberystwyth as a child. He attended Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig and Strathclyde University before completing a PhD at Cardiff University.



Photo: Jim Fowler

As a child, Carwyn attended the Church of England, and became a member of the *Annibynwyr* (Congregationalist) church as a teenager in Wales, before his move towards Unitarianism at around the age of 30.

Carwyn now lives in Burry Port, Carmarthenshire, and has one daughter (Heledd, 3 years). Currently, Carwyn is a self-employed harpist, with a passion for the traditional folk melodies of Wales.

During the next couple of months Carwyn will spend time with Rev Eric Jones on an informal basis, becoming acquainted with Welsh Unitarian protocol and other relevant issues.

Carwyn will meet with all of us in due course. He should have no problem in getting round to see us—he is a keen runner! He ran in the 2005 Cardiff Marathon on behalf of 'MIND' and in the 2009 London Marathon on behalf of the Parkinson's Disease Society. In the Autumn he plans to run in the Leicester Marathon on behalf of the Tomos Owen Leukaemia Fund.

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

Since June 2008, Ella Lewis-Jones has used this slot in the newsletter to help us get to know a little more about some of the individuals connected with the Unitarian movement in South East Wales. Now the tables have been turned and she finds herself the target for questioning.

Ella is a 'Country Girl' from Talgarth in Powys. She came to Mid Glamorgan in 1993 to work in the former Mid Glamorgan Health Authority. She now lives in Abercynon and is a member of Highland Place Church, Aberdare.

Apart from a short period working for the Local Authority and the National Farmers Union she spent the majority of her working life in the Public Health Sector of the Health Service in Wales and the West of England. Prior to her retirement she was Head of Department. She has various qualifications, including an MA in Medical Ethics, all of which she gained as a mature student in the ten years following the death of her first husband in 1984. She has two sons, Mark, working in computer risk management and security and Sean, working as a mechanic for the MOD.

Ella has been happily married to Keith for more than ten years. He actively supports the work she does for Highland Place and the South East Wales District. Keith is the 'unofficial' photographer for Highland Place and provides IT support for several Unitarian websites in Wales.

Ken Morgan

You are soon to make your debut on the District Pulpit Plan – how have you set about preparing for this task?

Over the past five years I have had the opportunity to observe the delivery of quite a number of Unitarian services and it seemed to me that there were two definitive challenges which anyone attempting to take a service has to tackle. The first challenge being to decide upon a theme which will lend itself to sufficient development to last for the length of a service and the second to integrate the chosen theme throughout the whole service.

For a couple of weeks after I was asked to take a service, I had several themes in mind which did not easily lend themselves in-depth development. Then one evening, when I was watching television, an idea came to me which had several different but complementary strands. I started to collect material from a wide variety of sources and began reading. Sometimes this led me up what was a blind alley and other reading opened up a whole new world.

I am aware that some people use the internet to find material for their services, but, although I "Googled" some key words, it was not directly helpful for my specific theme. The internet however was invaluable in locating books.

Reflecting back on the whole experience of preparing the service (at the time of writing I have not had the benefit of delivering it) I enjoyed the process and found it really worthwhile. It was quite a lot of work and reminded me very much of preparing an academic dissertation but this time without a mentor.

We have just welcomed in 2011 – did you make any New Year Resolutions?

Not as such. However, on receipt of my December credit card bill, and the realisation of how much I had spent on Amazon, I have decided that my weakness for books must be curbed and that I must buy for my needs not wants.

What is the best advice you've been given?

Twenty two years ago, in the midst of an extremely worrying time, when my youngest son was receiving treatment for Cancer, a Buddhist friend advised me to, "Trust the process". Often, in circumstances when there is nothing we can do, there is a temptation to do just "anything". These wise words, which I have passed on several times, helped me to have faith and accept that whatever the outcome it would be for the best.

What is your earliest memory?

Many of my earliest memories are bound up with my Grandfather, in whose home I was brought up. It was he who read to me as a small child, sat with me listening to Children's Hour on the radio and peeled windfalls for me with the penknife he carried. I recall the first time he took me to Church, at the time I don't think I had even started school and the service seemed very long and boring. I well remember the hardness of the pew and snuggling up to Granddad to keep warm.

Who/What is the love of your life?

I have always loved animals, dogs in particular. However it was not until I married that I had a dog of my own. None of the dogs I have had over the years could be remotely described as pedigree having been rescued from various places including a hospital car park.

What led you to be a Unitarian?

That is a very long story which is partly answered in an article I wrote for the book which is to be published shortly to celebrate the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of Highland Place. Suffice to say that I came across Unitarianism quite by accident. It makes so much sense to me, being more concerned with the problems of everyday life, rather than some theological concept.

Is there anything that would improve the quality of your life?

I consider myself very fortunate in that between us Keith and I have sufficient resources for our modest needs. I can well recall a time in my life when this was not so.

Do you have any leisure activities?

I have always read and for the last five years have been the convenor for The Cynon Valley U3A Reading Circle which meets at Highland Place. We meet nine times in a year and read as many books. However, I am always buying books and lend and am lent books by others. We garden, and love walking in the countryside, which is how Keith and I met originally. Occasionally we go to the cinema and to orchestral concerts.

Are you a 'practical' person – how well do you get on with technology?

I consider myself to be "practical" in a number of ways. I first had a computer of my own more than twenty years ago. At that time computers had a much more restrictive operating system and could not perform half the functions that they do today. These days I use a computer regularly, mostly for email and word processing. When I was working, technology was a very important adjunct to a Health Promotion Service where there is an ongoing requirement for publicity and training materials to be produced in-house. However I am no computer geek, I have plenty of ideas but it is Keith who is the real expert. Having been professionally involved with computers since 1965, he has a true affinity with technology.

What, in your life, gives you the greatest satisfaction?

I suppose it's trying to do a piece of work well or, to put it another way, to the best of my ability. If I write something, for instance, it is rare for me to be satisfied with it on the first draft, so I keep on revising and revising until inevitably, the time has run out and I have to be content with my latest attempt.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

I can't say that I have any big abiding disappointment. I have always believed, that in life, I should make the most of *whatever* has been given to me. I have tried my best to do that.

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 5th and 6th of November 2010)

1. Strategic Priorities

The Executive Committee is working in a focused and direct way to deliver the aims and objectives of the Strategic Priorities, which reflect the consultation held with the Denomination and were agreed at the last meeting. This includes reviewing the Commission and Panel structures. A constructive and positive discussion took place with Commission Chairs or their representatives, who had been specially invited to the meeting, with regard to proposals for change to ensure that we are able to effectively deliver the Strategic Priorities.

2. New Executive Committee Convenor Appointed

Sir Peter Soulsby MP has tendered his resignation as Executive Committee Convenor following his appointment to the Opposition frontbench. He will remain a member of the Executive Committee. Martin Whitell has been appointed as Convenor until May 2011.

3. General Assembly Vice President

It was agreed that the period for receipt of nominations for the position of Vice President of the General Assembly be extended until 19 January 2011 with a decision at the next Executive Committee meeting

on 22 January 2011. A letter has gone out to secretaries of congregations, districts and affiliated societies encouraging them to identify suitable individuals for this important role.

4. Executive Committee Election

A report was received from the Electoral Panel. The Executive Committee will seek authority at the Annual Meetings by an amendment to the GA Constitution to enable it to co-opt a member to fill the vacancy in membership from April 2011. A Constitutional Group is also to be established to bring proposals to the 2012 Annual Meetings on the electoral process, terms of office and frequency of election.

5. General Assembly Finances

The initial report on financial performance for the financial year ending 30 September 2010 shows a likely deficit of around £8,000; an improvement on the previous year's position of a loss of £29,000. This is excellent news given the current financial pressures facing us all.

A budget for the new financial year was agreed with continuing support for current programmes, a requirement for savings in travel and expenses and draw down of one-off funding. Work on a fund-raising initiative was begun.

6. Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

The Nightingale Centre was congratulated on its financial performance and the improved facilities.

Lis Dyson-Jones

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

The Year Ahead

The year ahead, what will it bring?

At least we may be sure of Spring.

What will they hold - the coming hours?

At least we may be sure of flowers.

Blossoms and birds and budding trees

Thank God, we may be sure of these.

(Source unknown)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

New Year Greetings to all those in South East Wales District. Following the cold and the snow and cancelled services at the end of last year there is a better start to the New Year. I can even see green shoots from my bulbs coming up in my window boxes. It has been a real boost to hear of the appointment of the new Welsh Department Secretary, Dr Carwyn Tywyn and on behalf of our district I would like to thank the Reverend Eric Jones and Lis Dyson-Jones for all the work they have put in over the last few years to make this appointment possible. We all look forward to meeting him in April.

2011 also presents us with good possibilities in Wales with the General Assembly Meetings in Swansea in April so that we are able to progress as Unitarians in Wales. I feel a fair wind on its way for positive changes and beautiful vistas and would like to share this poem written by Graeme Pilbrough from 'Waiting to be Discovered' which is edited by Johanna Boeke and Joy Croft.

Reunion

May the musical rays cast off Winter's shroud,

And pierce the darkness of a lost heart.

Let the melody's echoes carry beneath our own voices,

and connect us with the soothing tones of a treasured ebbing yesteryear.

The sweetness re-tasted, as once more we peer through the illumined inner sanctuary window,

and into the beautiful vistas of a reawakened heart.

With love,

Sarah Boyce

ABERDARE

The second concert, given by pupils from four of the Cynon Valley Secondary Schools, took place on 24th November, in the nick of time to miss the first snowfall of the winter. This concert included a varied programme of instrumental music, soloists, several choirs, recitations in Welsh and a band. The event was reasonably well attended and provided an opportunity for the schools to showcase some of their most talented pupils. The four schools who took part were Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, Aberdare High, Aberdare Girls and Mountain Ash Comprehensive. The event was reported in The Cynon Valley Leader.



Mountain Ash Comprehensive School Choir

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

The annual Autumn Fayre took place as usual and was better attended than initially expected. The cake, jam and chutney stall was a strong attraction. A popular new activity for children was provided by Joy Foster who demonstrated her artistic talents with face painting. I saw some very smart, elegant cats circulating in the hall. The handicraft stall had some excellent homemade gifts including some dolls (with names) made by Jean Thomas. Everything at the Fayre was of a high standard and very good value for money.

The weather, from the first snowfall on 26th November, totally disrupted the services and activities which had been scheduled to take place around the Christmas period at Highland Place. Although the roads and pavements became somewhat less hazardous, a second fall of snow on the 17th December made the cancellation of the Grand Service on Sunday 19th December a foregone conclusion. More snow fell on Monday the 21st December forcing the cancellation of the popular Christmas Eve service.

The Grand 150th Anniversary service will now take place on Sunday 27th March at 3pm. Neville Kenyon, President of the General Assembly, will be present and, hopefully, all the local dignitaries and representatives from the other churches in South East Wales who accepted invitations to the 19th December service, will be available. In March severe weather should hopefully not be a problem.

In February there will be a Celebratory Dinner at the Aberdare Golf Club when the guest speakers will be Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas, Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly and Roy Noble. Tickets are available from Rev Eric Jones

The history book which forms part of the 150th celebrations is shortly to be printed. The title is "Highland Place 1860 to 2010 – a story of resilience". The book will be officially launched at the Grand Service and copies will be available at the competitive price of £8. The history book incorporates, and brings up to date, the two previous brief histories written by Rev Jacob Davies (1960) and Rev Eric Jones (1985). It also includes some of the history of the people and businesses of Foundry Town, the community in which Highland Place is situated. Finally, the book contains memories and reflections of individuals with past and present associations with Highland Place, thereby spanning one hundred and fifty years. The content of the book should be of interest to local historians and others outside the Unitarian Community. Copies will be available for purchase from Rev Eric Jones.

Ella Lewis-Jones

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

“HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR DISTRICT FRIENDS”

Christmas has come and gone once more and like many of our fellow congregations we had to cancel some of our services due to the snow and icy weather during December. However, we were glad that a Children's Welsh Carol service could be held at Penrhiw, St. Fagan's on the evening of 13th December and our thanks go to Diana Bianchi for organizing it. The children were treated to tales delivered by a traditional story teller before receiving pencils and the traditional orange as a Christmas treat. The day before, there was a bilingual service followed by afternoon tea, at the Friends' Meeting House.

We were disappointed not to be able to join in celebrating at Aberdare with other congregations from the district for the 150 Anniversary Service at Highland Place on December 19th, but that too, had to be postponed because of the bad weather. We look forward to the rescheduled service in March.

At a special congregational meeting, held in early December it was agreed to rent a larger room at the Friends' Meeting House in order to have a dedicated Unitarian worship space there. We hope to take residence there in the Spring after we have had the opportunity to create the sort of worship area we wish to have.

We have also decided to begin the work necessary to appoint a Development Officer for Cardiff, following the unsuccessful bid to recruit a Minister for the Aberdare, Cefncoed and Cardiff congregations. The person we would hope to recruit would have the specific remit of increasing Unitarian visibility and membership and promoting Unitarianism in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was good to see Mike and Sandra Engstrom at recent services and to welcome them into our fellowship again. We hope to see more of them in the future. We have missed Gareth Evans during the past few months and hope he will soon be able to attend services again.

Our Secretary, Sarah, has attended the first of the REvolution Courses at Great Hucklow and will attend further training organized by the education and Training Commission during the coming months.

A congregational New Year lunch was held on Sunday 26th December before a service of favourite readings and music, led by Sarah Boyce.

EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT

We are pleased to announce that there will be a lecture, held at the Society of Friends' Meeting House, Charles Street, Cardiff on Monday 4th April 2011 at 7pm. This will be delivered by the Archdruid of Wales, Mr T James Jones and he will speak about his work, the National Eisteddfod and how Unitarianism has influenced it. It promises to be an interesting evening and all are welcome. More details later.

Thought for Now

'It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;....
And he who has deserved to drink from the ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from your little stream.'
(Kahlil Gibran)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

For our Christmas get-together we took a coach trip to visit the Hall at Abbey-Cwm-Hir. It was advertised under the heading 'Tours of Enchantment', and to tour the Hall was to step back in time to a truly family home. Every room (there are 52 in all!) was decorated for Christmas, each had a tree and home made decorations. We were given a guided tour by the owner and were certainly 'enchanted'. The day was rounded off by an enjoyable evening meal at the Old Rectory near Crickhowell.

The chapel was decorated for the Festive Season by Vera Tomsett and Ann Lewis, and we thank Vera's brother, Eiddil for, as usual, giving expert help with the 'electrics'. Unfortunately the weather conditions meant that very few had the opportunity to appreciate their hard work. The Christmas Raffle, organised by Vera, raised £150.

Snow and illness has delayed our first meeting so far this year. We hope to join in fellowship again soon.

Gwen Everrit

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

On Remembrance Sunday the services at the village War Memorial and at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd were conducted by Ken Morgan. The readings at the chapel were delivered by Major Stephen Price and by the Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, Councillor Dr Clive Tovey.

DECEMBER SERVICES

Weather conditions forced us to cancel service on 5th December and we were also disappointed that the celebratory service at Highland Place on 19th December had to be postponed. However, clearing the snow and ice from the approach to the chapel (and the use of a blowtorch on the padlocked gate!), together with re-scheduling to 3pm, enabled us to hold the remaining Sunday services.

On Christmas Day a few hardy souls braved the arctic conditions to attend the 11am service which featured *Only Hallowed Men Allowed*. We were pleased to welcome old friends, including one visiting from Australia.

SADNESS

Early in December we were saddened by the death of Mr Bill Douglas, husband of Shirley. We send our heartfelt sympathy to Shirley, her daughters Jocelyn and Judith, and to their families.

BIRTH OF AN INDUSTRY

We are very pleased that historian Wilf Owen has dedicated his latest book, *Birth of an Industry* to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. This well-researched publication traces the lives of chapel-members Matthew Wayne, Gladis Davies and Lucy Thomas, and their families, as their entrepreneurial ventures grow and intertwine in the development of the Merthyr and Aberdare valleys during the first half of the nineteenth century. *Birth of an Industry* is available at a number of outlets, including Merthyr Central Library and Aberdare Museum, at a cost of £5.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

We were delighted to hear in October of the birth of Elin, a daughter for Angharad and John Higgins. Sadly we were to hear a little while later that the family are moving from Porthcawl to Mid Wales to be nearer Angharad's family. We send them our best wishes for a happy life together.

We started our Christmas activities early in Nottage, which was just as well as our services before Christmas and on Christmas Day were cancelled because of snow and ice. None of us can remember a Christmas Day without a service before, it was certainly different! Porthcawl had its heaviest snowfall since 1982.

On December 1st the chapel was full for the annual Scout, Cub and Beaver service. To see so many children under our roof was heart warming, thanks to Annette Marsh and Jean Thomas for their dedication in making it happen.

On December 5th we had our congregation Christmas lunch together. We all arrived with plates of food and the varied menu was fabulous – thank you all!

We were very pleased on December 12th to have our service led by David Williams. David turned up at Nottage on his bike one Sunday about 6 years ago and to our pleasure has attended most Sundays since. He found Nottage chapel on the internet and has cycled to service from Pyle regularly. He is a lovely man, kind and hard working – he keeps the outside of our premises weed free! – and always enthusiastic. When he said from the pulpit he felt proud and privileged to have been asked to take the service my eyes filled with tears – we need more men like him. Thank you David from us all. Greetings to our friends in the District from Nottage for a happy, healthy New Year.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

Mrs Annette Marsh made our Remembrance Service rather special by bringing music from the war years and some very touching poems. The following Sunday our service was cancelled because Father Christmas arrived in Swansea and made it impossible for us to get to church. Mr Humphrey Evans always leaves us something to ponder over and this time it was Prayer. Julianne arranges beautiful Advent services and gave everyone decorations to hang on our Christmas trees. However the weather intervened before the last service and church was cancelled on Sundays 11th, 26th December and 2nd January. Normal services have now been resumed and we were pleased to welcome two lady visitors.

Our Christmas crib accompanied by suitable music has been the brightest spot on the High Street. The amount of snow this year has caused severe disruption to people's lives including broken bones due to falls. However, difficult times bring out the best in people and we saw neighbours offering to shop for elderly folk who were afraid to go out. People with 4x4 vehicles volunteering to help priority workers like carers and hospital staff to get to work. There were also scenes of magical beauty as the country was completely covered in a blanket of white and became a Winter Wonderland.

Beneath the snow and ice the bulbs are pushing through reminding us of the joys of spring to look forward to. Let us give thanks for the diversity of the seasons.

The church has received a letter thanking everyone who contributed towels, toiletries and other goods to the Cyrenians Hostel for the homeless. A special letter of thanks was received by Mrs Freda Thomas who collects all through the year and makes a bumper contribution.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

On the Sunday before Christmas we put up our decorations as usual and wish to thank Katy and Megan for setting out our lovely, big old nativity figures. We also enjoyed cake and sherry in celebration of Lewis's 40th birthday.

We have missed several services due to the dangerously icy conditions of the roads up to Gellionnen and our midnight Christmas Service was celebrated down in the valley at Gellionnen's daughter chapel, the Graig. About forty or more attended and one small dog (Toto) and it was good to welcome two visitors over from Singapore – Catrin and her partner Billy. Julie Nedin and Martin Edwards provided violin accompaniment and Lewis dug out some very old hymn books because our carol sheets were locked up in Gellionnen! It was a lovely service.

Rosie Evans recently made a lightning visit to Wales from New York. Sadly, she was not here on the Sunday but visited the chapel anyway. Some years ago she was bridesmaid to sister-in-law Suzette when Suzette and Barnes Evans chose to celebrate a Gellionnen wedding.

Phil and Katherine Harris are proud grandparents once again. Our love and very good wishes go to Iestyn Rhys Harris Lewis, born in December and weighing-in at 7lb 10oz.

We did manage to make it to the chapel on the first Sunday of 2011 when our chairman Clive Evans opened service with a traditional Welsh song welcoming in the New Year, a lovely start that raised our hopes for the future.

Genuine 'Gone Wrong' Notices

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to a conflict. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24th. So ends a friendship that began in their schooldays.

May we wish everyone a year filled with good things and great possibilities.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

It was our chapel's turn to hold the village Remembrance Service. Wick village continues the lovely old tradition of both places of worship hosting the Remembrance Service on alternate years. Following a brief service at the village memorial the weather was fine enough for most worshippers to walk across the Green for a very well attended service at our chapel, during which the curate read the lesson. It was heart-warming to welcome our visitors.

Another well attended service was at the wedding of Andrew Westlake and Felicity Stevens on November 27th. We woke up on the morning to a heavy fall of snow, and when Julianne arrived early to put the heating on it was to be greeted by Andrew, his father and the best man busily clearing snow from the path and lane outside the chapel gate. They worked hard and did a beautiful job. The chapel and graveyard were transformed into a 'winter wonderland' for a very happy occasion. We wish Andrew and Felicity every happiness and have been very glad to welcome them to our fellowship.

Our Advent Service was another happy event but sadly our Christmas Service had to be cancelled due to the heavy snow. This service is a particularly memorable one for us because members from far afield return home for the holidays and join in our festivities. We were sad not to see Rachel Board from Australia and her brother Stephen from Abu Dhabi, but wish them all the best for 2011.

My phone has been out of order from Christmas to January 7th. It is difficult to remember days when very few people had a telephone. Now it is essential and I apologise to anyone who has been trying to contact me. It was an exchange fault at a junction a long way from my flat, and I have been forced to use my small old-fashioned mobile – and to remember my number.

My message book was full when the landline was reconnected. One message was from Germany – our secretary, Lilian Hodgson flew to her son's home there during the heavy snow. She had a dreadful journey and is staying in Germany for a further few weeks.

We all look forward to a happy and healthy 2011.

Julianne Morgan

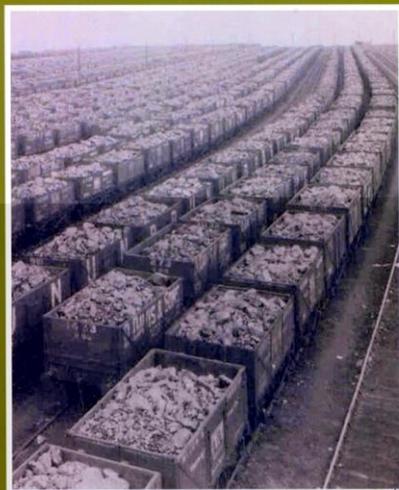
Lewis Rees

As this newsletter was being prepared for publication news was received news that Lewis Rees is quite unwell and is a patient at Morriston Hospital. He is now able to get up and move slowly round the ward, as far as his intravenous antibiotics allow. When this course of medication is finished he will be allowed home but will be closely monitored until a decision can be taken as to whether any surgery will be needed. He will continue his medication at home and will be unable to drive for at least 3 months.

We send our best wishes to Lewis and Cheryl at this time of anxiety. (Ed)

Wilf Owen

Birth of an INDUSTRY



**Annals of the Merthyr &
Aberdare Valleys
1800 – 1850**

Museum and valley bookshops.

Book Review

**Read about the contribution the Unitarians of
Aberdare and Merthyr made to the Coal and
Iron Industry in Wales**

Coal as a metaphor courses through the history of modern Wales, it has shaped people and moulded communities and faiths. It has been the very lifeblood of a Welsh Nation.

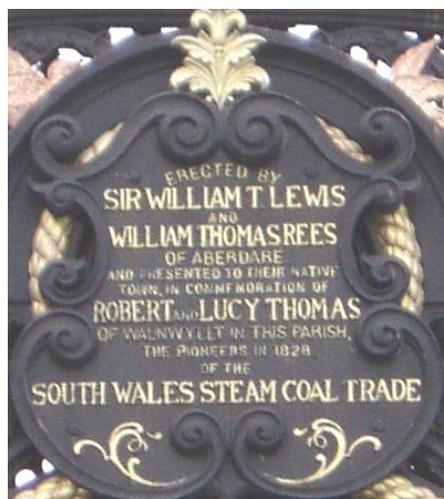
Wilf Owen is an historian of rare endeavour, painstaking in his quest for detail, who wisely takes the history of coal beyond the obvious narrative and delves into personalities individuals and families. People come to life in the well crafted text, and none more so than Robert and Lucy Thomas of Waunwyllt, who are buried in Hen Dŷ Cwrdd graveyard - as, too, is fellow chapel member Matthew Wayne of Merthyr and Aberdare the founder of Gadlys Ironworks and Cwmbach pit.

Other notable Unitarians include Joseph Coffin associated with the Merthyr Riots whose family is commemorated at the Bridgend Unitarian Chapel, and Gladis Davies from Maes-y-Faenor Farm near Cefn Coed who helped finance the steam coal trade of the Cynon Valley.

Well worth the £5.00. Copies can be obtained from Merthyr Central Library and Aberdare



The Robert & Lucy Thomas memorial 'Fountain' in Merthyr.
Photo: T D Owen.



The Memorial plaque.
Photo: Wilf Owen

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the *South East Wales Unitarian News* is **Saturday 19th March 2011**

Items for publication should be sent by to:-

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Copy may also be e-mailed to kenneth.morgan25@tesco.net or to Philip@philipgriffiths.co.uk

South East Wales Unitarian Society members receive the Newsletter free of charge.

The annual SEWUS membership fee for 2011 remains at **£5**.