



FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 2 March – GA President's Visit – Cawl Supper and Clog Dancing entertainment at Highland Place, Aberdare at 7pm. Number limited. Approx. Cost: £10 pp.

Saturday 16 March – Copy deadline for the next issue of the District News.

MARIAN LEWIS

We regret to announce the death of the last fully-recognised member of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon. Marian Lewis died at Ysbyty Cwm Cynon on 17th November at the age of 90 years. She married Arnallt 65 years ago and they shared a home with Marian's parents, Josh and Maggie Jane at 1 Alma Street. Maggie Jane was the caretaker of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd and Marian's husband, Arnallt worked in the local Council Offices. He died 20 years ago. When Hen Dŷ Cwrdd closed in the early nineties, Marian and her aunt Eirlys joined the congregation at Highland Place.

Cremation was at Llwydcoed on 5th December, service conducted by Rev Eric Jones.

DISTRICT CHRISTMAS SERVICE



Photo: Joy Foster

The 2018 District Christmas Service of Readings and Carols was held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon at 11am on Sunday, 2nd December. The chapel is now in the hands of Addoldai Cymru Welsh Religious Buildings Trust and is being restored by them, but it still lacks, among other things, a source of heating and an electricity supply. We had been forewarned of these drawbacks and came prepared not to let them lessen our determination to sing well and be jolly — *we did, and we were* - a much appreciated glass of hot mulled wine, provided courtesy of Lis Dyson-Jones, no doubt helped in this respect!

The service was led by District President Diana Bianchi and the accompaniment for our singing was provided by Grace Jones (Highland Place) using a battery-powered keyboard. Grace, who is an accomplished flautist, also entertained us with a Christmas medley on the flute.



Grace Jones

Photo: Rory Castle Jones

The service followed the usual well-tried format of readings interwoven with carols, with each congregation being represented by their Reader who presented a reading and lit a candle on their behalf.

Following the service we stepped across the road and re-gathered in the 'long room' of the Mount Pleasant Public House where a buffet had been arranged: a convivial time in the company of friends ensued.

We are grateful to Lis Dyson-Jones for organising this successful event and to Joy and Tony Foster for giving the chapel a festive look.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

The old year has gone and a new year lies ahead of us. Yes the year 2018 may have come in "like a lamb," but the lion's roar was ferocious and threatening as the year made its exit and left behind it a trail of world events, some of which were quite horrific and disastrous. Famine, war, earthquakes, human tragedies, forest fires and floods, 15 inches of snow falling in the Sahara desert, a ballistic missile alert across Hawaii in error (thankfully revoked in 38 minutes). And hapless world leaders such as the likes of President Trump who last January caused world-wide controversy when it was reported he had called African countries "~~s---~~holes" during an immigration meeting. Not forgetting of course the chaos that our own government inflicted upon us with.... Dare I mention Brexit? All this makes you wonder whether we are on the verge of Armageddon – if you believe in that kind of thing. It is therefore not surprising for us to feel overwhelmed and despondent by it all

Personally I don't believe that the end of the world is nigh. I believe that the human spirit is bigger than this and can withstand many of the things that life throws at it. We may not be able to avoid the natural disasters produced by the forces of nature, but we do have the intellect and the free will to herald changes which could bring about "a kingdom of heaven on earth".

I believe that this is already happening on a grass roots level. The advent of the world wide web allows us access to see what is going on throughout the rest of the world. In this panoramic view, we see ordinary people, our global family of which we are a part, getting on with their daily lives by working together in many different ways in order to improve their own and others' physical and spiritual lives and making their communities a better place to live in. They do this through overcoming whatever challenges life throws at them and raising their voices in protest against the injustices and cruelty inflicted on fellow human beings, the animal kingdom and the environment. To know and see this lifts up my spirit and brings me hope and optimism for the coming year. So may it be for you as well.

I would like to share with you one of my favourite and uplifting prayers from the Unitarian service book 'Every Nation Kneeling'.

"In this world of mingled good and evil, amid the senseless struggle of the better with the worse, grant unto us, (Universal Spirit, God of many names) the cheerful assurance that we are enlisted in the service of the good, bound for the better, and destined for the best. Reveal to us each day some task that we can do, some chance to bear the burden of another, some call to take the side of the right against the wrong. Help us to conquer hardship by patience, despair by hope, fear by courage, hate by love, evil by good; and may we find the peace, the power and the glory of thy perfect will reflected and reproduced in our hearts and lives."

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chwi gyd / A Happy New Year to you all.

Diana Bianchi

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda! Happy New Year! Have you made your resolution yet? If not, how about considering making a resolution to join in with more Unitarians Wales events? Those of you who regularly take part in our national events might be able to persuade others that it is often interesting, worthwhile and usually great fun as well.

The latest event that we participated in nationally was the event organised by the Inter-Faith Council of Wales to mark Inter-Faith week. Held in Cardiff on the 13th November and called "Walking alongside our communities" it was a valuable opportunity to show our commitment to creating and nurturing good relations between people of all faiths. Commencing with an address by Julie James AM at the Pierhead building, we then re-convened at the Cardiff Reform Synagogue where we learnt a little about the history of the building and the congregation there. We then made our way to the Cardiff Buddhist Centre, to Capel y Crwys and to the Dar-UI-Isra mosque where there was an opportunity to ask questions, to socialise and to share a meal. Thank you to everyone who supported the event, and if you enjoyed yourselves, then please do try and encourage more people to join us next time.

We will welcome the GA President to Wales over the first weekend in March and I do hope you'll be able to make it to Highland Place on Saturday March 2nd to the St David's Day Celebrations that SEWUS have arranged. In the meantime, keep up the good work locally, and hope to see you soon.

Melda Grantham

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

Dear Friends,

As we enter this New Year, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all congregations in both the South Wales and South East Wales Districts, for your hard work and your generosity in 2018.

Not only in your support for the Welsh Department Charity Appeal for Mental Health but your continued work in supporting your own local, national and international charities.

Your work as Congregations and Women's League branches is much appreciated and valued by the Welsh Department. We look forward to your continued support during 2019.

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

Tony Foster

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

One of the deepest secrets of life is that all that is really worth doing is what we do for others.

Lewis Carroll

ABERDARE

Women's League

Dear All,

I hope everyone is feeling refreshed following very enjoyable Christmas and New Year festivities.

I regret to report that Diane Jones and Dorothy Jones are not at all well. Betty Evans is awaiting still an operation to hopefully ease her painful mobility problems.

The founder of 'Friends of the Animals', Eileen Jones delivered an inspirational talk to the branch on 31st October. She described her animal rescue charity based in Ton Pentre and staffed by volunteers, working and re-homing animals across the UK. It operates 'The Wonky Dog and Cat Club' taking in animals with special needs or life-threatening illnesses and 'RCT Lost and Found' helping to reunite lost pets with their owners. This charity campaigned successfully for 'Lucy's Law,' which banned the sale of puppies by pet shops, online dealers and other third-party dealers, such as puppy farms. The dedication of these volunteers is admirable.

On November 7th, we received a visit from the Reverend Peter Hewis and his wife. Reverend Peter Hewis is a former National President and he spoke eloquently about his illustrious career in Harris Manchester College, which is a unique part of The University of Oxford, as it takes only students aged 21 and over to study degrees and post-graduate degrees. His talk was riveting.

The following week, I gave a talk on 'Royal Protocol' and listed the myriad of rules governing every aspect of the royal lifestyle. It is certainly an eye-opener! Look out for modern Meghan making her mark as she flouts some! My talk went very well.

The branch enjoyed a day out shopping in Ebbw Vale on 21st November.

On 28th November, we enjoyed thoroughly Pat Evans' illuminating talk on 'Grace Kelly.' Besides being beautiful, we learnt that she was quite a girl! She seemed to take a shine to older men, including co-stars, so much so, that I will never look at the film, 'High Noon' in quite the same light again.

On December 5th, we had a pleasant social afternoon and made final arrangements for our Christmas meal. Many thanks to Joy and Tony Foster for decorating the Chapel on our behalf.

We enjoyed thoroughly our Christmas lunch at The New Inn in Rhigos on December 12th. It never fails to impress. Thanks to Christine Roberts and Lis Dyson-Jones for helping to organise it.

On 19th December, we held our traditional 'Carols and Gift-Sharing Event.' We enjoyed a lovely buffet provided by members and the entertainment was a Christmas quiz, compiled by myself, which was a great hit. This lovely tradition with friends always seems to put everyone in the festive mood to welcome Christmas.

Now, looking forward to our planning session on 9th January, I close wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year!

Best Wishes to all
Anne Watts

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda pawb, a Happy New Year to all our friends in the district from everyone at Highland Place. Well, it was a busy time in the lead up to Christmas for Aberdare Unitarians. We were delighted to welcome members from across the district to the annual SEWUS carol service which was held at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon on Sunday 2nd December. I believe everyone thoroughly enjoyed the service of readings and carols, and what wonderful singing, accompanied by Grace Jones on keyboard. I don't think anyone noticed the cold too much thanks to the hot mulled wine and apple juice supplied by Lis Dyson Jones. There was a chance for everyone to have a chat and catch up after the service over a buffet lunch at the Mount Pleasant Hotel directly opposite the chapel.

On 16th December, we were once again treated to a wonderful concert given by ReChoir conducted by our former organist Nathan Jones. A superb programme including songs from the stage, pop songs, Christmas carols and an amazing medley of James Bond theme songs plus a piano duet thrilled a full church. Although fewer in number this year due to some members of the choir being unable to attend, ReChoir were outstanding and we have already booked them for next Christmas. Don't miss them. Our grateful thanks go to Nathan and Rechoir.



The Rechoir Concert

Photo: Joy Foster

We didn't have a Christmas Eve service but held a service of carols and readings on Sunday 23rd December, which was conducted by Rev Eric Jones. There were excellent readings and singing and some delightful musical duets with Grace Jones on flute and her brother Jacob playing the organ. It was good to have Jacob join us whilst on holidays from studying in Salzburg. It was also good to see some new faces in the congregation.

Joy and Tony Foster delivered the final donations of the year to the Merthyr Cynon food bank. Thank you to everyone at Highland Place for their generous donations throughout the year, which has enabled us to deliver over 250 kilos of food to the foodbank in 2018

We were sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Betty Thomas at her home in Kingston on Thames. She was the daughter of the late Mr & Mrs M R Morgan who lived for a time at Unity House and later at 45 Monk Street in Aberdare. M R Morgan was President of our District from 1952 to 1954 and was Sunday School Superintendent at Highland Place for several years. Betty was the last of his family and she died on the

18th of November at the age of 97 years. Cremation was at Kingston Crematorium on the 17th of December, the Rev Eric Jones officiating. Our sympathy is extended to her daughter, Dr Hilary Thomas in her loss.

Tony Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

The last few months have had a number of highlights in Cardiff, but I start with a sad event. The tragic shooting at the synagogue in Pittsburgh was commemorated by an interfaith event at the Cardiff United Synagogue. It was good to see many in Wales supporting the Jewish community at such a horrific time, but obviously a very tragic reason to bring us together. Some of us from Cardiff supported the event. Some of us also supported the interfaith walk across the city as part of Interfaith Week during November.

During November I took part in a performance in the Temple of Peace and Health to mark its 80th anniversary. The performance was called "A New Mecca" and featured the beautiful singing of a community choir and speakers engaging with what happened at the opening ceremony in 1938. Different speakers engaged with the topic of motherhood, the environment, remembering, empire, and I spoke about God. I recognised that the Christian (not interfaith) service that opened the Temple in 1938 would not be appropriate today, but pointed out that the prophets of the Hebrew Bible can still provide a strong inspiring voice for peace and justice today.

In December we had a successful Christmas carol service with over 25 people in attendance. We invited the Quakers and many of them enjoyed the opportunity to sing carols in their own Meeting House – something of course they do not have a chance to do in their own worship. It was a good opportunity for the two communities that share the same building to worship together. It was a great way to end a good year for Cardiff Unitarians / Undodiaid Caerdydd.

Stephen Lingwood

CEFNCOED

Women's League

We had decided to wind down the final stages of 2018 with two pre-Christmas treats which would see us pleasingly entertained and well fed, but things didn't altogether go our way.

On Wednesday, 28 November, in mid morning, we set off for Cardiff to catch a matinee performance of the show on at the New Theatre, planning to stop-off along the way for a meal. We arrived in good time and had a quick look around the shops before visiting Henry's for lunch. 'Fish and chips' was the popular choice—very good, too. We had booked for the stage adaptation of the toe-tapping, rain-splashing Hollywood blockbuster musical, *Singing in the Rain*. This was, perhaps, quite fitting as it was a wet and windy day, but fitting also in that we found the production somewhat disappointing—much like the weather.

The journey home in the dark and rain was further marred, as it had been on a previous occasion, by a build up of traffic, and so the 'Good Morning' and the 'Fascinating Rhythm' of the show were replaced by the tiresome stop-start rhythm of our minibus. We eventually got home a little after 7pm.

We had no such trouble a week later on 5 December as we stayed near to home. We met for lunch at the Castle Hotel Merthyr Tydfil where we had an excellent Christmas meal.

We are now taking a break from festive occasions and from League meetings and don't restart our fortnightly sessions until February.

Remembrance Sunday

This year again there was a large turnout by the community for the 11am Remembrance Ceremony at the village War Memorial. There were heavy showers before and after, but fortunately the bad weather held off during the service and wreath-laying. The assembled crowd then marched along High Street before dispersing just short of the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd. It is disappointing that so few members of the public feel disposed to continue their act of remembrance by setting foot inside a place of worship. Among those who *did* join us were two stalwart supporters – Major Tudor Price, MBE and Sir Mansel Aylward, CBE. The services at the War Memorial and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd were conducted by Ken Morgan, with the parade marshal Major Stephen Price, MBE presenting one of the readings at the chapel. A retiring collection was held in aid of the Poppy Appeal.

Out and About

Several members attended the District Carol Service held at our sister chapel Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon on Sunday 2nd December – it was good to meet District-friends once again. Mrs Ann Lewis presented a Reading on our behalf.

Services over the Holiday Period

We all contributed actively as well as spiritually to worship at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd recently with the services on three consecutive Sundays being conducted by members of the congregation.

Sadness

Sadly, we report the death of faithful chapel and women's league member, Mrs Iris Morris, at the age of 88 years. Rev Eric Jones officiated at her funeral which was held at the chapel on 21 December, followed by cremation at Llwydcoed Crematorium. We extend our sympathy to Iris's daughters Susan and Gaynor, son Robert, and their families. Iris's death was the second severe blow suffered by the family in just a few weeks as Gaynor's husband Martin passed away a short while earlier.

Best Wishes

Having quietly responded to treatment at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital, Llantrisant and the Stroke Unit at Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil, Marian (wife of Arthur Saunders) is now a patient at Ysbyty Cwm Rhondda, Llwynypia. We send Marian our best wishes.

District Executive Committee

We were pleased to host a special meeting of the South East Wales Executive Committee held on Saturday 5 January 2019.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Members of Nottage Chapel were pleased to host the last District meeting and meet Officers from the other Chapels.

Our Minister, Lewis is also Chaplain of Pontardawe ATC and he conducted a joint service at Nottage Chapel where around 40 people were in attendance.

There were a total of 33 people in the congregation at our Christmas service, where presents were given to all the children and Lewis wore his elf jumper for the occasion. Happily June and Rose, two long serving members of the Chapel were well enough to join the congregation at the service.

Jonathan, another long serving member of the Chapel, generously saved all his small change throughout the year and donated it to the Chapel to fund a new Christmas tree and the presents for the children who attended the Christmas service. Well done Jonathan!

Jeannie Monks

SWANSEA

The Swansea Congregation have celebrated Christmas in style this year. First we had our Christmas dinner at the Buck Inn where 14 of us enjoyed a very pleasant evening. Thanks to Hilary and Dave for organising the event. Next 5 of our congregation enjoyed the weekend organised by Gellionnen Chapel. We had a fantastic time on the coach with Rhys being an excellent tour guide. We spent time in Southampton and the Christmas Market in Winchester was superb. But most of all it was nice to spend time with our Unitarian friends.

James, Lynn, Dave and Stephen erected the crib in time for the switching on of the Swansea City lights. A VERY secure padlock was used for the newly repaired donation box to ensure the safety of the money. It has been quite a spectacle with the lights and music with many passers by stopping to look. With the crib taken down now we can safely say there was no repeat of last year's robbery. The money this year is going to Roots a charity nominated by Stephen to support vulnerable people lead an independent life.

We will welcome the GA President to Wales over the first weekend in March and I do hope you'll be able to make it to Highland Place on Saturday March 2nd to the St David's Day Celebrations that SEWUS have arranged. In the meantime, keep up the good work locally, and hope to see you soon.

Our Congregation enjoyed the trip to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon for the District Xmas Service. It is always a very moving experience with all the candles flickering, the singing of carols and listening to the readings. The breakfast stop on the way and the social interaction over lunch somehow makes it all a very Christmas affair. Many thanks to all of those who are involved with the organising.

We held our public Carol service at the Swansea Church on the 15th December. At 4.55 we thought that it might be just the few of us. Imagine our delight when by 5.00 there were over 25 in the congregation. Thanks to Rhys, Rory and Siôn for organising and contributing so much to this event. We learnt afterwards that some had been to the service last year.

On a sad note we had to say goodbye to our two students. They had joined in with all our festivities but were now returning home to Canada and Australia respectively. Danny did say that she hoped to return to us soon as she had loved being part of our congregation even if it was for such a short time.

On a happier note we will be pleased to welcome Melda to the Swansea Church for her work experience for ministerial training. She will be with us for the next few months.

We hope that all our congregations have a happy and peaceful new year.

Hilda Dumpleton

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

The Remembrance Day service was celebrated by Robert James our treasurer who, over a number of years, had researched the life and death in active service of a relative. We had a number of visitors and one spoke movingly of his own experience of the Afghan War.

Our regular collection of dry goods for the Ponty food bank continues as their own need of support increases. We also set up a Shoe Box Appeal. People were asked to cover boxes and lids with Christmas paper and to donate gifts small enough to fill these boxes. Our request was so generously supported that about 200 boxes were filled with all manner of things. The generosity and thoughtfulness of local people was heart warming and we are deeply grateful. If it were not for the gift of one of these shoe boxes, many people would have had nothing at all for Christmas.

In December, rather than the Pub Club we had a pub meal together where we were made very welcome and given our own room.

Brenda Griffiths' suggestion of a bus trip to take in Southampton and Winchester for a shopping weekend was highly successful. Thank you Brenda and Rhys for organising and collecting enough names to fill a coach. The company was good and the weather kind. When most of us were away, Martyn Edwards took the Gellionnen service.

The District Service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon was lovely and the setting very special. It is always good to meet up with our sister congregations.

We're all getting older! People were asked if they wanted a morning or midnight Christmas service and the result was fifty-fifty. As a result, Rory Castle Jones took a morning service of lessons and carols and more, then Julie Nedin took the Christmas Eve service. As always, contributors came up from Pontardawe Folk Club and our once-a-year band got itself together. We are indebted to these wonderful musicians who turn up without fail. The tableau was a first and in the complete silence of a chapel full of people was anything to go by then it was a success. Our thanks go to Megan Price for organising the tableau and to all those taking part. In the spirit of the age, we had wise ones not wise men and there were some shepherdesses as well as shepherds, all with crooks and lanterns. Our collection will be shared with a charitable group researching into brain tumours. This is in fond memory of Iona Hildrep who died earlier in 2018.

We thank our own and visiting speakers, our key holders, flower arrangers, tea makers, cake bakers, our fire lighters, graveyard gardeners, our chapel officers. Diolch yn fawr.

Our good wishes go to our chairman, Clive Evans and Jon Green.

To all our friends, may 2019 be a year filled with good things. God bless.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Our Remembrance Service was very well supported. Father Craig, the local vicar, read the lesson, and the Church organist played for us. Our gallery was in use and great interest was shown in our "old time" bier. Sadly we still have not been able to repair our more modern "facility." We hope to be able to do so this new year. Building work is so expensive, and our chapel building is very old.

On a personal note, I must thank Shirley Escott, Helen Lewis and Rhiannon Thomas for transporting me (and my wheelchair) to Wick these last few months. I don't know how I would have managed without them.

It was lovely to welcome Helen back from Kuwait in time for our Christmas Service. As usual everyone took part in some way, our gifts as usual were for the Bridgend Food Bank.

We look forward to a good and happy New Year, which we wish to all our friends in the district.

Julianne Morgan

MEN'S GROUP

For their final meeting of 2018, the Men's Group met at Alfred's in Pontypridd for their Christmas meal. There was an excellent choice on the menu, and what better way is there to spend a Thursday than enjoying good food in good company. Our thanks to Eric Jones for arranging the venue and booking the table, also for taking our orders so efficiently. No mistakes and no complaints. On reflection, I think Eric should have had the tip. We haven't set the agenda for 2019 yet, but you will hear about our first visit in the next issue.

Tony Foster



District Congregations' Candles at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Trecynon

Photo: Rory Castle Jones

APOLOGIES – Publication of this issue has been delayed by computer malfunction.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Copy-deadline for the next issue of the South East Wales Unitarian News: **Saturday, 16 March.**

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