

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday, 20 June – *Gathering to light the flame* - hosted by the Unitarian Welsh Department at Tabernacle Chapel, Waterloo Terrace, Carmarthen. 10.30am(for 11) 'til 3.30pm.
An opportunity to meet friends and share ideas with members of the Unitarian Welsh Department. Come with your dreams and your visions.
Bring a packed lunch to contribute to a shared table. (Small charge for Tea/Coffee plus raffle.)

27 & 28 June – General Assembly Weekend – would your chapel/Congregation like to hold a fund raising event for the GA? (see your Church Secretary for details)

Sunday, 5 July – South East Wales District Rally – Day trip to the Cotswolds
Including a 3pm service with the Cheltenham Congregation conducted by Rev Don Phillips (Minister of the Cotswold Group of Churches). See back page for details.

Saturday, 11 July – Open Day (afternoon) and **Auction** at **Gwersyll Cwmwrdu**.
Bring a packed meal to contribute to a shared table. The centre needs all our support.

'future ministry' INITIATIVE

Our completed 'Cluster Bid' has been submitted to the General Assembly *fm* panel (the deadline was 16th May). We now await the outcome of the panel's deliberations, which have been submitted to the GA Executive Committee for their consideration at their meeting on the 17th/18th July 2009.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ANNUAL MEETINGS AT CHESTER, APRIL 2009

Friday morning had a flavour of Wales about it...

Speaking on behalf of the Cardiff congregation, our new District President, Sarah Boyce was one of four representatives who spoke from the platform about their Growth & Renewal experiences during the last year.

Slotted in between various items of 'business' were a number of PowerPoint presentations designed to give snapshots of what goes on at grass-root level in our congregations.

One, produced by Keith Lewis-Jones featured Highland Place, Aberdare; another, produced by Nia Davies, featured Cwmsychbant. The two were well received and visitors to the '*Gathering*' at Carmarthen on 20th June will have an opportunity to view them.

Then came the juncture at which Honorary Membership of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches was conferred upon Rev Eric Jones. Eric acknowledged the honour with a short speech that was interspersed with humorous remarks and soon had the large audience rocking with laughter. We do not have Eric's acceptance speech, but Lis Dyson-Jones has kindly provided the text of the tribute to Eric that she delivered on behalf of the EC during the ceremony — it follows below.



Rev Eric Jones is congratulated by retiring GA President Mrs Joyce Ashworth.

Honorary Membership of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

The Rev James Eric Jones was born into a Unitarian family in Cardiganshire and was brought up, on a farm near Cribyn, in the 'Black Spot', where his family worshipped. He told me that Unitarians lived on every farm in the area for miles around. Unitarians everywhere!

Because of several childhood illnesses, including measles and whooping cough, which badly affected his eyesight, he was 9 years old before he could attend school. At that age, unable to read or write, he was overwhelmed by the ability of others. However, he was a bright little boy and soon caught up, passing his 11⁺ two years later. This whole experience taught him to think in other ways. He then attended Lampeter Grammar School and when any of the local Unitarian chapels held a Cymanfa, the school would close for the day.

Growing up in the area, he became a member of Young Farmers, where he again mixed predominately with young Unitarians and he learnt useful skills like public speaking and drama and it was here that he shared a good social life with other like-minded young people.

Following ministry training in Carmarthen and then obtaining a raft of other degrees in Welsh Language and Literature and Social Science, at the University of Cardiff, he found himself out of a job! All the pulpits were full in Cardiganshire but he had conducted services in Aberdare (South East Wales) during his time as a student. That pulpit was vacant and so he began his full time ministry there. He remained a minister at Aberdare for 42 years, until his retirement a few years ago. To that ministry, was added Cardiff, where he ministered for 30 years and Cefn Coed, 3½ years.

During this time Eric regularly broadcast on Welsh language radio. This put him in touch with some influential religious figures and, over time, he came to know them well. He once told me that they tried to guess what denomination he belonged to but they never got it right.

Eric has worked tirelessly for the Unitarian cause; not only in Wales, but also throughout the Unitarian Denomination. He has been Secretary of the Welsh Department since its inception in 1964 and continues to support the Welsh Unitarian District Associations in South East Wales and South Wales. He is Treasurer of the SE Wales District and was made an honorary life member in 2007. His knowledge of Welsh Unitarianism is phenomenal and he has published much on the subject. In 1989/90, he was president of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and has served on numerous committees over the years, from the Youth and Religious Education departments, to the Sustentation Fund and he chaired the Ministry Committee and Interview Panel for 12 years. And much, much, more...

If we are talking about service – he has done it!

At the 2007 National Eisteddfod, Eric was made a Bard of the Gorsedd, (*Eric Cwm Llydan*) receiving the honour for his work and service to Welsh Education, Language and Culture in the Cynon Valley.

Despite all of this, he remains a modest man, who is good at hiding his light under a bushel. His experiences of starting school later than his peers and those feelings of having to catch up, have left him always letting others go through the door before him.

I doubt if he realizes, though, just how much of an impact he has had on others.

He has lived his life moulded by Unitarian values but he has a modest and courteous manner, rounded by a twinkling sense of humour. He has 'grace' – he once said he didn't know what to say to others who asked him what 'grace' was. Well, those who to whom he has ministered and those who can call him 'friend', can tell him that it is a 'state of receiving divine strength and favour'. His balance and awareness allow him to view others with fairness, compassion and objectivity.

Eric has strong and right values. He is a family man through and through; a loving husband, father and grandfather. He is a loyal and reliable friend and I can't think of a better person to receive this honour.

Lis Dyson-Jones

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAY EC MEETING.

The first meeting of the newly-elected Executive Committee of the General Assembly took place in central Manchester on 8/9 May 2009. Agreement was reached on priorities for the coming year, as follows:

TOP PRIORITIES FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Develop paid, professional leadership for our congregations.
- Develop volunteer leadership and local governance skills.
- Raise profile (including communications and social responsibility).
- Finances and fund-raising.
- Spiritual and theological development.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Set strategic direction (based on Action Plans)
- Put in place central administration, including appointing Chief Officer.
- Relate to denomination (includes acting on Annual Meetings Resolutions).
- Develop team working and communication.

It was agreed provisionally that EC members maintain individual links with Districts and Commissions, but that these members decide *how* they should do this (in the light of their commitments). Recruiting is to begin shortly for the new Triennial (for membership of the GA Commissions and Panels, which are due for renewal next year). Structures are also to be reviewed.

Better communications: Draft EC minutes are to be sent out to all on the GA email list. In addition, a **new Q&A forum** is being set up on the GA website. Anyone in our movement will be welcome to send questions by email to EC@unitarian.org.uk (or by post to 'Executive Committee, c/o Mary-Jean Hennis' at our Essex Hall headquarters). The questions will be delivered to members of the EC -- and both the questions and their answers will later appear on the GA website.

Topics were set for **future meetings**, the next two being: **15 June** -- Special meeting in London to consider plans for a new GA Chief Officer. And full meeting on **18 & 19 July** at Luther King House in Manchester, with the focus on Strategic Direction and Action Planning.

Jim Corrigan

(newly-elected member of the GA Executive Committee.)

INTERS' REPORT

On the 6th to the 8th of March, my sister and I packed our suitcases and went to the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow. She went for Senior Weekend and I went for Inter Weekend. This was an experiment putting Inters and Seniors together.

However, it actually worked quite well. Inters is for 11-14 year olds and Seniors is for 14-17 year olds. Say you have Inters and some Hikers, the hikers would probably go to bed at, let's say, 8:00pm. We (Inters), though, go to bed at midnight! Therefore, for those hours between 8 and midnight we have to be silent. On the other hand, both Inters and Seniors go to bed at midnight so we don't have to be quiet!

Anyway, on to what we did at *Inters*... On the Friday night, it was just getting to know one another and meeting up with old friends. We had to bring old things with us that could be turned into new, e.g. tubes could be turned into a desk tidy. We also had a buffet. Then we had *circle time*. The theme to the whole weekend was '*Imagine This...*', so Claire (one of the leaders) took the first circle time about imagination, and how we would be lost without it, which was really thought provoking.

On Saturday, we had to draw round one another on a piece of paper! Then, once we had finished, everybody came and wrote something on the paper about you. I love mine (the paper body), it is really special.

We then went for a walk, around the village, a small triangle, it took about 45 minutes. It was extremely enjoyable because we chatted about 'teenage stuff' and other things!

When we got back, we had to do a sketch (play) about something that we would miss if it wasn't there. Ours was about grass, flowers, and horses. It was really funny.

We also had to plan the circle time for that night. We were split up into three groups; Beginning, Middle and End. We were the middle group (6 of us) and we did 'Imagine a World Without Time.' The other groups were good too. The bit that I liked best of the first group was their poem. It was about a blind person asking a friend about the colours in the world. It was read by Tilly and Annabel. The part that I liked best out the last group was that we all had to light a candle about something we wanted to be rid of e.g. sad memories. It was really deep and there were a few tears. The leaders then picked out what parts of our circle-times we were going to do in the chapel the next morning.

So the next morning we had to pack and then we went to chapel. The service was conducted by Inters and Seniors. The service was very good, better than I thought it would be because with Seniors and Inters together it was full of love and happiness. This made it better because we all knew that we had wanted to do this service, not made to do it. Then we had the christening (at the trough) when all the new Seniors and Inters basically had water poured all over their heads!

We then went back to the Nightingale Centre. Claire and Emma had made these laminated cards. They said things like '*Smallest Ears*', '*Person you would like to know better*', and '*Person you think will be famous*' etc. You then pick a card out of the box and give it to the person you think it suits the best. I had one off Alice, (I love her to bits, she's such a sweetie), which said 'Person you would like to know better'. Then I had one off Tilly, (she's really 'random', hilarious, and has a really nice personality), which said: 'Person with the best style'. Then lastly, I had one off Devon, (he's amazing), his said: 'Person you would most like to be stuck in a lift with'. Over the weekend, I also managed to lose my sweets at least twice. But I found them, they were once in the lounge and the second time they were in my toiletry bag!

To conclude... I loved Inters it was a right laugh and I'm definitely going again. I met some amazing people and some who are very funny but quite 'random'. I personally think that Hucklow is the place where I consider home and feel like my best friends are there. So I hope to see you in November!

Elizabeth Rosenberg (13), Nottage Chapel

SENIORS' REPORT

On the 6th-8th of March. I was extremely excited to be going back to Hucklow for Senior Weekend. This time, as an experiment, the leaders had decided to put Seniors and Inter weekend on at the same time. At first, I was sceptical about this, as I would be there at the same time as my sister. But, to my surprise it worked very well, we didn't talk to the Inters a lot, if at all, throughout the whole weekend!

Our theme for the weekend was "***Why do fools fall in love?***" We used discussion and drama to talk about love and its many aspects. In my group one night, we talked about how love has changed throughout time. That we see and act to, love, differently than say, our grandparents would.

We had an actor and playwright, Charlie Watts come and help us use drama to express our thoughts on love. I don't really enjoy drama, as I haven't had much experience, so I didn't think that I would really enjoy the activities. But, I surprised myself. I decided to throw myself in the drama and I found that it was easier than I thought it would be, and I got a lot out of it!

We also had the '***voluntary***' walk. It seems to be a tradition now, that I am one of the few who walk back to the centre, and not catch the bus, despite hating exercise. I told John Harley that unless my friend Sammy was with me, there was no chance I would be walking back! So she had to come with me, (more time to chat).

On the Sunday, the *Inter* and *Senior* 'weekenders' took the **whole** service in Chapel. This is amazing; as normally, we only have a ten-minute slot! The Inters took the first half an hour, and the Seniors took the last. In our half, we performed some of our drama piece that we had made up the night before. Our group was chosen to perform a small section about the different things in life that we love, and how we love things in different ways. We also said how, when one thing we love leaves our lives, that invariably, another comes into it.

Most people in school are sick of me raving about Hucklow when I come home. But I really can't express how much I love the Nightingale Centre, and the people there. The usual hugs and tears ensued on the Sunday afternoon as 3 of the boys left Seniors. They will be attending the 'Bridging Weekend' in May as they are joining BUYAN (British Unitarian Young Adult Network). We are all back together again for the youth week FDA in August. **Can't wait!**

Isabelle Rosenberg (16), Porthcawl

DISTRICT AGM AT NOTTAGE

The all-seeing 'spy in the sky', *The Golden Eagle*, dropped in on our Annual General Meeting held at Nottage on Sunday, 17 May. The avian snoopers' observations are to be found in 'A Bird's Eye View'.

EXTRACT FROM RETIRING PRESIDENT'S HOMILY AT AGM

(Kindly provided by Lewis in response to requests)

Read Isaiah 5:1-7

In the above reading the prophet Isaiah laments the fact that the metaphorical vineyard he speaks of has not produced good fruit, instead it has produced a harvest of sour grapes. Sadly, this all too often happens and our churches produce sour grapes, a bitter harvest of complaint and conflict. This happens because very often the means and the ends of what it means to be a church are confused. The vineyard is only the means, the end is the harvest. Being part of a worshipping community is not just about building a flourishing or larger organisation for its own sake. The point is the harvest where our lives and our congregations are expected to bear the fruit of authentic faith. The vineyard, which is the physical church building and its survival, whilst important, isn't the real point. The point is in us playing an active part in the work of mending our broken world. When we forget this larger purpose to which we are called, the result is often a harvest of sour grapes, but when we trust in the divine working in us and through us, amazing things can happen.

In Peace / Mewn Tangnefedd
Lewis

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

The interview in this edition is with Mrs Avril Protheroe.

Avril is a long-term member of the Nottage Church. She is also a past President of South East Wales District. Avril told me that she had lived in Porthcawl for most of her life, and started attending Nottage Sunday School when she was about six.

Her teenage years saw her wander off to try other things, but she became a regular attendee again, when she had her own children and wanted them to have a foundation of religion.

Avril's professional life was spent working with children and sometimes adults who had learning difficulties. She told me that she felt very lucky to have enjoyed both her job and now enjoy her retirement.

The three most important things to Avril, after her family and friends are... being Welsh, being a Unitarian, and being able to laugh.

A word of wisdom. Avril disclosed that she truly believed that laughter was the best medicine and of course it is free!

Ella Lewis-Jones

What is your earliest memory?

My brother being born, I was three and my older sisters and I were taken to a friend's house. I remember on our return, being puzzled by said friends knocking at the door. We lived there! And in those days nobody used the front door – the door was flung open by my father shouting – “It's a boy!”

Did you enjoy your childhood?

I think so. Childhoods weren't analyzed in those days, as they are now. I wonder what “quality time” would have conveyed sixty years ago. I had a mother and father who were married and lived together with their three daughters and son. “Quaint” by today's standards I think!

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

Giving a stable childhood to our three daughters and staying married for thirty eight years.

What is your greatest fear?

That I will tire of “retail therapy”! The gorgeous Gwladys Howell (Nottage Chapel's President) is my role model, so I have a long way to go yet.

What do you regret?

Nothing really. I think life is too short to dwell on the “what ifs?” of the past. I prefer to live in the now, and think of the coming days with hope.

Are you happy?

Yes. I feel truly blessed to be married, to have three daughters who are also married, and two beautiful grandchildren.

What is the most difficult job you have done?

Being a full time mother, while working full time and running our home.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Our Children!

What is the most useful skill you possess?

Home-making. I enjoy decorating, gardening, sewing and cooking, so it is a joy not a chore.

What or who changed your life the most?

My husband. I knew I had ‘wings’, he has demonstrated that ‘Roots’ are just as important!

What is the best piece of advice you have been given?

“Be kind to yourself”. When I returned to work with three small children at home, an older colleague told me I should always make time for myself – and how right she was!

How would you like to be remembered?

With Love.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Why should we live in such a hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. I wish to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life. I wish to learn what life has to teach, and not, when I come to die, discover that I have not lived. *[Henry David Thoreau.]*

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Max Kpakio from Liberia spoke at our AGM on the 17th May 2009 and gave his reasons for seeking life in the UK. He explained how uncomfortable he felt by all the negative media reports and attitude towards asylum seekers but also was aware of kinder attitudes and help as an individual in Swansea from members of the public and the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Group. This group has been supported by Wick and Gellionnen congregations.

Sheila Cousins and I from the Cardiff Congregation attended a talk held by the United Nations, Cardiff District at the Temple of Peace from Madame Nlandu from the Congo on the 8th May. Madame Nlandu is an impressive lady who worked as a lawyer and had been imprisoned by President Kabila. She felt that her freedom had been gained by the actions of such organisations as Amnesty International.

The Congolese community do not feel safe in our country because the British Authorities have allowed Congolese Government Officials to interview asylum seekers from the Congo in places such as in detention centres. Forty-three MPs have recently signed an Early Day Motion which states that there is reliable information that those perceived to be in opposition to President Kabila's regime if returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo face arrest, torture and extrajudicial execution. Any asylum seeker sent back will be viewed as a political dissident and is therefore at risk. There have been problems with Immigration Judges not accepting the compelling evidence of ill-treatment of asylum seekers from the Congo.

As newly installed District President I would like to support the Home4You Asylum Seekers charity in Cardiff and the Valleys and also the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers group of which Max Kpakio is a member. I am aware that as a district we need to support our own congregations and Unitarian charities and that we support national charities. The work of the Women's League in our district is excellent in respect of fundraising. I hope that as a religious community we can support the stranger within our midst in the shape of our local asylum seekers.

In Peace,
Sarah Boyce

ABERDARE

The Service which was conducted by Humphrey Evans on 29th March included readings and poems from no less than seven members of the congregation. They included; Joy, Hazel, Marian W, Ella, Paul, Dilys and Anne. Although there had been no pre-set theme those participating chose pieces which picked up on the season of the year and the growth of new life. Hazel's reading of "The Daffodils" by William Wordsworth, for example, was outstanding. Listening to her reading the poem one felt oneself transported to a lakeside in Cumbria. Never had 'The Daffodils' held so much meaning.

The Spring Sale took place at the end of April and was well patronised. Apart from the usual Cake/Homemade produce and jewellery stalls, the stalls included Bric-a-Brac, Nearly New, Books and Plants. It has been decided to continue having two smaller sales in the spring and autumn as it seems to be slightly less work and, in reality, raises more money. We are grateful to all those who helped with the sale and made it so worthwhile and enjoyable.

The Cheese and Wine evening which took place on 18th May was considered a great success. The quiz had been compiled by Paul David with the Rev Eric Jones acting as quiz master on the night. There were seven tables (four contestants per table). The quiz was won by the Cardiff group who had the advantage, amongst other information, of knowing all the Welsh rivers. The raffle was won by the ladies from Merthyr. There was certainly enough to eat and drink, with those who were driving restricting themselves to a single modest glass of wine.

At the GA in Chester the Rev Eric Jones was honoured as one of only six Life Members of the General Assembly. We are singularly fortunate to have him amongst us.

The repairs and improvements continue at Highland Place. The external walls of the entrance to the schoolroom have been painted a lovely primrose yellow which has been an enhancement to the building. Paul David has organised more storage facilities in the organ chamber and we await improvements to the toilet facilities.



Easter Bonnets at Highland Place by Joy Foster

Photo: Ella Lewis-Jones

There are parts of Aberdare which have been designated 'Community First' areas. These areas have attracted funding for activities which are designed to stimulate community involvement. One of these initiatives is 'Get Cooking'. The facilitators of the Get Cooking project were invited to Women's league recently and everyone had a very enjoyable afternoon tasting the soup, risotto and fresh fruit salad which they produced. The Get Cooking team will return early in June and we have invited League members from Cefn and Cardiff to join us. The topic this time is puddings.

QUOTATION TO PONDER

We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness, which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world.

Marcel Proust (Quoted in 'Buddhism without Beliefs' by Stephen Batchelor)

Ella Lewis-Jones

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

In April, members of the congregation attended the General Assembly Annual Meetings in Chester. Diana Bianchi was our official representative and she gave her report at our AGM in early May. Despite the somewhat poorer standard of accommodation than that of Hatfield, the meetings were successful and all who attended enjoyed the company and stimulating conversation of fellow Unitarians.

It was also good to see our former Minister, the Rev. Eric Jones honoured for his services to the Denomination.

Also in April, Margaret Evans hosted an evening at her home to raise money for the Khasi Hills Orphanage Project. All who attended enjoyed a delicious supper and £100 was raised. Visitors from the Khasi Hills had been guests at the GA Meetings and gave a very informative update on the progress of the work undertaken by Khasi Hills Unitarians.

The Congregation Annual General Meeting took place on May 3rd and in her comprehensive report, Secretary, Sarah Boyce showed how much has been done over the past year. A new notice board has been chosen and will soon be installed inside the Friend's Meeting House, an archive inventory has been completed and West Grove documents have been sent to the Glamorgan Records Office. These will be on loan to the GRO and we still hold the right of ownership. We have developed a strong link with the Cardiff United Nations group and Sarah is now their secretary. Alan Cohen has published his book 'Science and Spirit Reconciled' and we wish him well with its sales.

As a result of the Congregational Assessment Process, undertaken last year, the congregation has been able to focus on several issues. The Rules of Membership are now fully implemented and so now, using the process laid down in our constitution, we are able to agree membership prior to the AGM each year. All fully financially committed members can then vote at the meetings. The CAP process also helped the congregation work together when considering its part in the bid for 'future ministry' within the district cluster.

Those of us able to attend the District AGM were pleased and proud to see 'our Sarah' installed as the new District President. She will make a fine President and is a great example of the saying 'if you want something done, ask a busy person'. Despite her busy life, Sarah will always do her best to fulfil any commitment she makes and she fully deserves the honour bestowed on her. Congratulations Sarah!

Other news – personal and general

Margaret Evans has again become a great, great aunt. This time to Oscar, born on 25th April in Auckland, New Zealand. We wish him a happy life.

We were all saddened by the news of the death of Peggy Roberts. She worked tirelessly for many years, for the benefit of West Grove and although recently unable to attend services, was always interested in knowing of activities of the congregation. Peggy's funeral service was conducted at Thornhill Crematorium by Rev. Eric Jones, on Thursday 23rd April. Our thoughts and sympathy go to her family. Several members of the congregation were able to attend the funeral.

We send warm wishes to Olwen Williams, sister of Lyn Davies, following her recent operation and hope she will soon be able to leave hospital and return home.

We now have sufficient of the new hymnbook, 'Sing Your Faith' to be able to use them at our services and look forward to learning and singing its uplifting tunes.

We continue to support local, national and inter-national charities and our current charity box is open to receive donations for the BSP Charity School in Kathmandu, Nepal which was visited by Lis Dyson-Jones and Diana Bianchi last year. This Majuwa primary school gives free education to the children of brick makers in the Kathmandu Valley.

On 31st May, an all female congregation shared worship together, led by Margaret Evans, for Women's League Sunday. A moving reading, 'Smiles', was read by Ivy Thomas and Margaret read the League message from the National President, Mary Wightman. Reading from 'A Century of the Unitarian Women's League' edited by Judy Hague, including one written by Nora Wilson, (another enthusiastic Cardiff member), interspersed with personal anecdotes, Margaret demonstrated, with humour, her enthusiasm for and love of the League. We were reminded of the value of the League's Benevolent Fund and that over the years, over £165,000 has been raised for National Projects. She has been a member for nearly 80 years, joining as a 12year old when he mother was a District President. Margaret, a former National President, has also served as National Secretary (19yrs), District President and Secretary. An impressive record and those who were present were glad they were there.

Thought for Now

In the end, it won't matter how much we have, but how generously we have given.

It won't matter how much we know, but rather how well we live.

And it won't matter how much we believe, but how deeply we love.

(John Morgan)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Our Women's League Service on 31 May took place on a lovely sunny evening. Our theme was Sun, Fun and Pleasure — what an apt subject. We heard Readings and Poems; sang hymns and listened to music. Pretty comprehensive we thought, though one male voice was later heard to complain, "Shame there were no 'Pints!'".

We had a return visit from Mrs Silvin, who gave a very interesting talk on Modern Embroidery. Her wall-hangings and sculptures, made from very unusual materials, were wonderful to look at.

By special request we held another painting afternoon. Comments such as "I can't paint" were heard from one or two ladies, but soon (after a few words of encouragement from Betty which 'did the trick') quite creditable paintings began to emerge. Mrs Barbara Hopkins had the unenviable task of adjudicating and announcing the winners — but we all felt we were winners really. One would-be artist is so proud of her efforts that she has even had her work of art framed and put on display — it now hangs in the ~~Leure~~ loo!

Gwen Everrit

DISTRICT AGM AT NOTTAGE

Several members journeyed to Nottage on 17th May for the AGM, Service, and Talk. They enjoyed the visit, and were impressed by the transformation achieved by the schoolroom makeover.

The passengers of one car persuaded their driver to make a detour to Rest Bay and the esplanade at Porthcawl, but they failed to cajole him into letting them eat candyfloss in the car.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

The June 2008 edition of the Newsletter contained mention by Rev Eric Jones of the changes made at Llanmadoc Christian Youth Camp. Two 'Cefn-girls', Sharon Hellard and Donna Borja-Edwards (Murphy) recall with pleasure the happy times spent at Llanmadoc in their youth, and send their best wishes to all who, like them, have fond memories of times gone by. Perhaps we could, as a District event, meet at the camp in the not-too-distant future, inviting all old campers to join with us.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

At the end of March Jean Thomas retired after working as a 'home help' for 23 years. Jean is held in high regard by many, and news of her retirement and congratulations were in the local press. We wish her many happy years to come, sadly she has had sciatica for the past 6 weeks, not quite what she expected, I'm sure!

Julianne Morgan conducted a lovely Palm Sunday service for us, our thanks go to Julianne for her continued support. Thanks also to Helen Steele who provided a beautiful floral arrangement for the occasion.

Easter Sunday saw Annette in the pulpit and a bigger than usual congregation. Thanks to Karen Hnyda for playing the organ, and of course to Annette for always keeping us going.

On the 9th May, the Reverend Ashley Hills, President of the General Baptist Society came to South Wales. He conducted a morning service for us, with Julianne playing the organ, and then joined us in a Faith and Hope lunch before going on to conduct a service in Wick. I hope he enjoyed his visit as much as we did. We have a lovely photograph of him and our President, Gwladys Howell on the schoolroom wall.

On May 17th the chapel was full of friends from the District to hear Lewis conduct a service and then later, at the AGM hand the Presidency over to Sarah. Thank you for a lovely service Lewis and your work over the past years. Good luck to Sarah, we hope she will enjoy her term in office.

Those present could not have missed the 'makeover' given to both chapel and schoolroom recently. Alistair has spent many hours there for the past weeks, meeting workmen, and then cleaning up after them! Thank you Alistair. Thanks also to Dave and Annette Marsh who spent most of their weekend ensuring the schoolroom would be ready for lunch.

We send our sympathy and best wishes to Marie Rosenberg whose mother died on the 23rd May, and June Pattimore whose husband died on the 24th. Please know you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

Since our last newsletter various people have provided us with some very interesting services. Diana talked about Unitarianism, Julianne introduced 'Welcome to Spring' with poems and readings. Lewis's service contained a very controversial reading from Isaiah which, at first reading, seemed to approve of misdeeds and dodgy accounting – it would be a favourite reading at Westminster Houses of Parliament. On April 12th there were sixteen people in church, what a treat! A former member, Angela, was visiting with her two children, Charlotte and Cameron. Margaret Evans's daughter Alison was there together with granddaughter Hannah and Mollie's grandson Matthew. On May 1st Mrs Mollie Jones was 92 so we celebrated on Sunday April 26th with cake and savouries. The service that night was taken by Mr Saunders who joined us for the celebration. We were pleased to have him and enjoyed hearing about his connection with the Quakers.

As usual, the start of the holiday season has seen a reduction in attendances whilst our members are scattered – Margaret to Egypt, Jack and Glenys to Majorca, whilst David and Rhian cycled around Holland. On their return they continued their ambition to walk from coast to coast across England. They had previously started from the West coast of Cumbria so they continued and walked for days through cold, wet, windy and misty weather before arriving at Robin Hood Bay on the East coast. Well done! Mollie went to West Wales with her walking group and saw a lot of the countryside by using her bus pass on all local buses.

It is sad that we no longer have a Women's League but we are glad that others have and we enjoy reading about their interesting programmes. It brings back happy memories.

The District Meeting at Nottage was held on a showery day which did nothing to dampen the happy spirit within the chapel. After an enjoyable service taken by Lewis, with delightful participation by the Nemeth family, the shared meal in the schoolroom was a great success. We were happy to share the table with an American lady, her daughter and a British son-in-law. I hope they join in future events.

During the AGM, held after lunch, a talk by the Swansea-based Asylum Seekers gave us an insight into what it is like to flee from a dangerous homeland and become a stranger in a country which is not always welcoming. It was thought provoking. Thank you Nottage for hosting. The next big news will be the decision on the *future ministry* process.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

At this time of year on the way to Gellionnen we watch the lark rise and the red kite glide and we hear the cuckoo call. Our Easter Sunday service went surprisingly well. We expected a tiny turnout but in fact had six visitors and four children for the Easter Egg hunt. Julie Nedin conducted an informal, thoughtful homily.

We have welcomed Lewis and Cheryl Rees home from Australia; news of Lewis's decision to follow a further course of training was welcomed with the sharing of a very special cake cooked by Sandra Beynon and the presentation of a framed print of Gellionnen which was executed by Adrienne Hawes. We have also welcomed home Sheila and Gareth Evans who take themselves off to America whenever the opportunity arises in order to join family members there, especially grandchildren Teilo and Cerys.

It is good to know that Mair Evans has had a successful knee operation and also that Julie Nedin is recovering from shingles.

Diana Bianchi and Ken Morgan can vouch for the fact that our fractured and splintered pulpit is whole again — they have both conducted service since Andrew Grist miraculously waved magic wand, glue pot and a whole lot of mysterious tools over the shambles. The transformation is amazing.

Drainage around the outer walls has been attended to and a quantity of rotten floorboards has been removed. Come next winter, the whole atmosphere of the building should be improved. I didn't think I could find a building to be so precious to me, but here is a past, present and hopefully, future so rich that it needs to survive, to serve and inspire. The cheque presented to Lewis at the General Assembly Meetings tells us that so many people care and we are grateful. Such generosity deserves huge thanks.

Quotation from the Dalai Lama:

If you think you're too small to be effective you've never been to bed with a mosquito.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

We were very pleased to welcome Rev Ashley and Mrs Elizabeth Hill to our service on May 10th. Ashley was visiting us for the first time in his official capacity as Messenger of the General Baptist Assembly. The weather was on its best behaviour and both visitors admired our small chapel with its large and well-kept, though very old, graveyard.

After Ashley's service we all enjoyed tea, cakes and some excellent Indian savouries made by Anoop —they disappeared almost before being put out. We are looking forward to our next tea party Anoop. Helen Bhanaut took some excellent photos of our gathering, both inside and outside the chapel, and one will be used in the Wick village calendar for 2010.

The garden seat which is being presented to our chapel in memory of Stephen Jones is now ready and our local builder is exploring just where would be the best and safest spot for it. When finally placed in our grounds we will hold a special service.

Our treasurer Mansel Lalis and Julianne, in her capacity as Messenger, attended the AGM of the General Baptist Assembly held at Dr Williams Library, Gordon Square. As usual it was a very friendly occasion and so pleasing to welcome new and meet old friends.

Our next service on June 14th will be our annual Flower Communion, a service begun by Dr Norbert Čapek in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s. We would be delighted to welcome anyone who is able to join us at 3.00pm. Please bring a small posy to display and exchange.

Say what you will about the economy of life, Flowers are irrefutable proof of nature's extravagance.

Our best wishes to all,
Julianne Morgan

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

It's pretty amazing to be able to circle or perch above any gathering and observe what's going on below and the South East Wales District AGM was no exception!

I remember last year when I screeched with frustration when so few people turned up at the same event. Such a good idea of the intelligent District Executive to change the day and re-introduce the sort of AGM gathering of the past. (Great thinking to bring forward something from the past of value).

I think I counted more than 50 in number listening to inspiring worship led by Lewis (Hope some of his address is printed in the Newsletter – worth hearing again!)

The meeting followed the familiar pattern and Lewis was generous in his welcome of Sarah as the new President, thanking all for supporting him during his presidential term of office. He praised the work of everyone who pulls together at congregational level, thanked everyone who has worked so hard to prepare the 'fm' Cluster Bid and told of his belief that Collaborative Ministry is the only way forward.

The Treasurer tried to keep all spirits raised even though the sad truth of a reduction in the value of investments had to be told and he was rightly thanked for his sterling (no pun intended) work on our behalf.

Reports were received and accepted, from the Women's League, the sale of Bridgend Chapel and its decision regarding the proceeds from the sale, Cwmwrdu, Publicity and progress on the website. During the Newsletter report, Ken made his usual request for contributions for the publication and praised those who regularly contribute with innovative ideas and articles.

The election of officers for the next year took place and the Rules of the Society, which had been revised and updated by Lis, Eric and Ken, were discussed.

Future events dates were settled and there was a rallying cry from Margaret Evans (Cardiff) for more people to become Associate Members of the GA. She even had application forms at the ready – where does she get her energy from?

As if all this wasn't exciting enough, everyone listened with rapt attention to Max Kpakio a journalist asylum seeker from Liberia who now works for the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group. Wow, did that man have a story to tell!

I mustn't forget to mention the 'shared lunch' enjoyed by all (except this poor little bird). There was so much food there but they didn't throw anything out for me at the end of the day.

The lunch break was a great time to observe and listen in on conversations. I saw Dilys from Aberdare flogging tickets for a Quiz Night at Highland Place – Cheese and Wine included for the princely sum of £5. I also overheard Morgan Chambers telling Phil Griffiths that all the best looking women were in the Cardiff congregation! Bad move Mog! You could really set the cat among the pigeons there, and think of all your disappointed fans among the ladies of Cefncoed!

But a good day all round I think; and for next year Watch this space!

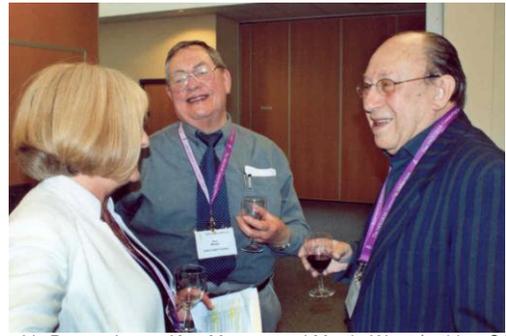
The Golden Eagle

GA MEETINGS UPLIFTING?

Even though I am an old-timer to the Unitarian Movement I was a first-timer to the GA Annual Meetings at Chester.

I found most of my stay there uplifting—until an experience on the final morning which was ‘up-lifting’ in a different sense.

After breakfast on Saturday I returned to my 4th-floor room in Old College to obey the directive that all belongings should be removed from rooms before the start of the Business Session. I collected my suitcase and entered the lift, pressing the button for the basement. I was cutting things fine so I was a little annoyed when the lift went up instead of down. I assumed that this was in response to a call from above—in the literal sense—but the lift remained closed at the 5th (top)-floor where it stubbornly decided to stay, ignoring my efforts to make it descend or allow me to escape from its clutches.



Lis Dyson-Jones, Ken Morgan and Martin West (retiring GA Hon Treasurer) enjoy a glass (or two) of wine at Chester

My initial, momentary, reaction was, as a true Unitarian, one of *disbelief*, but I quickly realised that it had indeed happened and I would have to do something about it. I pressed the Alarm button, and waited. Nothing happened – so I rang the Alarm again, this time for longer: Still no joy.

Surely someone must have heard it? – Receptionist... cleaners... *anyone*... But no – the building must be empty! If I hoped to be released I would have to attract the attention of a passer-by. I pressed the Alarm button again and kept it ringing continuously. The volume of sound was deafening – rivalling that of the Abba Tribute I’d attended on the Thursday night – it *must* have been audible all over the campus, but still no-one came.

Then, after an hour-and-a-quarter of captivity, I heard a shout of ‘*Are you alright in there?*’ from outside the lift. Much relieved, I shouted back that I was OK. Two security guards from another building had heard the alarm and set about tracing its source not knowing whether it was for a fire, burglary, or whatever, and uncertain of its location because the sound was bouncing off other buildings. They eventually tracked it (and me) down and, once a key was obtained, my incarceration was over.

In the ‘Growth Session’ on the previous day we had been encouraged to compose a snappy ‘conversation piece’ outlining our Unitarian faith, in readiness for quick delivery in a brief interval of time, such as, say, the duration of a lift journey. How ironic that I had the speech, had the lift, had *more than enough* time... but lacked the vital ingredient – someone to appreciate my eloquence.

Fortunately, I am of a sturdy constitution and suffered no ill-effects from my experience – I can look back at it and laugh. However, someone of a more delicate nature might not have fared so well. I would have thought it expedient on the part of the university to have some sort of visual display pinpointing the location of an alarm call, and possibly giving an indication of its nature.

Meanwhile, back in Cefncoed, earlier in the week, there had also been concerns that I might have received a ‘call from above’ – this time in the metaphorical sense. From Tuesday evening, through Wednesday, Ray, a friend, had been phoning my home leaving messages asking me to contact him—I didn’t, of course, as I was away. On Thursday morning Ray decided to visit my home.

I had taken the precaution of cancelling the newspaper and milk deliveries but, on that morning, the milkman had inadvertently left my usual pinta on the doorstep. Seeing this, and failing to get any reply when he banged loudly on my door, Ray was alarmed, and ‘feared the worst’...

(At this point I should mention that Ray is the local undertaker – so I don’t *really* know how he felt. Did he rub his hands with professional glee, or wring them in genuine sorrow? I’m being honest when I say that I believe it was the latter.)

After puzzling for a moment or two over what to do, Ray phoned Phil Griffiths, and was told by Margaret that the situation was not as dire as it seemed. I hadn’t ‘passed away’ – merely ‘gone away’. Ray was relieved. So am I!

Ken Morgan

BOOKS THAT MAKE YOU THINK

Many of our members are devoted readers and from time to time encounter books which can only be described as 'thought provoking' or even 'inspirational'. We invite anyone who would like to share their experience of reading such a book to write a short review of no more than 200 words that could be printed, if space allows, in future editions of South East Wales Unitarian News.

Sunday, 5 July – South East Wales District Rally – Day trip to the Cotswolds

An early 9.30 am start is envisaged with the coach leaving from Cefn Coed picking up at various points along the A470 and M4 – please advise the District Secretary of suitable locations convenient for your chapel, and numbers attending. The cost of coach is dependent on numbers and will vary from £7.50 to £10.00 per head. The cost of Sunday lunch will be approx. £10.00 for a main course.

Arrive Cheltenham around midday to: -

- Either to explore the town and shops and make own arrangements for lunch at the numerous cafes and restaurants available or take your own picnic lunch.

Or

- Make a conducted bus tour of the town with a group Sunday lunch at a local hostelry.
- **Details to be confirmed later.**

Service with the Cheltenham Congregation conducted by Rev Don Phillips (Minister of the Cotswold Group of Churches) at the Bayshill Unitarian Church a 3 pm. The church is located behind the Cotswold Auction Sale Room near the Royal Well Bus Station.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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

The annual SEWUS membership fee is **£5**.
