



South East Wales Unitarian News

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June 2011

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 3rd July – District Rally at Aberdare

Saturday 15th October – Visit of National President - Rev. Dr. Anne Peart

DISTRICT AGM 2011

The Annual General Meeting of the South East Wales Unitarian Society was held at Nottage General Baptist and Unitarian Chapel on Saturday, 21st May, 2011 at 11.30am.

Opening Devotions were conducted by retiring President, Sarah Boyce, and a moment of silence was observed in memory of Paul David.

The business session opened with a brief overview of the year's activities given by Sarah and the Secretary, Lis Dyson-Jones. The Annual Report[†] (covering the work of the Society in all of its component parts) was presented, section by section, and accepted.

Phil Griffiths (Cefncoed) was installed as President, and the election of officers[†] and of other post-holders[†] took place. In his acceptance remarks Phil paid tribute to the fine contribution made by Sarah during her two years in office. Thanks were also given to Ella Lewis-Jones who is standing down from her post as Minute Secretary.

[†] available on the SEWUS website at www.ukunitarians.org.uk/sewus/

After enjoying a shared-lunch we gathered for a Workshop session conducted by Karen Hanley of the Faith Commission. We were arranged into groups and given our topic for discussion. Helped by some initial 'pointers' from Karen, we set about our task. With Karen's guidance we were able to refine our ideas, each group eventually producing a final 'paper' for presentation to the gathering as a whole.

Our thanks to Nottage congregation for their hospitality.

GA ANNUAL MEETINGS AT SWANSEA, APRIL 2011

I attended Swansea General Assembly Meetings on behalf of S E Wales Unitarians. Thank you very much for sending me. I went with some apprehension, not having been to the GA for many years. It was a great experience, but back came the old frustration—there was frequently more than one meeting I wanted to attend at the same time! Obviously this is an ever present problem and I am grateful for subsequent accounts written up in the GA Zette* and the Inquirer.

Business meetings went efficiently. I enjoyed the Opening Reflections – a good way to proceed – and we were all thrilled to welcome the Bangor Unitarians. We celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Amnesty International and listened to moving words on the Charter for Compassion. We were made aware of the hand to mouth existence of asylum seekers. We also heard of the considerable voluntary efforts made by Unitarians of all ages right across the UK. Surely, volunteers



Sarah Boyce welcomes incoming president Philip Griffiths

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones



Lis Dyson-Jones displays her badge of office as new GA Vice President

Photo: Giles Croucher

are part of the glue of society.

Particular highlights of the GA for me were 'Faith in Action' facilitated by Karen Hanley and 'Human Rights or Civil Liberties', a session set up by the Penal Affairs Panel. But there were so many other special meetings too. I could go on and on.

The John Relly Beard Lecture on Friday afternoon was delivered by Rev Eric Jones. Over the weekend reference was made on a number of occasions to Eric's retirement from the post of Secretary of the Welsh Department and his contribution was recognised by presentations of a cheque and an album of photographs. It was good to meet with Dr Carwyn Tywyn who is the new Secretary. I feel that this post, carefully nurtured over the years by Eric, will continue to develop in the hands of Carwyn.

The two visiting choirs were a delight on Saturday and Sunday. I loved the contribution of the young people and the use of art in the Sunday Service and to be there in the Brangwyn Hall in great numbers was uplifting – a great service, great singing.

When about to leave I met a man from Carlisle who attends every GA with his wife. "We have no nearby church," he said, "so we look forward every year to the Assembly."

To see our own Lis Dyson-Jones elected Vice President was the icing on the cake. We congratulate her.

Once again, thank you for sending me as South East Wales District representative.

Marian Littlepage

** The GA Zette is a publication sponsored by the Foy Society. During the course of the Annual Meetings it provides a daily commentary on events of interest.*

GA MEETINGS AT SWANSEA – A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

From 15th-18th April, Swansea University was 'home' for the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. It was their 49th Annual Meetings, and it was my *first* one! Unfortunately my sister Isabelle couldn't come as she got into the National Youth Wind Band of Wales—yes, she is amazing.

I was quite happy that it was in Swansea, only thirty minutes down the road from my house, and with a beach opposite the Uni. It was a sort of home from home.

We had our own Youth section, led by Jen Hazel and Sarah Atkinson. Our first session was all about getting to know one another and what we wanted to attend, whether we wanted to leave campus and so on. (We didn't actually go to any *business* meetings as they all sounded a bit boring.) We decided to go to Swansea town on Saturday morning, and would attend the question and answer session led by the EC on Sunday. But on the first night there was one thing I really wanted to go to...the opening ceremony! Last year the Youth conducted the opening ceremony, and I did not get to go. But no doubt ours was not a patch on this year's, which I thought was good. Possibly the best part was Dorothy Haughton reading three short monologues about volunteering, which was the theme for this year. I think that everybody listening was laughing, and that Dorothy is a fantastic comedienne.

Seeing as the Youth's funds are being reduced more and more we decided we would take the situation into our own hands...and make some money ourselves! On returning from our 'shopping excursion' on Saturday we decorated the Unitarian bags that had been given out at the beginning of the weekend and then sold them to the Unitarian movement, while they were having a cup of tea. I believe that we made at least fifty pounds for the Youth. Helping to raise our own funds is definitely something that we will carry on doing.

We were asked by Jeffery Gould to take part in the Anniversary Service. He didn't tell us what to do, he put a lot of trust in us and just told us that the theme of the service was Palm Sunday, he was lovely and it was nice to be trusted like that. So the rest of the afternoon was devoted to sorting that out.

On Saturday night I decided that I would stay up and help the GA Zette [*see above]. This year's editors were Laura Hooley and Ben Hadfield, they did a fantastic job. It was a very good night—and early morning! We finally finished collating it at half past four!

On Sunday morning we went to the EC question and answer session. I sort of accidentally nominated myself to speak on behalf of the Youth. Of course I wasn't scared!—Okay, I was shaking. But as my



Rev Eric Jones delivers the John Relly Beard Lecture

Photo: John Hewardine

friend Tilly put it, "They won't eat you!" And she was right - the EC pussy-footed around our questions, answering them with "Well, John Harley...", and saying that they had asked us what we wanted, through John Harley of course. I don't think that we actually got a straight answer out of them, and I don't think that the EC have thought too much about the Youth's future. They just depend on John Harley. John Harley is an amazing Youth co-coordinator, but he's not **us**. Apparently we're getting an EC member to come to Senior Weekend, or Fun-Days-Away to talk to us about what we want; to see what we do. But then again, they may just get John to ask the questions and send on the answers.

The Anniversary Service was held in the Brangwyn Hall, and I thought that it wasn't bad as services go. I loved the address, thought that the poems included were good, and we obviously had a good old 'hymn sandwich'. I thought that it could have been shortened, as two hours for a service is a tad long, but, on the whole, Jeffery Gould did very well.

That night I was up with the GA Zette until six in the morning, and that was because the colour printer broke down on us. So we gave up on it, and did the last half of them in black and white. If we hadn't I think we would still have been collating when breakfast started! I sincerely hope that the whole movement appreciates the work that goes into the Zette – it should not be taken for granted.

On the Monday morning we went down to the beach and made a massive chalice with sand. We filled the flame with shells, and the base with swirling lines. It was a proud moment, a happy moment, possibly the perfect way to finish my first GA. Every Unitarian should come, young and old, because the GA is something everyone should experience.



Chalice in the sand at Swansea

Elizabeth Rosenberg

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

The interview in this issue is with Julie Nedin.

Julie was born in Swansea in 1959, studied in Cardiff and graduated as a Dietitian. She now works largely in Swansea Hospitals managing the nutrition and dietetic services, but continues to keep an interest in advising patients with diabetes, cancer and malnutrition. Julie has recently completed some work for the Welsh Government on nutrition standards for hospital food. She is married to Martyn, who is a critical care nurse. They both love walking in the UK and abroad, gardening, music and theatre. Both Julie and Martyn are non meat eaters and enjoy cooking and eating! The protection of wildlife and the environment is a particular concern. Julie has been an active campaigner against nuclear weapons and strives to encourage equality and humanitarian values in our society. Julie is a member of the Gellionnen congregation and has recently been made Vice President of the South East Wales District.

Ella Lewis-Jones

Have you always been a Unitarian?

No, I started attending Gellionnen chapel just before I married Martyn there in 1993. I arrived at Unitarianism via a long journey which started in a Primitive Methodist Chapel, Ebenezer Plasmarl in Swansea where I started in Sunday School and continued to attend services as a young adult. This chapel taught me a lot about responsibility, how to stand up in front of people and read or sing, the motto was 'never say no' to a request to participate. At University I was blessed with a welcoming environment, a new family of young people in The Methodist and URC Society headed by a fabulous Chaplain called Martin Evans-Jones who, with his wife Gwen, nurtured and supported us all. They gave us the space to be ourselves and encouraged the exploration of faith and social justice issues. In February 2011 we held a reunion which was very well attended; we spent a whole weekend together and hardly stopped talking, even after all this time (25 years plus) we 'clicked' as a group but it did make me realise just how far I have journeyed in those years.

What is your earliest memory?

I have a very early one of sitting in a Swansea cinema watching the original Walt Disney 'Fantasia'. I was very impressed by the 'live' instruments!

Which living person do you most admire, and why?

Can I have two shots at this?

The first being the expected famous person - Desmond Tutu - for his terrific composure and sense of humour through the terrible times in South Africa and after the end of apartheid heading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The second is my husband Martyn - no matter what he wants to do he makes his decision and follows a programme of learning, until he has achieved a very high standard - be it learning to speak Welsh, sailing, or playing a musical instrument. Also for his dedication to spiritual growth, he will not let anything interfere with this, and is disciplined and meditates every day. I think this is an essential tool which he uses to deal with the stresses of nursing in an intensive care unit.

What is your most treasured possession?

My dog Gwenann, a Lurcher we brought home from the Dogs Trust at the age of 8, she's now 14. I would never have chosen a big dog and as she was quite nervous back then, I did think we'd made a big mistake at first. Martyn was right, however, and she settled well to living with us, and we adore her!

What do you owe your parents?

A huge amount, they taught me the value of learning and an appreciation of books, music and theatre, to be courteous but stand up for what you believe in.

What are the values that guide your life?

Fair play and honesty, treat everyone as an individual and try to see their point of view.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

It has to be chocolate. I put the guilt down to being a woman rather than a Dietitian however!

What keeps you awake at night?

I think of all the support I have in my life from my family and dear friends and wonder how I would cope without that.

What is your biggest personal or professional strength?

I think I am very calm on the whole and can think through an issue logically before putting forward a point of view.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

A happy home life.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

It's not a rehearsal.

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 13th May 2011)

1. Resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby

The resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby from the EC, following his election as Mayor of Leicester, was received with regret. Peter was thanked for his contribution to the work of the EC since its establishment, including a lengthy period as Convenor. It was agreed to institute a process for the co-option of a new EC member in July 2011.

2. Strategic Priorities

The meeting considered the feedback received at the Annual Meetings to the presentation of the Strategic Priorities and agreed a process for the appointment of strategic group leaders and recruitment of group members by mid-June 2011.

3. Ministerial Students Fund

The current and likely future demands upon the Ministerial Students Fund were considered and it was agreed to encourage current and new supporters – congregations, districts and individuals – to make contributions to build up the Fund. The Ministerial Fellowship was thanked for its generous donation of £5,000.

4. Appointment of Convenor

Rev Martin Whitell was appointed as EC Convenor for the forthcoming year.

5. New members

The two new members of the EC – Rev John Clifford and Mr Robert Ince – participated in their first meeting and completed their induction.

Rev John Clifford

Co-option of Member of the General Assembly Executive Committee

The EC is seeking applications for a co-opted member to fill the vacant position following the resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby. The co-opted member will serve from July 2011 until after the Annual Meetings in 2013. The same criteria for an election nomination process will apply.

Applications are sought from Full, Honorary and Associate Members of the General Assembly and quota-paying members of constituent congregations. Skills and knowledge required are in the areas of

Leadership; Strategy development; Communications; Decision making; Representation; Financial awareness; Team working.

Confidentiality, where necessary, about Executive Committee business is a general requirement.

In addition candidates should:

Demonstrate 3 years active commitment to the Unitarian community.

Be in sympathy with the Objects of the General Assembly

They should not be:

A student in training for the Unitarian ministry

A close family member of anyone employed by the General Assembly

Applicants should submit a one page cv to Derek McAuley, General Assembly Chief Officer, at dmcauley@unitarian.org.uk setting how their experience and skills are relevant to the post.

Applications must be received by 8th July 2011 to enable consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 15th-16th July 2011. For further information about the role please contact Derek McAuley on 020 7240 2384.

Rev John Clifford

UNITARIAN MUSIC SOCIETY

During February half-term (Wed 23rd–Fri 25th) my sister Isabelle and I attended another UMS conference at the Nightingale Centre. We have always gone to the conference in August, and were expecting this one to be quite similar. But it really wasn't. The three-day conference, 'Catching Heaven in a Note', was not as formal as the August one, which is a rush to get all your notes and singing voices accurate: in February there were no extracts from a set work to prepare for.

In the first session, led by David Dawson, our four-part choir sang hymns from the purple hymn book and a Latin piece. We really just got to know our musical community. Another session that day, well *night*, was 'World Notes' led by Jo Rogers. I adored this session. We sang through little songs, eight lines at the most, but in different languages. There were songs from Japan, Israel, Ethiopia and India – and, of course, some in English as well. We found the English the easiest by far!! My favourite was the Japanese tune. It was called 'Sakura' (Cherry Blossoms) and it had the most haunting but sweet little tune. That night Isabelle and I took the epilogue. It was all about colours, and, even if I do say so myself, it was very good.

The next day we had to be up early to start at 8.30! Well early - but some of us (*cough...Isabelle...cough*) didn't get the 'up' part. The first session was about Indian music and we got split into groups and made our own Indian music. Chiming together on off and on beats. One group were just using stones and xylophone, it was most effective. We then had 'Spiritual Spirituals' with Josh Johnston. I have to admit, I still do not know what Spirituals are, but we sang together and made a lovely sound. So I'm sure whatever we were trying to achieve we achieved it. Even if it was trying to get the basses to sing in time!

After lunch we had a choice of where we wanted to go. I played my recorder and then did some chamber music on my flute. I'm glad the flute is my first instrument and not recorder!

The 'ad hoc' concert that night went a little over time, only by an hour or so! But it was wonderful, not just singing and playing but stories and poems and little jokes as well. And of course a Joyce Grenfell sketch from Joan! The epilogue taken by Marcie McGaughey was very relaxing and set us up nicely for bed.

Friday, the last day, started with us moving out of our rooms, packing our suitcases, getting to the first session in plenty of time. Or, for me and Isabelle, throwing everything in our suitcase, and getting to the first session, 'Persuasive Percussion' led by Richard Merritt, bang on time!

Richard talked us through percussion instruments from other cultures and how they could be used.

We then split into groups and took a hymn from the purple hymnbook and put our music to compliment the words. Funny thing was, another group did the exact same thing, with the same text! There were two other groups as well, and they were amazing. They took actual hymns and put drums and shakers, and so on, in at different times, while singing and counting. It sounded great.

The last event of the conference was a service of worship. I think that it was such a good idea. Helen Merritt took different hymns and songs that we had sung throughout the conference for us to sing in it. She also printed out little quotes about music, they were passed around and each person took one and read it out. Isabelle and I did a clarinet and flute duet and David Shaw did a reading. It was the best way to end a conference, and a fabulous conference at that.

Elizabeth Rosenberg

SENIOR WEEKEND AT GREAT HUCKLOW

On the 1st–3rd of April I was happy to attend my second Senior Weekend. The theme was ‘Soap Operas’ and throughout the weekend we had sessions about *soaps*—how they impacted on us; what message they sent to the world. We also had to think if any of them paralleled with our own lives. Personally, I don’t watch soap operas, but I know that some major happenings of soaps have never happened in *my* life...a train has never fallen on my road, and the pub at the end of it has never burnt down, or ever been the place where fisticuffs at dawn has been held. But as for the minor things?—Well maybe my life so far *has* been interjected with soap opera storylines. The sessions ended with us having to make our own soaps. All of them were fantastic, and hilarious and utterly enjoyable to watch.



One of my favourite parts of the weekends has always been the walk to Eyam. Maybe even more so this year as I talked to different people and made more friends. But this year something else overrode the walk. Nearly every ‘Inters’, an Inter-weekender will get too old and will have to move up to Seniors. And this year, on the obstacle course outside the Nightingale Centre, the Inters crossed the bridge, quite literally, to Seniors. Not going to lie! - it was the cutest thing ever! When the Inter got to our end of the bridge, a Senior gave them a little welcome. This Senior Weekend one of us got too old and moved up to BUYAN (17-35 year-olds). But instead of just crossing the bridge, he had to complete the whole obstacle course. As Sarah Atkinson put it, ‘because an obstacle course is what his life is going to be from now.’ I think that most of the Seniors just saw it as an excuse to hope that he fell off and made a fool of himself...!

I often wonder how the next Senior Weekend is going to top the one before it. Somehow it always does, and it keeps me coming back for more.

Elizabeth Rosenberg

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Recipe for Joy

This dish is surely worth sampling to taste true happiness :

Take - two heaped cups of patience

One heart full of love

Two handfuls of generosity

A dash of laughter

One head full of understanding.

Sprinkle generously with kindness

Add plenty of faith, and mix well.

Spread over a period of a lifetime and serve everyone you meet.

Taken from the Sunday Express.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Having been born in 1946 the only thing I had planned for 2011 was to become a *pensioner* -which I achieved in April- and reduce my working day to around 8 hours, with the aim of becoming a better husband and grandfather – not a difficult task to achieve.

To become President of the SEWUS, a position I had great reservations in accepting, was not in the plan. I do not see myself as a front man. I am always happier, and hopefully more effective, working objectively behind the scenes.

On discussing my reservations with Keith Lewis-Jones, I was told I would have to be nice to people – a difficult task for an outspoken Arian, but I will try. I will not be as nice as Sarah, who has done an excellent job as President during the last two years.

Whenever I produced an AGM report as District Secretary I always looked at the list of past presidents in awe – reading down a list of names of individuals who had been pillars of the faith in South East Wales. I am the seventh president to come from Hen Dŷ Cwrdd chapel Cefncoed but the frightening thing is that I knew *five* of them, and upon reflection I *did* meet the earliest of them as a young child.

I had not planned to be a Unitarian quiz question – *'Who is the only president of the SEWUS (apart from the first) never to have been vice president?'* But when it became evident that Paul David would be hospitalized for at least a part of his term of office, it was a privilege and an honour to deputise for Paul as and when needed. Paul was a person and a Unitarian for whom I had a lot of time.

He was a great communicator, and taught us all the value of the punch-line in a sermon. Who can forget the Pentreclwydau cuckoos? or the Aberdare Special School bus trip to Tenby, when Paul, using the jaunt as a geography lesson, asked the class, "How do we get to Tenby?"

Expecting no answers he would then tell them, "Well, from Aberdare we go to Hirwaun, then down the Glynneath Bank to Pont Walby and on via Neath, Swansea and Carmarthen." Hardly had the question been set, when one lad shot his arm up saying, "Please sir, I know how you get to Tenby." Somewhat surprised, Paul said, "Well go on then, tell us." "Well Sir," came the response, "1B, 2B, 3B, 4B,...."

And those of us who attended the carol service at Swansea cannot help but recall with fond memory Paul's reading of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales*—you only had to close your eyes (which I often do in a service) and you could be on Cwmdonkin Drive throwing snowballs at the cats.

Paul and I shared a lot in common: a social conscience - but from opposite ends of the socialist spectrum; inveterate smokers – although, thankfully, I gave up early enough; and of course a love of sport. Most importantly we shared a deep wish to see Unitarianism not only survive, which is our immediate task, but also flourish, and Paul's efforts as Secretary at Highland Place during its anniversary celebrations are already beginning to bear fruit.

I trust I can step into Paul's shoes and serve the faith, but we *all* have a lot of difficult choices. The poor attendance at the Nottage AGM was proof, if proof is needed, of the weak and complacent state of Unitarianism in SE Wales. The excellent seminar by Karen Hanley on Leadership was very professionally presented and thought provoking - even to EC cynics like myself who had vowed never to flip a Unitarian Flip Chart again.

Hopefully I can in some small way aspire to the words of John Quincy Adams who said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more, you are a leader."

My aim, like that of Paul David, will be Growth – everything that is not growing is 'dying'. We are surely mistaken to look for answers and growth from the EC; they have identified, badged and re-badged the problems. Growth must now come from our individual actions in each church and meeting house, inspired by our leadership as individuals, overcoming the complacency that lies within many of our congregations.

Phil Griffiths

ABERDARE

Having the General Assembly Meetings at Swansea University this year, offered a not-to-be missed opportunity for any interested member of the Highland Place congregation to avail themselves of the chance to attend. The Annual General Meeting of Women's League, the Singing Festival and The Anniversary Service attracted congregational members who had never previously experienced what it was like to take part in such a meeting, as well as those who were 'long-standing' attendees. The representatives from South Wales who had been involved with the advanced planning of the event certainly succeeded in giving it a 'Welsh Flavour' and creating a friendly, welcoming, atmosphere for

which the inhabitants of The Principality are renowned.

The All Present/Membership Service conducted by Rev Eric Jones, took place in May with 30 people present. It was lovely to see families of three generations sitting together. The Service deviated slightly from the usual structure which is traditional at Highland Place to a more informal style of content and presentation to suit the occasion which everyone appreciated.

Our Wayside Pulpit outside the church has been in a sorry state for some time and following a committee discussion, in which it was proposed that the possibility of acquiring a new Wayside Pulpit be explored, prices and designs were quickly accessed via the internet. As it turned out the cost of such a venture was way beyond what anyone had ever imagined. However all was not lost as Tony Foster offered to have a look at the pulpit to assess the possibility of repair. The result, an expertly restored Wayside pulpit, with three display panels. Two with Perspex covers, to protect displayed items from the weather and a central panel which will have to be sign-written.

Celia Evans and Elwyn Lloyd are still in Aberdare Hospital and we send them our good wishes. I recently paid a very brief visit to see Celia who was in the Physio Department at the time. Celia was her usual cheerful self, always pleased to see people and having a joke about her exercise regime describing it as "a ride on the big dipper".

Very recently a revised Constitution for Highland Place was unanimously adopted at a special meeting which had been arranged to discuss it. It is understood that there is a possibility in the future that the Government may introduce legislation which will require us to tighten-up our constitution further, but for the moment, what we have will suffice.

Those of us who attended the John Rely Beard lecture given by Rev Eric Jones found it an interesting mix of retrospective reflections and prospective insights, interspersed with many touches of humour. It was an enjoyable occasion from which much could be learned about the necessity for adaptability "working outside your circle" within Unitarian Ministry.

It is with regret that we heard of the death of a long standing member of Highland Place. Nesta Morgan died at Kingston upon Thames on May 30th at the age of 94 years. She had been a Deputy Head of an Infants' School at Hirwaun and she was a generous supporter of the church even though she was now living with her sister at Kingston. The funeral was at Kingston Crematorium on June 9th, the Rev Eric Jones officiating. She is survived by a sister, Betty and brother, Stuart.

Ella Lewis-Jones

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Our annual Spring Fayre was held at Highland Place schoolroom on 2nd April. Over £500 was raised, and a big thank you must go to all members of our Women's League for all their hard work, preparing for and serving on the day.

Early in April Rev Eric Jones took myself, Hazel Jones and Barbara Hughes to Swansea University to have a look at the room which was to be used for the Quiet Room for the GA. It was a daunting prospect at first to envisage what we could do to transform the room. It was a large room, with curtains hanging off their hooks, not all the lights working and a lot of chairs and audio visual equipment all around the room. Back at Aberdare we discussed what we would do to transform the room. A lot of preparatory work was done and we headed off to Swansea on 14th April, with a car full of plants, ornaments, posters, books, magazines, CD player, bottles of Welsh mineral water and even a jigsaw.



The Quiet Room (showing just one portion of the décor)

Photo: Ella Lewis-Jones

Unfortunately, Barbara was unable to join us due to illness, which was disappointing after all the hard work she had done. Thankfully, Anne Jones stepped in to help. A very busy afternoon ensued. At one point Hazel was left on her own for over an hour as Anne and I had to attend a 'Unitarian Helper' training session. The hard work resulted in a room to be proud of. The comments written in the visitors' book were delightful and much appreciated, with some stating that it was the best Quiet Room ever. Well done girls!

On Saturday 16th April a bus was arranged to take members of Cefn Coed and Highland Place to Oystermouth for the morning, and the afternoon was spent at the GA in Swansea for the Women's League meeting. National President, Dilys Evans gave her report, and a cheque for £8,500, raised through the Project, was presented to John Hewardine. Barbara Clifford was installed as the new National President. I would like to thank all those who attended as it was important to have a good turn out as the GA was in Wales. This year's Women's League project is Combat Stress—this is a charity that helps ex-servicemen and women who need psychological help and support.

Usual meetings have been held at League including gardening tips, quizzes, a talk on the Plantagenets, and trips have been planned.

Love to all.
Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

In April we were pleased to welcome the Archdruid, T James Jones whose inspiring talk was enjoyed by members of the congregation, visitors and friends.

A small committee from the congregation has continued to prepare to advertise for a part-time Development Officer. However, this plan has been put on temporary hold when it was discovered that the advertisement for a joint Minister was still active on the Ministerial Vacancies List. Should there be no enquiry from that advertisement by the end of July, it will be withdrawn and Cardiff will proceed with its plan for a Development Officer.

We were pleased to welcome Gwyn Pritchard into membership of our congregation and delighted that Gwyn has agreed to serve as a committee member. He will bring much to our deliberations.

A new Children's Sunday Club/Group will begin on Sunday 5th June. The leaders will be Diana Bianchi and Sarah Boyce and the children will meet on the afternoon of each first Sunday of the month. We wish them well and the children and their families will be invited to attend the District Rally on the first Sunday in July.

Sarah Boyce continues to attend the National REvolution Course designed to provide religious education to children and young people.

For the past six weeks our pianist and loyal member, Lyn Davies has been in hospital. Lyn has had open heart surgery but is now slowly improving and each day feels a little stronger. She has been overwhelmed by the amount of good wishes she has received and sends her thanks to all who have expressed them. Get well soon Lyn, we miss you!

We are indebted to Anne Bunford for stepping in whilst Lyn has been in hospital and for playing the piano at our Sunday evening services. It is good to see Anne back among us.

The financial commitment of Church Members was discussed at our Annual General Meeting in May. The rules of membership include the possible methods of payment for membership, (currently set at £50 per year) and a reminder that this must be paid to remain a member and be able to vote at congregational meetings. In addition, membership will be reviewed after each January and before the AGM when the committee can enter or remove a name from the Register of Members.

From a Navajo Indian Night Chant Ceremony

Happily on a trail of pollen may I walk. Happily may I walk. May it be beautiful before me, behind me, above me, below me. May it be beautiful all around me.

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Our recent visit to GA Annual Meetings at Swansea to attend the AGM of the Women's League was a very interesting experience. We met old friends and made new ones. As one member put it, 'it was good to be able to put a face to names read about in League letters.'

We spent the morning browsing shops and having lunch before arriving at the university campus to attend the League meeting. Following the meeting we were able to briefly visit a few of the interesting display areas before tea and cakes, which were gratefully received.

Vera Tomsett, Margaret Edwards and I also attended the Cymanfa Ganu on the next day. We enjoyed ourselves and loved the children and their beautiful singing.

We are now busy organising the Women's League service on 5th June. The service will feature some personal memories and mementos that hold a special meaning for us and include our favourite hymns and readings.

Gwen Everrit

GA MEETINGS AT SWANSEA

With the Annual Meetings being held relatively 'on our doorstep' Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was well represented at Swansea. In addition to a designated Delegate and two official Day-Visitors a number of ladies attended the Women's League meeting on Saturday. A further contingent attended the Cymanfa Ganu and the Anniversary Service at the Brangwyn Hall on Sunday afternoon—one of whom has since remarked, "It made me feel really proud to be a Unitarian."

NEW DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Several members attended the District AGM at Nottage on 21st May and were pleased to be present when one of our congregation, Phil Griffiths accepted the office of District President. We congratulate Phil on his election and look forward to his leadership.

BEQUEST

We appreciate the generosity of the late Florence Jones who left a bequest of £1,000 to the chapel in her will. Flo was the niece of the late D B Jones, whom older members of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd will recall as one-time chapel Vice-Chairman.

HEN Dŷ CWRDD WEB-PAGE

After service on 29th May, thanks to Keith Lewis-Jones and his laptop, members who have yet to become a 'silver surfer' were given the opportunity to view the Hen Dŷ Cwrdd page on the District website. We now hope they will tell their families, friends, neighbours, ...'everybody'. It might seem irksome to key in www.ukunitarians.org.uk/sewus/cefncoed.htm but, once it's logged as a 'favourite', all future visits require only a single 'click'.

FUNERAL

On 19th May, Rev Eric Jones officiated at the funeral of Mr William John Davies, aged 87 years. Billy and his late wife, chapel member Marie, had ten children and Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was filled to capacity with family and friends for the funeral service. Rev Eric Jones also conducted the service at Llwydcoed Crematorium.

IN OUR THOUGHTS

We miss those members who, for reasons of illness or infirmity, are unable to attend service – in particular, Eirwen Evans, who is a resident at Oakwood Nursing Home, Aberdare. We send our best wishes to them all.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Rose Owen's son, daughter-in-law and family moved from Swindon to live in Porthcawl, leaving behind them friends and neighbours. One of their neighbours who they were very fond of died, and because they were unable to attend her funeral they came to one of our services together to pay tribute to her. Frances, the eldest daughter told us of her life. Her name was May, and she had never married because her fiancé was killed in the war. She was a schoolteacher, loved by all, who died aged 90 and obviously would be very much missed by those lucky enough to have known her. The family bought flowers for the chapel as a tribute to her. As a congregation we were touched by their gesture and I am sure she would have been looking down on it all with great pride. God Bless May.

We were quite a gathering on Easter Sunday, and are grateful to Julianne for taking our service, and to Delydd McAdam for playing the organ for us.

Sadly we have seen very little of Annette and David Marsh for the past few months because they have both been poorly. Dave has now returned to work, and we hope they will be back to good health soon, we miss them.

Gwladys Howel has also been unable to join us every Sunday, as is usual, because of a troublesome leg, but she is always with us in spirit and in our hearts.

We had a really lovely surprise recently when Harry and Sam Taylor King brought their 3 week old brother Tomos to meet us. What a lovely family they are.

We are grateful to Alastair Rosenberg who conducted a service for us recently, while his daughter Isabelle played the organ, well done both of you.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

Since the last newsletter our congregational life has continued with its usual Sunday Services. However the big event was the General Assembly Meetings at Swansea. We send our congratulations and good wishes to Lis Dyson-Jones on her appointment as Vice President of the General Assembly and for the busy years ahead. We thank our members Hilda Dumbleton, Stephen Wilson, Lynn and Margaret Evans for representing us when taking part in various ceremonies. Julianne Morgan was unlucky when a taxi ran over her foot when she was on her way to the Women's League meeting. She still attended the meeting but her foot has been painful and needed binding up for weeks. Thankfully it is slowly improving.

For me the big occasion was the Sunday afternoon meeting in the Brangwyn Hall. There was that buzz of voices, a sense of excitement and a feeling of anticipation before the curtain goes up in a theatre. We were not disappointed because it was a musical feast. The presentation of various paintings of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday adding a touch of drama. It was a delight to see so many young people on the stage. Many thanks to everyone who contributed Welsh cakes to be enjoyed during the tea break before the service which was the second part of the afternoon. How lovely it was to see Lewis Rees on the platform fulfilling a promise he had made to read at the service in spite of his health problems and feeling so poorly in the days just before. We wish him a good recovery and hope to see him taking services again in the not too distant future.

We thank our members who attended the District AGM at Nottage and participated in an interesting programme.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

Y GRAIG

Trebanos and District Mixed Choir

Some 43 years ago the SE Wales Musical Union held a Cymanfa Ganu in the Graig chapel, Trebanos. In preparation for the Cymanfa, the chapel's organist, Lawrence Bowen, started to practise the congregation each Sunday evening after service. Practices went so well that after the Cymanfa had taken place several people asked Lawrence to continue and this was the birth of the Graig Choral Society which quickly became the Trebanos and District Mixed Choir.

Lawrence never had any qualms about handing out difficult and challenging music. To belong to the choir has added another dimension to the lives of many of us. It has been an education, a challenge, a comfort. He is now about to retire from the choir, though not from playing the magnificent Binns organ in the Graig chapel. Lawrence has made a significant contribution to this community and deserves our appreciation and thanks. Diolch yn fawr.

Marian Littlepage

The Forty-Third Annual Concert of Trebanos Mixed Choir was held at St Mary's Church, Clydach on Sunday, 22nd May. As Choir President and Graig-chapel member, I marked Lawrence's retirement with these words:

"Lawrence has significantly contributed to the musical life of our valley for nearly half a century and he has achieved this by his cheerfulness, enthusiasm, hard work and his love of classical music.

We have been fortunate in having a musical director who always found time to improve the choir's performances, as exemplified by two successive first prize awards at the Royal National Eisteddfodau and by his choice of oratorios by well known classical composers whose works he has never repeated more than twice during the life span of the choir.

The choir has always been a huge time commitment for him and indeed for his whole family, and we wish to acknowledge the support they have given him since the choir was formed in 1968."

And, on an entirely different tack....

I recently read a short poem by Richard Constable, the great grandson of the well known English painter, John Constable, which you might like. It reads as follows,

Approach things with an open mind,
All have gifts to which we're blind;
Be sensitive to others' cries,
Others too are also wise.

Colin Morgan

GELLIONNEN

So far this year we have watched an ever changing display of flowers blooming over by the long boundary wall of the chapel. Daffodil and crocus were replaced by primrose and bluebell, and now we have foxgloves.

The Passion Play set over Easter-time in Aberavon by the well known actor Michael Sheen also had a number of other well known people taking part. Our own Josie Nemeth and Hywel Jones were in the band!

Sandor Nemeth managed to arrange for the removal of an incredibly heavy log burner left in our kitchen area. This has freed up some much needed kitchen space.

Our windows should all have been repaired and replaced by now, but unfortunately the carpenter detailed for the job has had a stroke. Alternative arrangements have now been made and our very good wishes go to the original carpenter for a steady recovery.

We were well represented at the GA service in Swansea's Brangwyn Hall and all much enjoyed it. It was particularly good to see Lewis Rees taking part.

Marian Littlepage

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Items for publication should be sent by to:-

Ken Morgan, 25c Holford Street, Cefn Coed y Cymer, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2RW. Tel: 01685 379016.

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

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