



November 2009

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 6 December – District Service of Readings and Carols – hosted by Cardiff Unitarians at the Friends' Meeting House, Charles Street, Cardiff at 3pm, followed by a shared tea.

AN ANSWER TO YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT PROBLEM?

We are pleased to announce the publication of **The Good Ground** by Rev J Eric Jones. Eric's book contains colour photographs of all twenty-two Unitarian churches currently open in Wales, together with brief background notes on each. Price: £5 available from Eric, at 14 Clifton Street, Aberdare, CF44 7PB

PRESIDENTS' VISIT TO SOUTH EAST WALES

Visit of the President of The General Assembly and The National President of Women's League



Jim Corrigan, Sarah Boyce, Dilys Evans, Mary Wightman, Rev Bob Wightman, Rev Eric Jones (holding a copy of *The Good Ground*)

Photo by Keith Lewis-Jones

It is not unusual for couples to individually hold a high office within the Unitarian movement, but it is fairly uncommon to do so simultaneously. The Reverend Bob Wightman and his wife Mary currently hold the positions of President of the General Assembly and National President of Women's league.

At the meeting, which took place on the 24th October at Highland Place, the Presidents, and those representing all the congregations in South East Wales, were warmly welcomed by Sarah Boyce, President of South East Wales.

It was Mary Wightman who spoke first. Mary drew the analogy between the needs of League Members and the different flowers and shrubs in the garden. Mary explained that just as some plants will thrive under certain conditions, whilst others need different conditions to flourish, the way in which Women's League is organised needs to reflect the individual needs and talents of all its members. Above all, Mary suggested Women's League should be enjoyable, somewhere where we can all have a bit of harmless fun.

The recent decision of the Central Committee of Women's League to hold their Annual General Meeting in a different venue to the General Assembly was explained. It seems that the Central Committee of Women's League was only offered a one hour slot in the morning by the GA. During this time they would be expected to hold the Annual General Meeting, make the presentation to the current charity and allow a representative of the forthcoming charity an opportunity to speak. Strong representations have been made to the GA in an attempt to secure a more appropriate time slot.

The Reverend Eric Jones is not new to the publishing world and his new book "The Good Ground" was launched at the meeting. Eric related that the book had taken a little while to produce owing to the fact that much of the first draft and many of the photographs had been lost when his computer had crashed earlier this year. The book features all the 22 Unitarian Churches which are currently open in the whole of Wales and also indicates their location. Copies are available at £5 each.

The Rev Bob Wightman began by explaining that his role as GA President was to be a link between the General Assembly, the District Committees and individual churches. He described his role as that of an Ambassador, there to listen to people and feed this information back to Essex Hall. As with many things in life it was suggested that, "you only get out what you put in", and that this applied to the Unitarian movement. Later, during Tea, I had a chance to speak with Bob and I asked him what advice, based on his experience of being President, he would give to the next President, his reply was that it was best not to be too outspoken and important to listen.

To mark the occasion the Rev Bob Wightman and Mary were presented with two small gifts from South East Wales.

The ceremony was also attended by Jim Corrigan who is the Link Person for South East Wales with the General Assembly Executive. I only had a short discussion with Jim and I found that he was interested in the Unitarian Community in South East Wales and keen to be of help.

The tea was provided by the Highland Place Women's League, with ample homemade food for everyone present.

There were many people involved in the organisation of the above event and Sarah Boyce drew attention to this and thanked everyone for their assistance.

Ella Lewis-Jones

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

The interview in this issue is with Dilys Evans.

Dilys is a member of Highland Place Church, Aberdare, and is currently Branch President, District President and National President Elect for Women's League. She is also Vice Chairperson of Cynon Valley U3A.

Born in Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire, Dilys attended Ebbw Vale Grammar School. She studied English, French and German at Cardiff University, during which time she spent a year in Titisee/Neustadt in the upper Blackforest. At University she attained a B.A. (Hons.) and a Dip. Ed.

Dilys taught at Aberdare Girls School for 28 years, where her subjects were German and French. She likes all types of music especially Baroque and Church.

A kind, empathetic person with a well tuned sense of humour Dilys also has a special gift for finding the right words to fit every occasion.

Ella Lewis- Jones

When were you happiest?

At Christmas supper when I was a child. My parents and I would walk two miles through the snow to grandmother's. There we would meet up with the rest of the family. I loved the annual board games, being teased by my uncles, and the wonderful, red gleam of the adults' port. Not so happy was the return home. My father was not a great drinker and would insist on wearing the "Hitler" moustache from his Christmas cracker and saying, "Good Evening, vicar, to all the men we passed.

What is your greatest fear?

Losing my independence through a stroke or blindness.

What is your earliest memory?

Two, around the same time and in the same street.

1. I was three and was coming home from the photographers with my mother. I was wearing a pale yellow sprigged dress and new black patent shoes. I clearly remember my mother lifting me onto a window sill for a neighbour to admire my shoes. Fortunately, I do not remember that before she got me home I dived into another neighbour's garden and into a pile of soot from a freshly swept chimney. Apparently I was then black patent all over.

2. In the same year I remember coming out of my grandmother's garden, being knocked down by a bicycle and then being comforted "Welsh-fashion" in a brown checked shawl.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

There are two which seem to be linked – arrogance and a lack of sensitivity.

What is your most treasured possession?

A gold chain from my parents. This is very closely followed by two black cats, sisters. Binki is the elegant sophisticated one and Dinkie, (a midget and like a dachshund in shape), the eternal kitten and terrorist.

What is your most unappealing habit?

I eat everything in sight but I am working on it. If you have noticed any others, please send your observations on a postcard to

What do you owe your parents?

Everything, their love and friendship. The comfort of their patient support and lack of pressure. They gave their care, time and goods to others and respected people of all appearances and stations. Family and neighbours knew they could count on them.

What advice, if any, would you give now to your former self?

Worry about what matters, e.g. your dealings and relationships with others. Do not worry about your outer self. There is always someone worse than you. (I Hope!!!)

What has been your biggest disappointment?

Looking back, no disappointments could have been very big. I am still here, have good friends and neighbours, have had a good career and enjoy many things.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I suppose that it was getting my B.A. (Hons.) German. To me it was a great relief – I hate tests and examinations. My parents were very proud and that pleased me. To be President Elect of the National Unitarian Women's League is, of course, also very gratifying.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

Bearing a grudge is pointless. It eats away at both parties. We are all human and have the occasional falling-out. It is much more important to be aware of the feelings of others and to show them consideration and sensitivity. To be first to smooth the ground is to display real character.

FIVE DAYS AWAY 2009...

FDA this year was held at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow on the 11th-14th August. FDA means Five Days Away. It was great fun. When we got there, we went up to our rooms put our suitcases in them and then went downstairs looking for our friends. This year's FDA had the most participants, that they have had out of all four of them. It was made up of 34 FDA-ers. It was so big that we had nine

leaders! – John Harley, Sarah Warhurst, James Barry, Claire Maddocks, Emma Lowe, Lorna Hill, Andrew Usher, Stephen Lingwood and Andrea (from Bristol).

The theme of this week was 'Leadership Skills'. Basically, it was just building on your own leadership skills and sometimes working as a team. When you got there you had a lot of free time just to settle in and meet up with your friends, especially if you're like me and you only see your mates from FDA once or twice a year. We then had a lot of parachute and 'getting to know each other' games, e.g. People Bingo, which Isabelle and her friends won. We brought our own packed lunches, and then we had dinner provided for us at 6 I think. From 7.30 'til 9.30 we had the first leadership skills session. In the first session we talked about bedtimes and things at first, but then we talked about what qualities a leader should have. Then we thought if any of these qualities were bad or good. Then we had to think of a good leadership skill that we have, which is more difficult than you would think because, as Sarah says, "We are very good at thinking of all the qualities that we would *like*, qualities we *don't* have. Our problem is that we do not think enough about all the fantastic qualities that we *do* have."

After that we had Credo Groups. Credo Groups are a small group of people (in FDA we are all around the same age in our Credo Group) you are also assigned one or two leaders. Our leaders were Andrew Usher and James Barry. There are five Credo Groups and each night after Credo Groups they have to lead the Circle Time. Circle Time is a winding down time at the end of the day to get you ready for bed. You just chill out really. On that night Sarah's group was doing the Circle Time and we all had to get into partners and give each other little arm massages to take all the tension out of them. It was okay and a bit funny. Then we all had to lay on the floor and Joe talked us through this calming, winding down, thing. He told us that there was this lovely, happy feeling going through our feet, legs and body, and basically filling us up. It felt so lovely. He did a really good job. Then we all went up to bed and got very hyper again!

The next day was our day out. It's normally on Wednesday but this year, for some reason that I do not know, it was on the Tuesday. It was a full day of abseiling and mountain biking. The abseiling was awesome; they had two drops, a 65ft one and a 90ft one. The bottom of the 65ft is quite rocky and the bottom of the 90ft is... a river! There is someone on the ground pulling you across so that you don't go in the river. It's so scary it's unbelievable, pretty lush scenery though. That was on the 90ft drop. On the 65ft one I got two fingers stuck in the figure 8 and then when I got to the bottom I couldn't open my carabiner! Eventually John and I gave up trying to open it. I just took off the harness that I was wearing and the man at the top pulled it up. It was very funny to look at!

The 90ft drop was scary as heck. Well, I thought that it was anyway. As I was going down I was looking at a tree to calm myself down. I looked down, saw this drop, and nearly screamed. I turned round to look at the tree and the tree had disappeared. Obviously not *really*, but because I kept going down while looking down the tree was above me. I just closed my eyes then.

In the afternoon was the mountain biking which I hated. I couldn't get the bike going. The seats were like rock, and then my thumbs numbed out, I only felt *those* two days after the experience. Never again. When we got back to the Nightingale Centre we had Dinner and then we had another Leadership session. In this one Isabelle and Ben had to be two different leaders, Isabelle was a very relaxed leader and Ben was a very dictatorish leader. We had to see how the two groups worked with these types of leaders. The challenge was to try and make a chalice out of straws. Isabelle's group got more done and worked together better, whereas Ben's group started to rebel – by throwing straws at Ben: Bless him. After that it was Credo Group and Circle Time. That Circle Time was Lorna's group. In that they had a big piece of Paper and they had painted LOVE on it. We all had post-it notes on which we had to put what *we* thought love was, and then we had to stick our post-it note on the LOVE poster. Next, we all had to pick out our favourite meaning from the poster. My favourite was '*Being naked and unafraid*'. After that was free time until bed.

After breakfast on Wednesday we had the third leadership session. We were all put into groups and we had to pick up a bamboo stick with each of us only putting one finger from each hand under the bamboo stick. Then we were put into two groups and had to talk about the exercise. I thought that it was utterly pointless and we were all tired from the activities of the day before, and why? Why do something like that first thing in the morning?! After that we had a bit of free time and then we decided if we wanted to be in Sarah's group for song writing or Emma and Claire's group for Dancing. I was in Sarah's. We were making up a song for the beginning of GA. Our GENRE was 'Beachy'. We didn't really get very far but we had a lot of good ideas and a lot of fun. Then it was dinner, and following this we had the fourth leadership session of active listening.(2 sessions in one day!) We had an inner circle of chairs and an outer circle of chairs. Everybody sat, with somebody facing them, and Sarah gave us a topic to talk about to our partner, e.g. your biggest achievement this year. You had to talk for two minutes and the other person actively listened. Then you swapped roles so you listened while they talked – but it was a different topic – and then the person in the outer circle moved. I thought that it was fantastic just to have someone listening to you, because obviously you talk to a lot of people but

you don't actually think that that they are listening. But then you knew that they were because of their body language, or if they laugh at what you say etc. It felt good. After was credo and circle time. In circle time, there were lots of balloons in the middle with all of our names on them and we all picked one and wrote something about that person That was well good☺.

Thursday. We had breakfast and after we had this game called Labyrinth. Basically there was an eight by eight board taped on the floor and we had to find our way across it and only Sarah knew the way. Once we had found our way across everybody else had to; basically it was all about working together. Then Sam talked about this charity, and Tanya gave us a quick karate lesson. After that was Lunch until 2.30 when we had the walk to Eyam (think ee-mm). The itinerary said 2.30 - 4.30; I did think that they were being a bit hopeful seeing as when we got there it was five to five! When we did arrive at Eyam, we went into the shop. Then we had a decision to make: Who wanted to walk back, and who wanted get the bus back. I was one of the walkers! Obviously everybody was jumping up and down to walk, there were so many people wanting too, and not take the bus...**not!** There was a grand total of 4 walkers and 7 leaders! John said that the leaders could form a protective circle around the FDA-ers – so that we didn't get attacked or anything. I gave him a look and said, "A: Who would be walking in the middle of a lot of fields, and B: The most likely thing we would get attacked by would be sheep. I can't really see them jumping at us with machine guns!" When we got back to Hucklow I had to have a majorly quick shower, because we went out to the well-dressing. Which was alright, but a bit boring (the older generation might have got more out of it though). After was free time until 'ShowTime'. That was sooo fabbity-fab-fab-fab. It was actually hilarious. Everything from singing, to Draculas; Joyce Grenfell, to dancing; and John's ghost story, which I don't personally think was as scary as last year. After was credo and circle time. In circle time there was a package that we passed around and it had little slips of paper in it that had things like, for example, 'funniest person', and 'person you would most like to be stuck on a desert island with'. I had 'the most reliable person'.

On the last day my 'roomy' Lizzie and I were late to breakfast by about 25 minutes, after which we had to pack and things like that. We then had the last Circle Time. *Our* Circle Time! Basically, we had pieces of paper on chairs, and on the backs of chairs we had people's names and you went round and wrote on everyone's piece of paper that you wanted to write on. It was alrighty. Then we went to the trough and people who were new and leaving got water tipped on their heads! It was very, very, funny. Especially when George went to pour water on his brother Sam's head, and Sam saw him and tried to push George in! Hilarious if you ask me. After that was just saying good-bye and things. There were a few tears, but not many, and there were a couple of very good hugs; and then, there was my dad... Well, he was trying to get us to leave. After half an hour, when we were finally in the car, my mum went, "I'm just going to the toilet, Alastair." Then my sister went too! It was madness! Everybody had been watching us to see if we would leave, so they were all in hysterics. We did finally get home, though. I was happy to be home, but nowhere is Hucklow - it's where all my really good friends are: and hopefully some new ones – if any of you are coming next year!

Elizabeth Rosenberg, aged 13. Nottage Chapel

This August I found myself at Hucklow again. This time for my third FDA (Five Days Away). This year our theme for the week was 'building everyday leadership skills'. As always, we had games to start off with, such as the parachute game, to help us get to know each other. I thought that the theme of leadership was a good one. It was very helpful, especially as I don't consider myself as a natural leader!

The activities that we did were very interesting apart from in the morning when I was too tired from the late nights to fully participate!

On the second day of FDA we had an activity day. I have to say it was my least favourite part of the week. But it did get us out of the centre for the day. In the morning we went mountain biking. Some of the more sporty people (mainly the boys!) managed to go the whole 20 miles along the trail. And a few of my friends even did an extra 3 miles! I didn't quite manage that! I did about 10 miles, and I thought my legs were going to fall off! I also couldn't sit on the floor for the rest of the day! In the afternoon we went abseiling. It was AWFUL (in my opinion). I found it so scary, I cried and screamed all the way down, and I also started to have a small panic attack half-way down!

The Welsh contingent (and John Harley) at FDA proudly displaying Y Ddraig Goch



Isabelle Rosenberg, Elizabeth Rosenberg, Rev John Harley, Carrie Boyce and Tanya Bhanaut
Photo by Alastair Rosenberg

But I'm so thankful that my friends were there, for the whole way down the 35ft bridge they kept up a constant stream of encouragement, telling me how great I was doing when I really wasn't! I realized doing that abseil how much I really appreciate them being in my life. I didn't think that I would feel proud of myself for doing it, but now, much later, I am incredibly pleased that I did it. Although I have no intention of ever doing it again!

In the evenings we had our "circle time". This is our half hour at the end of the day when we are quiet and sometimes do small activities. My favourite circle time was "pass the parcel". Inside each of the layers was a statement and we had to choose the person who best fitted the statement, give them the parcel and then they would pass it on. e.g. "most entertaining" (which is what I had!)

Next FDA will be very hard, because six of my friends left this year. So next year I will be the second oldest there! The next time I will be in Hucklow will be in November for senior weekend! See you there!

Isabelle Rosenberg, aged 16. Nottage Chapel

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Key messages following meeting held at Essex Hall on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th September 2009

The EC has approved the appointment of Derek McAuley as Chief Officer and it is anticipated that he will take up his new post before the end of the year. A strong field of applicants were interviewed before the final choice was made and Alan Ruston, who acted as observer to the process, was happy that it had taken place in a fair and just manner.

Derek, originally from Northern Ireland is the current National Treasurer and Chair of the Cross Street Chapel Trustees. He will move to London when he takes up his new post.

In the light of the new appointment, the EC has commenced the process of identifying an Honorary Treasurer to serve until election/re-election at the 2010 Annual Meetings.

We have continued to develop Action Plans and have looked realistically at our financial situation in these challenging times. The reduction in live giving is of particular concern to the EC. We have noted how this constrains new initiatives and have decided to develop packages of exciting proposals that will transform the programme of activities. This will be designed to identify the costs associated with them and the implications for the Denomination of raising the necessary money. These new initiatives will be presented at the 2010 Annual meetings to enable the denomination to make its choices and decisions.

In the challenging financial situation we find ourselves in, income has not met expectations and we have to manage our spending with great care. Priorities are being identified and the EC looks forward to meeting with Chairs of Commissions at our November meetings.

The Annual Meetings Panel is working hard in preparing and planning an innovative programme for the 2010 Nottingham meetings. Plans are also underway in preparing for the 2011 Annual Meetings, which will hopefully be held in Wales.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Recipe For Preserving Friends

Select those with round hearts.

Don't bruise with unfeeling words.

Add a heart full of the milk of human kindness and plenty of tact.

Warm with sympathy.

Don't overheat or it may ferment mischief.

Knead with oil of unselfishness but beware of jars.

Keep in a warm corner of the heart.

Years will improve the flavour of this preserve.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

A thank you to all members of churches/chapels and friends in the district who attended the visit of the National President of the General Assembly, the Rev Bob Wightman and also the President of the National Women's League, Mary Wightman on Saturday the 24th October. We also had a visit for the first time from our Link representative Jim Corrigan on this occasion. Many thanks need to be given to the Rev Eric Jones, Lis Dyson-Jones and Philip Griffiths who provided hospitality and transport to our guests as well as planning for the day. A big thank you to the congregation of Aberdare for hosting the event and to Women's League for the delicious home made tea, especially as they had baked for their Sale of Work just the week before. Thank you to Keith Lewis-Jones for taking photos at the event.

We are moving forward in the district with ministry and worship. A meeting was held for Worship Leaders on the 28th September led by the Rev Eric Jones and Lis Dyson-Jones and this was very well attended. A further meeting for Worship Leaders will be held on 30th November at the Friends Meeting House in Cardiff to take areas further such as Rites of Passage.

A group to take ministry forward called Collaborative Leadership met on 8th October and Philip Griffiths was installed as Secretary and Sarah Boyce as Chair. We met with representatives from Gellionen/Trebanos, Swansea and Wick and there was concern about how many chapels a minister could lead. It was decided at the meeting therefore that it may be more effective for Cefncoed, Aberdare and Cardiff to work together as a group so that it is more manageable for a minister in terms of workload. The chapels on the West of the district will also work together with a meeting to be convened by Lewis Rees. Representatives from Cefncoed, Aberdare and Cardiff will meet again as a group on 9th November and this group hope to work to a timescale so that we would have an advert for a minister/development officer by the end of March ready to advertise by the beginning of April. We will be preparing issues such as finance and a Person/Job specification with reference to the General Assembly publication called Guidelines for Partnership between Congregations and Ministers.

We will still all work closely together through the district and it is hoped that Lewis will act as a link between the East and West sides of the district in regards to meetings.

I close with words from Kathleen McTigue

*May the light around us guide our footsteps,
And hold us fast to the best and most righteous that we seek*

In Peace,
Sarah Boyce

ABERDARE

These are just a few items of interest which have taken place at Highland Place over the past couple of months.

A representative of Age Concern Morgannwg recently attended a Women's League meeting to inform members of the various local projects and initiatives for which Age Concern is responsible in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There was information on the drafting of wills and setting up a Power of Attorney. Members also heard of a number of financial benefits which are available and were informed that Age Concern is able to offer, free of charge, a confidential financial assessment for those who would find this helpful. Members were able to take away abundant literature on the issues covered in the session. Many thanks to Jan who made the arrangements.

Joanna Foster, who is the daughter of Joy Foster our deputy President, made a lively and interesting computer-aided presentation on the topic of Fire-setting to Women's League members. Joanna works for the City of London Fire Service and is in charge of their Fire setting Programme. This is an educational initiative which is aimed at young persons who have been involved in starting non-accidental fires. This is clearly a demanding area of work which, to date, has been reasonably successful in changing the behaviour of those youngsters who have been involved in the programme.

The Harvest Service this year was taken by a second year student from Unitarian College, Manchester, Danny Crosby. The church had been beautifully decorated and the flowers and fruit which were contributed by Cefn and Cardiff added to the effect. A modest harvest tea followed the service, when those attending had a chance to meet Danny and also catch up on local news. Danny's service contained an interesting mix of readings and choice of hymns which everyone enjoyed and appreciated.

Paul David has once again been instrumental in organising improvements to our toilet. This was an area which was in a very sad state of deterioration, not having had any attention for many years. It has now been transformed with new toilet, sink, flooring and wall tiles. Best of all is the heated towel rail (the toilet had formerly been the coldest room in Highland Place). Is it any wonder that more people seem to be using this facility?

The Annual Autumn Fayre attracted many of our usual customers. As always the cake stall was a major attraction, especially so for two youngsters who had been sent by their mother to buy a chocolate cake. The boys had previously attended our spring fair and had purchased a chocolate cake on that occasion and had clearly appreciated it. There was also a well stocked handicraft stall, Lucky Dip, surprise parcels, Handmade, Harrods look-a-like bags and numerous raffles. A worthwhile sum was raised for church funds.

The Church has, for many years, supported an educational charity entitled Zisise which is based in a very under developed area of South Africa. Nicky Lee, who comes originally from the Merthyr Area, was the founder of Zisise and she recently gave a presentation to Women's League. Being able to see, via a PowerPoint presentation, the developments and initiatives which Zisise has set up gave members a sense of satisfaction that the resources which Highland Place contributes are making a real difference. There were some beautiful shots of the majestic and unspoiled countryside in which Zisise is situated. Nicky went away with a cheque from Women's League which will be used to fund their feeding programme. Hazel Jones, our financial secretary, takes responsibility for the Zisise Project and would be pleased to receive donations which will be passed on to Zisise.

Ella Lewis-Jones

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

Although initially quite disappointed at losing the future ministry bid, members have taken a very pragmatic view and feel strongly that we need to move forward. We have, in the short term, decided to work towards achieving a joint ministry with other congregations wishing the same. However, if this process becomes protracted, we will pursue previous plans to seek single ministry for Cardiff. Two members of the church committee attended a recent joint ministry meeting and reported that a positive approach had prevailed.

A visit from the Bristol Unitarians on Sunday 18th October was a delight. Over twenty visitors enjoyed fellowship with us and a chance to share insights and ideas. The service was conducted by Sarah and Lis with tea provided by several members.

The cheese and wine party held at the home of Margaret Evans raised over £200 for the charity 'Bobath Cymru'. Those able to attend enjoyed a pleasant evening hosted warmly by Margaret.

Several members of the congregation and the Women's League attended a meeting at Highland Place, Aberdare on Saturday 24th October. This was presided over by Sarah who welcomed the GA President, Rev Bob Wightman and his wife Mary, the National President of the Women's League. This unique occasion was well attended and we were all able to listen to lively messages delivered by both speakers. This was followed by a splendid high tea, prepared by the Highland Place Women's League.

We continue to be thankful for the variety of worship delivered by a dedicated group of people and we look forward to hosting the District Christmas Rally at the Friend's Meeting House in Charles Street on the first Sunday in December. The service at 3pm will be followed by a shared tea.

Several members of the congregation have each donated £10 towards the cost of the new hymnbook 'Sing Your Faith' and under Lyn's guidance, we are beginning to learn some new tunes. The hymnbooks will be inscribed with the name of individual donors.

We continue contact with the United Nations and some members attend meetings at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff. The autumn programme includes a talk on an Islamic Woman's perspective of the UN and a discussion about the Wales Peace Institute and the joint Campaign against the Arms Trade and Côr Cochion Caerdydd.

Members

We are happy to report that Marjorie Collins is feeling much better since spending time with her nieces and a period of convalescence in Porthcawl. Alan Cohen is also feeling better and hopes to be back with us soon. Win John has not been well, but it was good to see her back with us for the visit of the Bristol Unitarians and Lyn continues to care for her sister Olwen. We send warm wishes to them all.

Ann Saalbach has now retired and is currently spending some time in the USA.

Thought for Now

'The best of us still have our aspirations for the supreme goals in life, which is so often mocked by prosperous people who like to control the world. We still believe that the world has a deeper meaning than what is apparent and that therein the human soul finds its ultimate harmony and peace. We still know that only in spiritual wealth does civilization attain its end; not in a prolific production of materials and not in the competition of intemperate power with power'.

Rabindranath Tagore

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Our annual summer outing took place recently. We visited Oak Church Farm near Hereford. We enjoyed ourselves strolling through the complex from the Butchery and garden centre to frozen fruit and the gift shop. We had a lovely meal in the restaurant before wending our way to Hay-on-Wye for afternoon tea.

We invited Ms Louise Body to address one of our meetings. She spoke about Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), which we found very interesting. Ms Body (a very apt name) demonstrated the technique on one member, helping to ease a painful shoulder; another was helped to lessen the panic attack she has on seeing a spider. We hope to have a return visit from Ms Body to speak to us on Meditation. At our most recent meeting one of our own members, Diane, came to tell us all about the marathon task she had to find her birth mother. It was a moving tale of a mission which took several years to complete, with her journey taking her to Ireland and Denmark. There were many ups and downs and a lot of expense incurred before a happy ending was attained.

What a joyful meeting took place on Saturday 24th October at Highland Place. We were privileged to hear some challenging words from GA President, Rev Bob Wightman and Women's League President, Mrs Mary Wightman. What a delightful couple they are. We shared a delicious buffet after the meeting. Many thanks to the Highland Place ladies for the wonderful food.

Gwen Everrit

HERITAGE OPEN DOORS EVENT

On the afternoons of 12th and 13th September the chapel was open to the public as part of European Heritage Weekend. Though the response was disappointing we received useful coverage in the press and on the Internet, and two of Saturday's visitors returned on the Sunday! We were pleased to welcome sisters Diana Bianchi and Thelma Hynd and included them in our tally. Strictly speaking, they were not Open-Day-visitors, but they have a family link to Rev Hathren Davies, Minister of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd (1877—1910) and they visited his grave. The occasion arose as a result of Diana taking our service – for which we thank her.

OUT AND ABOUT

Several members of our congregation have visited Highland Place recently – for the Joint Harvest Service conducted by Danny Crosby on 20th September and for the visit of two Presidents on 24th October. Both occasions were highly successful and we very much enjoyed the welcome and the hospitality provided.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

Summer holidays seem a long way in the past now, but thankfully we all returned safely and with the evenings getting darker are settling in for Winter now. The lovely Autumn has made the thought less gloomy.

Annette organised a coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Nurses, and we were delighted to send £160 to them. Thanks to all who attended and contributed in so many ways. Annette, Dave and Alastair had a much needed "sort out" of items kept for a sale, so chapel is much tidier for this, thank you.

Annette's Harvest Service was very well attended, happily with lots of children, and most of the congregation stayed for a Faith and Hope lunch afterwards.

Best wishes to you all for the Winter, keep well and happy.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

We are grateful to the Rev Eric Jones and the lay preachers who have taken the time to prepare some very interesting services and to travel to Swansea although we are few in number. Services which have questioned the way we view other people's beliefs, e.g. the resurrection. Another service focussed on the value of hymns and the statement that, 'If all the bibles were lost would our hymnbook reveal what our church stood for'. I think it does. Many of the hymns are sermons in themselves. However, Quakers do not have music in their services but Mr Arthur Saunders, a Quaker, came to us with his Unitarian hat on. (Which he left behind!). We are always pleased to see him and he joined us in celebrating Julianne's birthday. One service asked if we were like Elijah in the Second Book of Kings – being asked to do even more than previously to further our cause. Well we are trying to be involved in investigating whether partnerships with other churches in our area are a possible way forward. Have we really anything to offer a society that doesn't appear to need or want the church any more?

The highlight of every autumn is the Harvest Service. Well prepared by Julianne with guest soloist Rhiannon and her daughter Rebecca on the cornet this was a delightful service after which the harvest offerings were sold to boost the India Fund.

We live in a troubled world but one peaceful hour in church with like minded folk and music provided by Stephen is a balm to the soul.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

The gorse continues to bloom as it does throughout the year and the heather is still with us.

Lewis Rees has been sorely missed but is now back at the chapel. He is recovering from a sinus operation, not pleasant at the best of times but this also had its complications.

The Pontardawe Festival made its presence known with us in August when we had an attendance at Gellionnen of more than fifty. Thanks must go to Eirion Phillips who held things together with his usual wit and good humour. And thanks again to stalwart performers, the Nemeth family, Sandra and Lynnford Jones, Heather and Huw Pudner and a Quaker visitor who played the bodhran* and was most pleased that we sang a Sydney Carter song. At the Festival itself many of us enjoyed the sounds of Moongazer, a group in which Jamie Nemeth performs.

* *An Irish frame drum that looks like a large tambourine.*

On the Festival Sunday we had a surprise visit from Lilian and Gary Dermody and Freddie their Jack Russell terrier. The Dermody's now live in the Forest of Dean but still keep a place in their hearts for us as we do for them. Another four legged visitor that day was a dachshund who did not leave his name in our visitors' book.

Martin Edwards has fulfilled a dream of his teenage years, in September he walked along Offa's Dyke and thinks he might just do it again!

In October we were visited by Grace James – all the way from Canada. Grace had come over to attend the wedding of a granddaughter but tragically, during her stay here her son Emlyn died. Emlyn's death was sudden and unexpected. Grace actually came to service in Gellionnen after her bereavement. Our heartfelt love and sympathy go out to her.

The meeting in Highland Place held to support anyone conducting service in our churches and chapels was attended by Lewis Rees, Julie Nedin and Marian Littlepage. The discussion was helpful and we were much impressed by the state of the hall. It is fresh, bright, comfortable and welcoming.

We celebrated harvest rather later this year which meant that Lewis was able to take the service. During service we learnt a new song from the purple hymnbook - "Touch the earth lightly". Sandor Nemeth once again made a beautiful harvest loaf and a pot of soup, and these we enjoyed before

going home. A very attractive box of foodstuffs was put together by Sheila Evans and this as usual was taken to our local women's refuge.

Many thanks to those who have taken service recently, particularly Arthur Saunders who had intended joining us at the beginning of the year but was prevented at that time by atrocious weather and bad road conditions. Arthur's service was worth waiting for.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

The Harvest Thanksgiving Service at Wick has always been one of the highlights of the year as Wick is in the midst of a farming community. Six farming families gathered together in the 1780s to provide land and resources to build a chapel which has remained in constant use –together with its graveyard– from 1792 to the present day.

Our oldest member Phyllis Rose, who is 95, remembers the men always filling the gallery and adding strong tenor and bass notes to the Harvest hymns. The chapel is always well decorated for the occasion and this year we also gave thanks for the beautiful memorial seat presented to the chapel by the family (including Phyllis Rose) in memory of Stephen Jones - a former Sunday School member.

We were very pleased to welcome the new curate for our local diocese to our Harvest Thanksgiving. Reverend John –he asked to me call him that– is from Kenya originally and has recently moved into the village vicarage. He paid us a courtesy visit and stayed for service, taking part in readings and our congregational get-together. This year the village Remembrance Service will be held in the Anglican church so we will be joining their congregation for the occasion.

On the Tuesday following the Harvest Thanksgiving members of Stephen Jones's family, from Wick, Bridgend, Newport and Somerset gathered in lovely sunshine for a formal dedication ceremony. The seat is positioned just as you enter our well-kept graveyard, with a view through the trees and, of course in time, to our many Spring flowers.

Stephen's Gran, Phyllis, and his great-aunt Ruby from Newport tried out the seat and pronounced it very comfortable. We thank the family for this thoughtful memorial.

Stephen had been a regular soldier and travelled all over the world. He remained a member of the TA until his death aged 51. These words were spoken of him for this occasion

*We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where started
And know the place for the first time.*

We send our warm greetings to all friends in the District.

Julianne Morgan

MEMORIES OF NOTTAGE

Grace James (see Gellionnen News) moved away to Canada about fifteen years ago but still keeps in contact with many friends in Wales. This little poem was written when Grace still lived here, you will notice that she mentions evening meetings rather than morning ones! The poem comes from a book of Grace's called "The Gleanings of a Wayflower".

Nottage Chapel

There's a tiny chapel in a village know as Nottage,
It's neat and clean and homely, not much bigger than a cottage!

It boasts a congregation of old, young and in between,
Stands on a little side road quite near the village green.

It is such a comely meeting house with a welcome shown to all,
So you're cordially invited any time you care to call.

If in Porthcawl on an outing, or a visit to the sea,
Call on the Nottage Unitarians any Sunday after tea!

Grace James

For perhaps the second time this year I have recently been in the Nottage Chapel hall when a very successful coffee morning was held. There was the smell of coffee brewing and Welsh cakes being cooked on the spot and the hall looked good. Its new kitchen is obviously being put to good use and the carpeted floor gives a great feeling of comfort.

Marian Littlepage

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

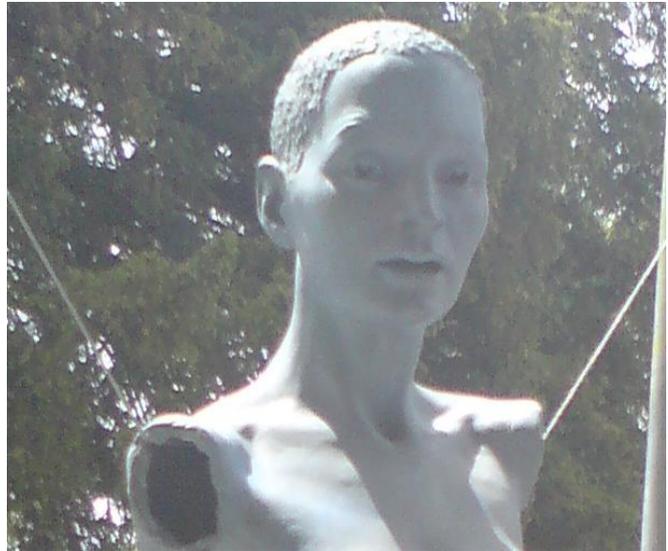
The August issue contained a fine report about the trip to Cheltenham. The article made mention of the sculptures by Josie Spencer that were elegantly displayed under the colonnade of the Pittville Pump Room at the time of the visit. The editor has suggested that I should look into the rumour that of one of the ladies of Cardiff congregation posed as a model for one of the figures.

I've flown a fair number of air-miles in my investigation and reckon I've uncovered all there is to find.

Is the rumour true? Well, that's now for you to decide....

(Even if it *is*, it seems a pretty 'armless pastime!)

The Golden Eagle



The camera lens picks up detail even a golden eagle might miss

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.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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The annual SEWUS membership fee for 2010 remains at **£5**.
