



South East Wales Unitarian News

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November 2010

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 19th December – at 3pm

A grand 150th Anniversary service will take place with members of the South East Wales Unitarian Society taking part. The National President of the General Assembly, Neville Kenyon, will be present along with local dignitaries. These include Mrs Kate Thomas (Lord Lieutenant), Councillor Simon Lloyd, (The Mayor), Ann Clwyd (MP), Christine Chapman (AM) and Sarah Boyce (SEWUS President). Refreshments will be served following the service.

ANNOUNCEMENT!

The GA Annual Meetings are coming to Swansea in 2011! Please make a note in your diary now.

**Friday 15th – Monday 18th April at Swansea University
'Valuing and Celebrating Our Volunteers'**

COME AND BE INSPIRED! COME AND JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION! COME AND SING!

Please contact Lis Dyson-Jones if you are willing to act as a Volunteer Guide during the Meetings. It is important that we all do our bit to ensure that the Annual Meetings in 2011 will be remembered as the best yet!

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VISIT OF GA PRESIDENT TO SOUTH EAST WALES

On the weekend of 16th-17th October, General Assembly President Neville Kenyon and his wife Betty were in Wales visiting the two Districts.

On Saturday they made an early whistle-stop tour of the thirteen chapels in the 'Black Spot' before a formal lunch and gathering at Talgarreg.

On Sunday we were pleased to have them visit us for the morning service at Nottage General Baptist and Unitarian chapel. SE Wales President, Sarah Boyce lit the chalice flame and welcomed the National President and his wife. In response to Sarah's welcome Neville said that he brought us greetings from national headquarters and from the whole of the Unitarian movement. Neville then led us in worship.

Two very apposite readings prepared the ground well for his address in which he spoke of our indebtedness to those who had laid "stepping-stones" for us to tread upon, pointing out that it is now up to us to do the same for future generations. He stressed the need to nurture the freedom that the wide spectrum of Unitarian beliefs provides – freedom to be recognisably different. We were urged to *evolve* – to change and adapt... "*Life is about evolving.*"

At the close of the service we moved to the Hall for a shared-lunch. The quantity and variety of delicious items awaiting us was most impressive, and everyone had their fill (and more!). The icing on the cake was, quite literally, "*the icing on the cake*"—Isabelle Rosenberg, Nottage, celebrated her eighteenth birthday that weekend and we all had a slice (or two) of her Birthday Cake.

Thank you Nottage for hosting this enjoyable and successful event.



GA President Neville Kenyon delivers his address at Nottage



"Cutting the Cake"
Sarah Boyce, Isabelle Rosenberg, Neville Kenyon

Photos: Marie Rosenberg

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

The interview in this issue is with Donna Borja-Edwards who spent most of her youth and her early adulthood in the parish of Vaynor (near Merthyr Tydfil) and attended Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Chapel in Cefn Coed. She was a pupil at the former Vaynor and Penderyn Comprehensive School. From the outset she clearly had a 'passion' for Drama and at just 14 was selected for the lead role of Myfanwy Llywelyn in a series about the Merthyr born composer Joseph Parry. Donna completed her degree in Welsh and Drama at Aberystwyth University in 1984. Her first professional role on a Welsh medium programme was in 'Dinas'. Since then she has appeared in various films and makes regular appearances on 'Pobol y Cwm'. Donna married her husband Ray Borja in 1993 and they have two daughters. Her brother Ken still lives in Cefn, and she continues to take an interest in the Cefn Community.



For someone who was not brought up a Welsh speaker to command such a notable position in the Welsh media shows that Donna has been prepared to work hard to master the Welsh language. Above all she remains a warm and sincere person who is totally unaffected by her not inconsiderable achievements.

'3 Lle' (3 Places) is a series on S4C where famous Welsh faces choose three places that have played, or still play, a prominent role in their lives. The first edition of the new series on 28th October featured Donna. She reminisced about her formative experiences, including stays at Llanmadog Youth Camp as a teenager. Readers who missed the broadcast may wish to visit www.s4c.co.uk/clic/e_index.shtml (or simply 'google' *s4c clic*). 'Clic' is the catch-up service for S4C – the programme is available to view again for 35 days online free of charge.

Ella Lewis-Jones

What are your memories of attending a Unitarian Sunday school?

Hazel Morgan's lovely way of teaching by example. The 'old' ladies' wobbly voices singing at the back of the chapel on a Sunday evening Service, one of whom we used to call 'Fanny all colours'. Llanmadog, Llanmadog, Llanmadog and Hazel throwing a girl out of Sunday school for lighting up a ciggie on the back pew.

I understand that from a young age you were drawn to acting, can you tell me more about that?

Mrs Nanwen Owen used to run the Drama class in the Youth Club in Cefn Coed. A gang of us used to take part in 6 part comedies, light hearted and we would perform them in the Cefn Community Centre. Plays for girls, e.g. 'Six maids a-mopping'. Mrs Owen thought I was a *character* and wrote to the BBC to tell them of me, the rest is to the present day.

What is your earliest memory?

I was 3 years old. We lived in 58, Heol Tai Mawr, Swansea Road, Merthyr Tydfil, next door to a large family. Angela was one of Maudy's daughters. She was 2½ and chased me up the alleyway between the houses, I was terrified. We pulled over the fish tank another time and the fish were slimy. Building nests of grass in the front garden.

What living person do you most admire and why?

My disabled brother Kenneth who is 66 years old and v-weak now. He worked at TBS factory, Merthyr as a labourer for years despite his mental impairment, paid taxes, paid for my ballet lessons and my piano lessons. He integrates fully into the Cefn Coed Community and won a Trophy for Best Snooker Player, Cefn Workmen's Club in the 1990s.

What trait do you most deplore in yourself?

My anger and verbosity.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

Losing my mother at the age of 17, I felt robbed. At least I had a great relationship for 17 years. Some people don't get on with their parents at all.

What do you owe your parents?

Gratitude for the confidence they instilled in me. Despite a humble background I feel confident enough to walk into any scenario.

What have you sacrificed for your career?

I have not. Life without my career would be worse. My career has been like a therapy session. I think my children are normal and my marriage is happy. I like our house and the area we live in. I could do with a new car though.

What advice would you give to a young actor?

Make sure you have a second, more stable, career that you can always fall back on when the work dries up.

What has been your biggest Challenge?

Repaying my brother Kenneth for all the help and love he gave me while I was young. While I unfortunately live 25 miles away from him due to work, I wish I could do more.

What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

A new car.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

So far, and boy is it taking a long time, I'm attempting to try to enjoy each day as it comes and remain as calm as possible. Trying not to be stressed.

When were you happiest?

Now.

WELCOME TO OSIAN ARWYN

Anne and Eric Jones are pleased to announce that they are Grandparents again, thanks to the arrival of Osian Arwyn, weighing in at 10 lb 9 oz, to proud parents Dyfan and Vicky. Dafydd is delighted to have a brother, while Menna is not sure what to make of the situation.

FUN DAYS AWAY 2010

Well, the time has come for me to write about my participation in the youth programme for the last time. Cheesy as it sounds, it was the best time I've ever spent in Hucklow. Although the theme 'Our Whole Lives' was the most interesting theme I've ever had; and the sessions about things such as love, and the influence of the media the most thought provoking I've ever taken part in; it was the times in between that really made the week for me. Recounting past experiences with the leaders, or making new memories with the participants who have many years in the youth programme ahead of them. I feel honoured that I have that I have had the opportunity to meet amazing people through the youth programme, especially at the last FDA.

I have been humbled by their experiences and their ability to cope with them. As the eldest at the week, I can only wish I had the wisdom that some of the younger ones have now. One of the best moments of FDA was the Circle Time that my Credo Group and I organised. We had a huge bonfire, sweets, and an awful lot of tears and hugs. I don't think it's possible to write down how incredible the youth programme is. It has given me the best experiences, the most incredible, and inspiring friend's I've ever had and it has helped me to become the person I am today. I can't say thankyou enough to John Harley and the other volunteers who run these events. Without them, these weeks and weekends would never be able to function.

I wish I could give everyone reading this one day at a youth event, to show you the wonderful people who run and participate in it, to let you experience the mature and the hilarious talks and activities we have, and of course, to let you get 'through', i.e. to have cold water poured over your head! I have enjoyed every second of being part of the youth programme; I can only implore other young people to join it. And I'm sure that BUYAN are pleased to add another young adult to its list!

Isabelle Rosenberg (18)

The Welsh contingent (and Rev John Harley) at FDA 2010 proudly displaying Y Ddraig Goch



Rebekah Thomas, Carrie Boyce, Bethan Branagh, John Harley, Elizabeth Rosenberg, Isabelle Rosenberg

MUSIC WEEKEND REPORT

From the 13th to the 16th of August, my sister Isabelle and I attended the Unitarian Music Society conference held at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire.

On the Friday, as everyone arrived, Isabelle and I mainly slept, as we had been at Hucklow the week before as well. So while everyone was making music; we had a nap.

At 8 o'clock we all met in the Charles Peach Room for 'Acis and Galatea'. (Each year we have like a set work to play, and this year it was Handel's Acis and Galatea. So, the singing that night was just to learn the ropes really.)

On Saturday morning we split up into musicians and singers. I am a musician, and we just played through the pieces that we were playing in Acis and Galatea. Learning the rhythms, remembering where we had to come in and such. After a coffee break we had a choice of where to go – either to recorders with Jo Rogers or the community choir with Jen Hazel. I chose recorders with Jo, which was good fun, and the music wasn't too hard - which was fab, as my recorder skills are not great!

Then there was lunch and free time. In the free time Adrienne Wilson was really lovely and went through the music with Rebekah and me. Thank You! Then the rest of the free time I fell asleep on the windowsill, and missed David Dawson's 'Sight-reading for the terrified!' which I really *did* want to attend. But I heard that it was good. We then had a rehearsal for Acis and Galatea.

Saturday was also the village gala day, so all the villagers came to the centre for dinner with us. That was nice. After that, Nick Morris put on a musical quiz for us. It was challenging, but a lot of fun – there was lots of laughter.

On Sunday, Isabelle and I woke late and had to rush off to chapel. It was a great service, and David (Dawson) was really kind to transpose the hymn for flute, bassoon and cornet. Which then meant that Rebekah, Isabelle and I could play it.

After chapel was the AGM, which I did not attend. But it was done and dusted in 50 minutes, as Richard Merritt got down to it and there was no messing about!

Later in the day then we had another rehearsal for Acis and Galatea, and also my sister and I did some trios with Jen Hazel. She is rather amazing at lute and singing. Also amazing on the whole.

Even later, we had the Acis and Galatea Concert. This went well I thought and it sounded lush.

To finish the evening we had the informal concert, which was such a great infusion of talent and funniness, and oh, it was just fantastic!

So, the last day – the only thing I attended was Jen Hazel's Community Choir. Which was so much fun! We did a 'rounds' kind of thing, but with different songs; it was just real good.

But after our goodbyes, and lunch, we were homeward bound. Looking forward to next year at Ammerdown!

Elizabeth Rosenberg 14



Rebekah Thomas (Swansea)

KEY MESSAGES FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (following the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 17th and 18th September 2010)

1. Strategic Priorities Agreed

The Executive Committee, having considered the responses of the "Difficult Choices" consultation with the wider Unitarian Movement, agreed the following strategic priorities for the work of the General Assembly. These strategic priorities set the framework for a range of innovative activities to be implemented over the next three years which will require change in many areas of our work as we focus on what makes a difference at congregational level. These are currently in development and further information will be circulated when the plans are finalised.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Our Goal

Sustainable and thriving Unitarian and Free Christian communities.

Our Aims

To benefit our communities by:

- encouraging and supporting leadership at local level
- developing Ministry within the denomination
- raising the visibility of the Unitarian movement
- improving the services to the movement provided by staff and volunteers

Our objective

Our objective over the next five years is to become a thriving and increasingly visible liberal religious community throughout Great Britain.

- We will increase our membership by 20%
- We will increase the number of qualified and active Ministers to at least fifty
- We will ensure that all Unitarian congregations can have access to professional Ministerial or recognised lay leadership and support
- We will ensure that all volunteers have access to training and support

2. General Assembly Quota

The Executive Committee, in support of these aims, and having considered the responses to the 'Difficult Choices' questionnaire, has decided to increase the 'Quota' payments to the General Assembly in three stages over the next three years; by £3 next year (2010/2011); £2 in the following year (2011/2012); then by £1 the year after (2012/13). These increases form part of a three year plan and will give congregations clarity about the future as they manage their own finances.

Lis Dyson-Jones

HIGHLAND PLACE ANNIVERSARY LECTURE

The second Anniversary Lecture entitled "Radicalism and Unitarianism in Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare" was delivered at Highland Place Church by Mr Joe England. Mr England, who hails from Merthyr Tydfil but now resides at Abergavenny, has a background as a journalist, author and educationalist, having lectured at Hong Kong and Warwick universities and been Warden at Coleg Harlech.

Mr England stressed the links that existed between Merthyr and Aberdare. The fact that they formed a single parliamentary constituency. A single poor law union and shared a stipendiary magistrate.

The Unitarian chapels at Cefn Coed and Trecynon were built in 1747 and 1751 respectively and their geographic isolation did not make them ignorant of the latest religious and political debate. In 1774 Theophilus Lindsey had opened the Essex Street Chapel in London, at which Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Priestley attended. The link between this radical Welsh crowd in London and Unitarianism and Arminianism in South Wales, was provided by Richard Price and in particular Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg). What was particularly productive was Williams's friendship with Thomas Evans (Tomos Glyn Cothi) who, as minister at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Trecynon, was instrumental in founding the Cyfarthfa Philosophical Society, at which publications such as "The Rights of Man" and the "Age of Reason" were discussed. In 1773, the Curate of Merthyr pronounced that the population of Merthyr, was predominantly Presbyterian/Arminian. In 1812 the Merthyr Meeting was founded, and in 1821 the Unitarian Chapel at Twynyrodyn, Merthyr Tydfil was opened.

The radical influence was bolstered by an influx of immigrants, who brought other denominations and this new order sponsored progressive causes in local politics. Unitarian families, such as the Johns and the Jameses, were influential in local politics. After the Merthyr Rising of 1831, Unitarians gained control of the Vestry and the Board of Guardians.

With the Great Reform Act, Merthyr and Aberdare gained a Parliamentary seat. The James family supported the candidacy of John Josiah Guest. In 1834, out of Merthyr's population of 27,000, only 300 had the vote. John Jones, the Minister at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Trecynon, organised dissent against Crawshay's candidate Meyrick.

The Chartist Movement in Merthyr and Aberdare, was more philosophical and less strident than elsewhere. Mr England ascribed this to the rational and peaceful influence of Unitarianism. 13,700 people from the two towns signed the petition, but hardly any marched at Newport.

Mr England's lecture climaxed in 1868, with the election of Henry Richard as MP and this brought an end to a most instructive and enjoyable evening.

Paul David

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

Reflection:

Treasure Mother Earth.
Sanctify and respect her.

Walk gently upon her.
Breathe in her fragrances.

Be still as her breeze caresses you.
Share her beauties with all.

Imbibe on her comfort,
her stillness and give thanks.

Treasure Mother Earth,
and give thanks.

Val Worthington (from "With Heart and Mind 2")

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Many thanks to Annette and the congregation at Nottage chapel for their hospitality on the 17th October 2010 to welcome the President of the General Assembly, Neville Kenyon and his wife, Betty. Neville gave an excellent service. What I took from his address was the need for a coalition between all perspectives in the Unitarian movement and that our diversity is important otherwise we might as well join up with other Christian churches.

On the weekend of 8th-10th October I made the long journey by two trains and a taxi to the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow with Joy Foster from Aberdare. This was for the first REvolution course to train us as leaders for religious education in our congregation or district for children and young people and for intergenerational groups. The three RE ingredients set out in the aims of the course are to REnew skills, REjuvenate our communities and REvive our visions. It was certainly an action packed weekend with Friday and Saturday sessions finishing at 10pm and most people then going off to the Queen Anne pub in the village. It was well worth the travel and time. I was impressed by the commitment of those who attended, some of whom had young children themselves. We were very lucky to have a varied group of experienced and talented trainers including the Rev John Harley, Mandy Richards, Liz Hills, Lorna Hill, Margaret Robinson, Jean Mason and Dawn Buckle.

We covered areas such as communication skills, safeguarding, listening, risk assessment, coaching, Special Education and much more. I was even instructed by one of the leaders to sneakily get lost in the wood so that out on a walk the group would have to enact doing a head count and find the 'lost' child. I am glad to say that I was found and brought back.

The course lasts for a year and will include four Saturdays and then a final weekend in October 2011. The group has now split into two groups for leading children and young people so that we will meet in different venues for the Saturdays and then come together for the final weekend. Both Joy and I are grateful for the funding for this course from our congregations and from the district.

On the same topic of activities for children, the congregation in Cardiff have planned a family service on the 7th November which will be taken by Diana Bianchi and we also hope that district members will join us for a family bilingual Christmas service on Monday 13th December at Penrhiw chapel from 6.30 - 7pm or 7 - 7.30pm. The congregation at Aberdare are also planning a Sunday school for children to start soon.

I enjoyed attending the Aberdare final Anniversary lecture given by Ann Peart on 7th October and the congregation at Aberdare were joined by members from Cardiff, Cefncoed and Nottage congregations. We look forward to attending Aberdare for their forthcoming musical events and Christmas service.

In closing may I leave with these final words by Stephen Lingwood about including young people in our Unitarian community.

If we do something now that keeps things the way we like and comfortable, but that leads to the eventual decline of Unitarianism after we've gone, then we're not recognising our inter-generational responsibility.'

With best wishes,
Sarah Boyce

ABERDARE

During September and October the 150th Anniversary celebrations gathered pace. In September there was a two-day open event which included an invitation to any member of the public who had never previously had occasion to attend Highland Place, to make an informal visit. The church had been tastefully decorated in autumn colours for the occasion and light refreshments were available. Members of the congregation took turns during the two days, to be available to talk about the history of the church and to answer any questions. Throughout the church and in the schoolroom there were displays which illustrated the history of the church right up to current times. The displays had been cleverly put together to form a series of "rooms" each of which featured different aspects of the church's development including the notable Aberdare Unitarians of 1860 who were instrumental in the establishment of an 'English' Unitarian church at Highland Place. A considerable amount of energy was devoted to publicising the event with flyers distributed locally and advertising in the local paper. During the two days there was a steady and significant stream of visitors to Highland Place.

On the Sunday afternoon Unitarians from Cardiff and Cefn joined the Highland Place congregation for a "Thanksgiving for Life Service". This included more than twenty members of the congregation testifying to some aspect of their life experience for which they wished to express their gratitude. Everyone who took part had written their own "script". Gratitude was expressed for Music, Sport, Books, Village life, Warmth, Animals, Allotments, Transport, Grandchildren and "Valleys women" to name but a few. This was an interesting and in many ways a moving service which demonstrated the talent and creativity of the Highland Place congregation. To organise the above events was a considerable amount of work with many members of the congregation working together and making their unique contribution to its success.

The report on the third and final lecture in the series, entitled "Notable Unitarian Women" with the Rev Dr Ann Peart, took place early in October, will be featured in the next edition of this newsletter.

For anyone who could not attend the lecture series or who would like to refresh their memory, a DVD has been produced which includes all three lectures. These are available from Rev Eric Jones or Keith Lewis-Jones at a cost of £5.

Readers may be interested to have a look at the Meditations which are, and will continue to be, featured on the National Unitarian Fellowship Website over the next six months. These meditations were written and read by Anne Jones, Anne Watts and Ella Lewis-Jones and were recorded by John Wilkinson for The NUF. The website address is - <http://www.nufonline.org.uk/NewNUF09/index.php>.

Ella Lewis-Jones

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Hello everybody, Autumn is with us, tempus fugit! But along with the chillier days, the trees give us their final flush of gorgeousness, before they rest for the winter, ready to burst into new growth in Spring (a bit like us in Women's League). Things are going well here at Aberdare Women's League, we now have 28 members, which is great. Each member brings their own uniqueness and life experiences which invaluablely contributes to the whole.

This month we have enjoyed two speakers, one being Mrs Beth Butler, who gave a very illuminating talk on 'The History of Nursery Rhymes' (which emanate from historical and sometimes macabre times). It was most enjoyable. Our second speaker was our very own Sarah Boyce, District President, who gave us an illustrated talk on her work with children as a Speech and Language Teacher, complete with a 'toddler sized' puppet, which is a prop Sarah uses to communicate with younger children. He was so cute. Sarah's work must be so very rewarding.

We have also sponsored a child in Peru, and we hope to have regular correspondence with her and her village throughout the coming years. Jan Morris has taken on the task of contact person and arranging the sponsorship. We have held our usual bring and buys and raffles, and as I write, we ladies are all busy preparing for our Autumn Fayre on November 6th.

Before I close, I just want to say how lovely it is to have Celia (Evans) back at our weekly meetings after her long illness. A very happy birthday to Iris (Davies) on her 90th Birthday, (Stay as sweet as you are! –as the song goes).

I want to thank all the ladies who have worked so hard behind the scenes on the 150th Anniversary Displays and Lectures, and for providing all the refreshments. Well Done to you all.

Until next time, keep warm, well and in touch.

Joy Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDOIDIAID CAERDYDD

The Congregation was happy to share in the celebrations to mark the 90th birthday of Margaret Evans, by taking her out for lunch to the Caesar's Arms Restaurant near Cardiff on Sunday 12th September. This was probably the third or fourth celebration to mark the event and there have been several others since. In all, Margaret partied for over a month but has been delighted at the dozens of cards, gifts and messages of goodwill she has received. She will have a treasure chest of wonderful memories of all of the celebrations shared with family and her many friends and it has been a very special time for a special lady.

Another member of our congregation also celebrated a special birthday during September and our good wishes were also sent to Mrs Ivy Thomas on the occasion of her 89th birthday. We have all been so pleased to see Ivy at our services since she moved from Aberdare to Cardiff to be closer to her daughter, Pat and we look forward to her very special birthday next year.

The investments from the sale of West Grove will now be managed by the church committee, the Managing Trustees and the Rules of our congregation have been amended accordingly. Special meetings of the congregation have been held to accommodate this. We are all grateful to the previous members of the Building Trustees for all their hard work to bring us to this point.

A Family service will be held at the Friends' Meeting House at 3pm on Sunday 7th November and will be conducted by Diana Bianchi. It will be a short service suitable for young children and all are welcome. Light refreshments will be served afterwards.

Sarah Boyce has attended the first of several sessions of the REvolution Course run by the GA Education and Training Commission at Great Hucklow. It was a rigorous weekend but provided all who attended with additional skills and much to think about. Sarah's daughter, Caroline will be attending the Seniors/Inter Weekend at Great Hucklow on 27/28th November along with other young Unitarians from the District.

We shared a memorable Joint Service of Thanksgiving at Highland Place on Sunday September 19th and the warm, welcoming fellowship following the service.

Some of our members attended the lecture on notable Unitarian Women, given by the Rev Dr Ann Peart on Thursday 7th October, also held at Highland Place as part of their special celebrations. It was good to again, share time with our friends.

Mrs Win John will shortly be moving from her house at Lakeside Cardiff to a more manageable bungalow. We are grateful for all the books she has donated to us and wish her much happiness in her new home.

Thought for Now

Love is the beginning of the journey, its end and the journey itself. Love is everywhere, but in some places it is blocked by fear. (Deepak Chopra).

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

We continue to have our fortnightly Wednesday-afternoon helping of good fellowship and fun when we 'Put the World to Rights' over copious amounts of tea. We are very pleased that Vera Tomsett is getting over the effects of her recent operation and is now well enough to join with us once again in League, and also in Chapel.

Undeterred by the fact that we are now on the threshold of winter, two of our more energetic ladies have taken it upon themselves to 'Spring-clean' the Vestry. They have become oblivious to our cries of, "You can't get rid of *that...*," and are steadfast in their determination to have every nook and cranny clutter-free and sparklingly clean. It is rumoured that they intend next to turn their attention to the 'cwtch dan star' in the chapel. This will be good news for employees of the gas and electricity boards who, at present, face the risk of injury when they call to read the meters.

Gwen Everrit

VISITORS

On the afternoons of the 11th and 12th September, the chapel was once again open to the public as part of European Heritage Weekend, and the event was publicised on the Internet and in the local press. We are unlikely to be at the top of a 'must see' list - but there are always *some* visitors. Even though they are few this still means it is worth the effort. It was especially pleasing that four of the visitors also attended the service on the Sunday evening. We were particularly pleased to welcome Mrs Susan Hudson (née Owen) and also Mrs Marilyn Murray (née Bann); both have family ties with the chapel and attended in their youth.

During September and October we also had a number of visitors researching family graves.

OUT AND ABOUT

For a variety of reasons during the past couple of months, several of our members have been heading towards Highland Place Church. On 19th September, together with members of the Cardiff congregation, we attended a novel form of Thanksgiving Service. Then, on 7th October, came the final lecture in a series of three – this one delivered by Rev Dr Ann Peart. Finally, on 28th October, there was a Grand Concert. Each, in its own right, was a memorable event and fully merited the trip over the mountain, but the concert, featuring the ladies of 'Cantorion Cyfarthfa' and the Aberdare section of 'Only Boys Aloud', was an outstanding success and the members of Highland Place are to be congratulated.

IN MEMORY OF BETTY

We have been pleased to receive a large (400mm) glass vase donated by Linda James in memory of the late Mrs Betty Williams, and have also received the sum of £1000 bequeathed to the chapel by Betty.

ARTHUR SAUNDERS

We hear good news of Arthur's steady progress after his operation. We look forward to the pleasure of again having Arthur and Marian join us for service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd in the not too distant future.

Ken Morgan

NOTTAGE

We send our congratulations to Isabelle Rosenberg on her 18th birthday, and wish her well for exciting times ahead.

Annette conducted a lovely harvest service for us earlier in the month. There were 20 of us to enjoy the service and a 'faith and hope' lunch after it. Delydd McAdam played the organ for us and it has become a tradition that after each 'special' service we have communion. Delydd's 22-month-old son was in my care and as the wine was raised to the lips of the congregation Gethin said, "Cheers" !.....

We are very pleased that Jo Taylor-King has agreed to become a 'named person' on the register for marriages at Nottage, her willingness to help is much appreciated by our very small congregation.

About six years ago Annette started a Spiritual Healing group at Nottage. It took a while to grow, but her faithful attendance each week has encouraged one person to undertake Reiki 1, two to undertake Reiki 2, and one person to become a Reiki Master. Sadly there are frequently more people in the Monday Healing group than in chapel on Sunday, so with the thought that this may be the way to grow again, we have started a Monday morning relaxation/meditation group. So far, five people have joined in, we would hope for more, but time will tell. We share tea or coffee before we leave, so if anybody would like to venture to Nottage for 11am on a Monday morning, you would be most welcome to join us.

Avril Protheroe

SWANSEA

As usual our Sunday services have given us much to think about. One service recalled the origin of the Olympic Games and how its objectives have lasted so long. Then we were asked “how many in the congregation had a medal for anything.” It brought a surprising response when we discovered that our member Jack Merrells is a medal holder as a former boxing champion. Other congregations might have pleasant surprises if they asked the same question.

Harvest Festival always falls during this beautiful, colourful season of ‘mists and mellow fruitfulness’. A display of the bounty of the earth has always been a joy to behold, however, this year it was decided to have a change and instead, all donations went to support the orphanage in the Khasi Hills. We were reminded of the life and work of the Rev Margaret Barr. On a personal note I remember Margaret Barr taking our Sunday service. She was, truly, the most inspirational speaker I have ever heard and her closing words have stayed with me as she disclosed how they had inspired her – “Yea, I am with you even unto the ends of the earth.”

Hopefully, we will all meet at the combined Christmas service which is always such a joy to be involved in.

Pamela Taylor

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

August is the month when the heather blooms and Gellionnen celebrates a Folk Service. The Pontardawe Folk Festival became the Pontardawe Music Festival some years ago but our Folk Service continues with singers coming to take part in a Gellionnen celebration. Our thanks go on that day to Dylan, of the group Yr Alltud whose lovely big voice rolled around the building, to John Alderslade from Trowbridge with his gentle wit and beautiful Wiltshire accent, to Lynnford Jones and the Nemeth family, our very own singers of folk songs, to our own Lewis Rees for holding things together, and to Lynne Gent who sang the dismissal song and to the congregation for singing lustily to the accompaniment of strings and euphonium!

Hilda Dumpleton took service recently for the first time in several years. It was good to have her with us and she was surprised at the musical accompaniment that day – violin and trombone! Our instrumentalists were brothers Aneurin and Hywel Jones. Hywel has since taken off to study music in Goldsmiths, London. We miss him and wish him well and suspect he might find his way to one of our London churches. Our loss will be their gain but we do look forward to seeing him during visits home.

As usual we celebrated harvest home and shared lunch together afterwards. Sheila and Gareth Evans took a box of goods to the nearby Women’s Refuge afterwards.

We have many ‘pick and mix’ services these days when those in the congregation bring music, poems, stories, whatever. To those who bring, thank-you, and to those who come to be part of the whole, thank-you very much also. This development has occurred out of necessity and may well have caused some to read and listen in a more directional manner.

Four of us travelled from the Swansea Valley to Nottage Chapel to join in service with the President, Neville Kenyon and to meet his wife Betty. It was a lovely day, the service was positive and enjoyable, the shared meal was abundant. The togetherness of these occasions is so good for us all. Nottage Chapel looks very attractive and its buildings are comfortable and functional. No need for thermal socks there!

Gone Wrong Notices — they’re all genuine!

For those of you who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.

Smile at someone who is hard to love.

Say “Hell” to someone who doesn’t care much about you.

Marian Littlepage

SOUTHERN UNITARIAN WEEKEND RETREAT

On a lovely, sunny day I journeyed by train to Warminster. I was to join the Southern Unitarian Weekend Retreat in Ivy House, the St. Denys Retreat Centre just a short walk from the railway station. The retreat programme had been created by Kathy Beckett, a member of our Southampton Church, who hoped to have a few Welsh participants. Marie Rosenberg and I duly turned up to form the Welsh contingent. The title of the retreat sounded interesting, 'Discover Yourself', and indeed it proved to be so. We were all sent a list of nine paragraphs known as enneagram facilitators. Initially I read these and thought, 'Yes, I can Key in with this, or that,' in several paragraphs, but of course, when we came together we were asked to choose *one* of these paragraphs which most applied to our attitude and thinking. Our enneagram leader Josephine Seccombe encouraged us to seek out our strengths and weaknesses and deduce the sort of people that we personally would most easily understand and get along with. It was an interesting journey and I think I do now know myself a little better.

Our *Do it yourself* Sunday service was pulled and held together by the Rev Akasha Lonsdale, interfaith minister, psychotherapist and author. She is often called upon for very special services and ceremonies. The title of her homily was Spirituality. It was short, simple and helpful.

There were choices to be made. We could join a small group taking part in poetry/play writing, Sufi prayer, Taize chants, drama, spiritual movement or tai chi.

On Sunday afternoon we all got together for 'Dances of Universal Peace'. I had anxieties about this but need not have done and the chants that accompanied the music were lovely and very different from the sort of singing I would normally take part in.

The gardens of Ivy House are glorious, full of colour when we were there and the trees heavily laden with apples and pears. Our small group had come together from many churches and chapels and the weekend did not feel as short as it often does – we left at 4.30 on the Sunday afternoon.

Marian Littlepage

GRAND CONCERT AT HIGHLAND PLACE

Inspirational, moving and miraculous are some of the adjectives which were used to describe the performance by those who attended the recent concert of reflective and contemporary music at Highland Place. The concert was jointly given by Cantorian Cyfarthfa conducted by Derry Prothero and Only Boys Aloud (Aberdare Choir) leader Wyn Davies.



Cantorian Cyfarthfa, with conductor Derry Prothero

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

Cantorian Cyfarthfa were formed in 2001 from the choristers of the Cyfarthfa High School Girls' Choir in Merthyr Tydfil. Still based in Merthyr and under the continuing leadership of Derry Prothero with his wife Maureen at the Piano, the choir has achieved considerable success and boasts a wide repertoire of traditional – ranging from Elgar, Latin Polyphony and Welsh Harmony- to popular music. The choir sang a total of fourteen complementary songs, including three in Welsh.



The Aberdare Choir of Only Boys Aloud, with leader Wyn Davies

Photo: Keith Lewis-Jones

The Aberdare Choir of Only Boys Aloud was formed only a few months ago and it was therefore quite astonishing to witness what had been achieved in such a short period. There were a total of seven soloists, whose performance can only be described as outstanding, so much so, that there was hardly a dry eye in the audience. Only Boys Aloud was initiated by its father company, Only Men Aloud, with the purpose of encouraging young men from across the South Wales Valleys to sing in public. As their enthusiastic and energetic leader Wyn Davies said, "Latterly, singing as part of a choir has not been seen as a cool thing for young men to do."

The evening concluded with the boys singing three rousing choral pieces which brought many of the audience to their feet. Highland Place was packed for the occasion, both on the ground floor and gallery. The Rev Eric Jones, as always, made an excellent compère and all who attended thoroughly enjoyed the evening, many remarking that they had not attended such an excellent concert in many a long year.

Ella Lewis-Jones

NIGHTINGALE CENTRE

The last issue of the newsletter inadvertently quoted the 'old' e-mail address for the Centre. Please note that the current address is info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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