

A GREAT  
Winter Walking Weekend

# Foy News

Spring 2025



# The Foy Society

is a fellowship of women and men who, in a spirit of free inquiry, seek to understand the nature of present issues and problems - political, social and religious.

Founded in 1924 as The Fellowship of Youth, in 1957 we became known as the Foy Society. We had gradually taken on the role of an inter-generational group.

Despite the fact that most of our members are Unitarians, all are welcome to join and participate, whatever religious background. Our discussions and interaction thrives on a rich texture of input. Please feel free to join us.

**Cover picture:** Cathie Masztalerz leads enchanted walkers back into Great Hucklow's "Winter Walking Wonderland", articles pages 6-8.

**Photographers - this issue:** Richard Varley, Tim Baker and John Hewerdine

**Future Photographs:** Please don't paste images into documents with text, but send separately from text, as jpg file attachments

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# President's Piece



Dot Hewerdine enjoying the fresh-air  
on our balcony over the Leeds Liverpool Canal

Finally, it is beginning to feel that Spring is on the way! After very, very cold, wet and windy weather with more than one named storm to test our buildings and our gardens, the sun has appeared and the snowdrops and daffodils are raising their heads on the tow path opposite, enjoying the feeling of hopeful warmth.

There is much to concern us in the troubled times in which we live. In this short piece, I do not intend to focus on world events but to enjoy that warmth and anticipate hopeful and joyful activities some of which you can read about in the pages that follow!

The Annual meetings of the General Assembly are fast approaching. This year they are being held in Birmingham again AND from a Saturday to a Monday which, for many schools, is right in the middle of the Easter holidays. I am hopeful that this will attract more families, younger people and others who would normally have to take holidays to attend during the week.

There will be several constitutional Motions to be debated. These will have a bearing on how we are governed in the future with some changes to our current constitution. Perhaps more importantly, there will be a motion to accept the new constitution proposed for moving to the GA becoming a CIO. These are important changes and I hope will be debated respectfully.

This year we also have an election for the GA Executive Committee (EC). The members of the EC are the Trustees of the General Assembly. It is the one time that individuals, Associate and congregational quota paying members, are entitled to vote and I urge you to make use of that opportunity.

Closer to home, preparations for Foy Conference 2025 are well in hand. The topic this year is **Artificial Intelligence**. We will be exploring several different aspects of AI to help us better understand its benefits and its challenges. We have a team of excellent 'guides' for our exploration and we will have fun too learning how to 'have a go' at using AI. This Conference is not just for 'techies' so come along and join us for a journey of exploration.

There will also be free time, social time, games and worship in the beautiful setting of The Nightingale Centre. You can read more about the Conference in this Foy News. There are still rooms available for booking and opportunities to visit just for the day.

And what next for Foy? In my President's Piece in the Autumn 2024 Foy News, I mentioned that, as we have fewer members with the energy or capacity to lead and manage our activities 'maybe we will need to pare down our expectations of what we can do. Maybe we will have to

let go of issues we do not have the capacity to support, even though our hearts are calling us to do so.'

For the first time this year for several years, Foy has **not** submitted a Motion to the General Assembly though there are many issues which concern us. This does not mean that Foy members will not be active during the meetings. **Allan Warhurst** will be our delegate and will use our vote wisely. Led by Hazel, we will have a stand. Several of us will be there representing other groups but, also as Associate members, will be able to engage in the debates and session slots making our presence at the meetings meaningful.

And so to our AGM on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 on Zoom. Please make a note of the date. It will be a time for looking back and celebrating what we have achieved and looking forward to the year ahead. It is also when we appoint our Officers and Council members. Please consider if you are able to take on one of the tasks. Many of our current officers have been in post for many years and doing an excellent job. Some have expressed a desire to step down and Richard has given notice that he will not be continuing as Foy Secretary after the AGM. Richard has been an efficient and amiable Secretary, keeping us on our toes with his unique sense of humour and ensuring we have up to date records. We appreciate that he has continued in recent years despite the health challenges he has faced.

In the last Foy News, Gordon Lowthian challenged us to think about the future. Do we indeed have one? Gordon concludes 'by all means enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie of old friendships for as long as possible.' Yes, but is there another way to do this? Should we follow IRF's example and stop having the annual gatherings with themes, committees etc and simply agree gatherings at The Nightingale Centre with no agenda other than to be there and enjoy being together as Foy Oldies!

Dot Hewerdine

# God is a Problem

Dotty  
Haughton



Recently, when leading a harvest festival service I realised that we were about to sing things that we did not believe and probably had not believed for a very long time. We know that God does not bring the snow in winter nor the warmth to swell the grain and that therefore it is pointless to thank the Lord, oh thank the Lord but I suggested we consider this just a part of the ritual.

I recently heard that references to God should be regarded as metaphor which I find more useful.

When a child at Sunday School we were told that if we had a problem we were to think about it carefully and come up with a possible solution. We could then, as it were, plug ourselves into God as though God was some sort of electric current from which we should get the necessary strength, courage, compassion to solve the problem. I was fascinated to read in a recent Copy of Progressive Voices, the PCN magazine (Progressive Christianity Network) a man describing his prayer ritual which very much resembled ours. Four stages: What is the problem, what to do about the problem, ask God for the strength/courage to do that. And this all

called to mind one of my favourite sayings by Lon Ray Call: Prayer doesn't change things, Prayer changes people. people change things.

So, God is a force in the Universe which can be harnessed. I remember writing a service entitled 'If you build it he will come' when I said that God does not come when the church is built, God is here when we gather together to build the church or free the slave or feed the hungry.

The other problem with God is the male pronoun plus 'The Prayer of Jesus' (which I really can't bear to say anymore) 'Our Father which art in Heaven'. I loved it when at Intergroup Keith Gilley said, 'God the Father, God the Mother, God the Sister, God the Brother.' I don't think calling on the Goddess works. May I here slip in a quick word of heartfelt thanks to all those responsible for the Green hymn book.

"Dotty" is pictured here with her back to the camera at the Social Evening of last years Foy Centenary Celebrations



There was a time in church when we would be earnestly required to join in prayer for the troubled people of the world. A list would follow. Some preachers then moved onto animals nearing extinction and I would mutter to myself, 'If s/he gets down to Leach's Storm Petrel I'm out of here.' Did we think that God would send forth his mighty Word and save these poor beings? No, Take One. Let's discuss what to do. Knit blankets. Collect clothing. Give money. Hold a car boot

sale. Then pray. If only we had the habit of speaking out in church someone might respond to such a prayer, 'I've got masses of baby clothes' and another might say, 'I've got a boxful of white elephant stuff. Let's go in my car to the Lower Pocklington car boot sale on Saturday'. A little old lady might ask for some help in clearing out a cupboard which might yield useful stuff. You could put a big notice up outside. **DECLUTTER. WE CAN HELP.** Don't just sit there thinking beautiful thoughts. Do something!

Unitarians rarely use the Bible for readings and equally rarely refer to Jesus though the Parable of the Good Samaritan is always a favourite. Because there is a problem and somebody does something about it? However, though the quotation starts with 'Love God' there is no mention of God rewarding or approving of the action.

I often quote the lovely story in which the reverend and learned Rabbi Akiva tells a story of the even more reverend and learned Rabbi Hillel. A man comes to Hillel and promises that he will convert to Judaism if Hillel will recite the Pentateuch standing on one leg. With both feet firmly on the ground, Hillel says: 'Love God and love your neighbour as yourself, that is the law, the rest is commentary.'

I also treasure another story in which the sages discussing which books should be canonical are about to dismiss the story of Ruth because it is not true. 'Ah,' says the most learned and wisest of those gathered, 'But it is poetry'.

I have told you these stories and said these things to you before but I remember a child saying, 'I love Mrs Downing. She says everything three times.' The first time you hardly hear it, the second time it sounds familiar, the third time you really listen.' Perhaps we should hold every service for three weeks running, the fourth could be a Songs of Praise where we sing the hymns nominated as favourites by members of the congregation. We had one in Shrewsbury recently. Perhaps you should hold one too. If you demand some meat in your sandwich then a brief biography of St Ephrem should suffice though I doubt you would want to sing his hymns.

Go away. Talk about this over coffee. And no, I am not sweetening this with an Upper Pocklington joke. Make up your own.

Dorothy Haughton



WINTER

WALKING

WEEKEND

JANUARY

2025



Jimmy Timiney

*introduction by The Editor*

*Ed: "Jimmy Timiney and Tim Baker have both sent me reports on this event and I am happy to reproduce them fo you. First let me clarify details of the weekend. Because of the popularity of visiting Great Hucklow in January (when the walking can be delightful, if often somewhat challenging) it has, for some years actually been held on two consecutive weekends. The differing nature of the two events has always been vaguely defined, but this year the Nightingale Centre had planned for the first weekend to be for children and adults who require less excercise but enjoy seeing the children kicking around a football or building snowmen or rolling in the snow. The second weekend was to be for*

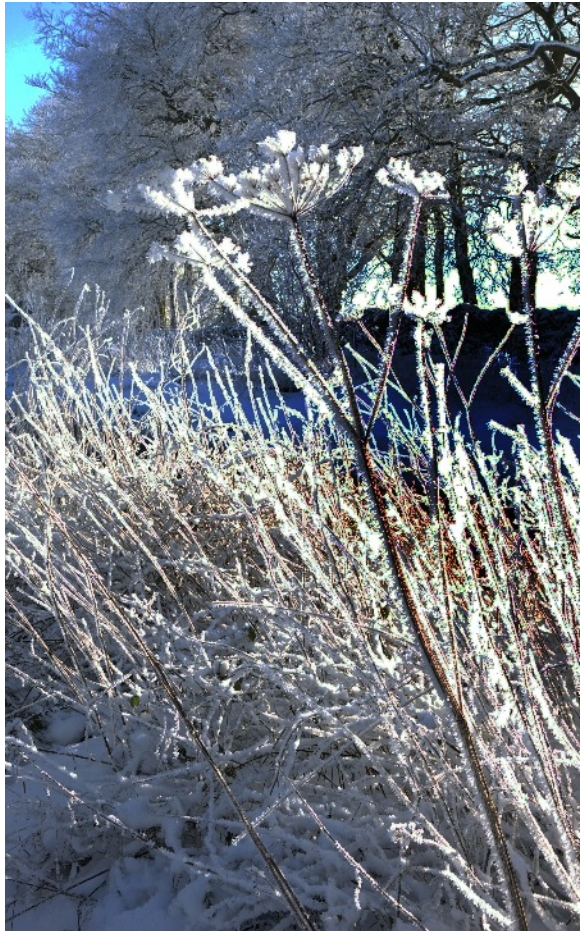
*more energetic walkers who wish to test their walking ability and enjoy more challenging walks in the Peak District.*

*This year we had amazing winter weather. Although heavy snow was forecast, just before the first chosen weekend, some of us were concerned that this might make it difficult getting there. In the event the roads around Sparrow Pit were completely clear. What was great about the weather was that it remained below freezing for most of the time we were there. This meant that it remained fresh and clean and wasn't melting and getting us all wet. It would just brush off our clothes and so the playing and snowballing was able to continue with the ceaseless energy which abounded in the younger folk.*

*Your editor was only able to attend the first weekend with the family. We had a great time and I enjoyed using the camera, recording the beauty in the landscape, as well as the fun and games.*

*Jimmy Timiney and Tim Baker sent me the following reports but I am sorry not to have news from the group who attended the next weekend".*

*On the next page is what Jimmy said about his involvement.*



The winter walking weekend held at the Nightingale Centre in the village of Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, has had some risky weather over the years, but in recent years, perhaps with global warming, it has been mainly wet weather with mud and more mud. This year it turned out to be a magical winter walking wonderland as the temperature dropped and laid a deep blanket of snow on many places of our fair Island, including the legendary Peak District, bringing delight to children and adults alike.



We had some reservations about whether we should travel and kept an eye on the weather forecasts as they announced the drop in temperature and the road conditions but in the end, we decided to go. Filling a couple of flasks with hot drinks we turned the water off at the stop tap and left the central heating on low.



We had an uneventful journey apart from one slippery country road that I should not have taken. We finally arrived safe and sound. On our way we visited Chesterfield where we enjoyed the famous parish church, St. Marys, with its crooked spire.



The main activities of the weekend were held on Saturday. There was a choice of a long walk for the fittest or a leisurely shorter walk. The long walkers climbed around a thousand feet to walk along Stanage Edge. On the shorter walk the adults watched the children as they rolled and played in the snow. Other people did their own thing. Our chosen activity for the day was to visit Buxton where we walked through the lovely Pavilion Park and then enjoyed the winter conservatory with its oasis of unusual plants including banana trees.

On Sunday, with other people, we went to the Unitarian Old Chapel in the village. Ed Fordham took the service and welcomed Simon on his first visit to play the organ, we all appreciated his music as we also did Ed's inclusion of readings and thoughts around walking. This fitted into the weekend theme. After the service some of us helped take down the Christmas decorations, as many hands make light work.



All in all, this was a lovely weekend of walking and talking, enjoying excellent food with good company and much appreciation for those who organised the weekend and put good wholesome food on the table.



Jimmy Timiney



# Somewhat More Serious Walking

Photos  
And text: Tim Baker



*“And now we hear from Tim Baker about his impressions of the same weekend. Coverage of the other winter Walking Weekend has not been forthcoming, but here is what the more energetic folk got up to on the first weekend” Ed*

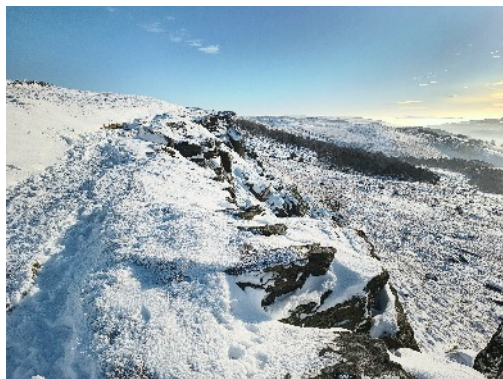
Winter Walking Weekend at **The Nightingale Centre**, Great Hucklow has been a long standing event for many decades. Certainly since before I started going to Hucklow at some point in the 1980s. I have been many, many, times in the years since then. The thing I find and like so much about this event, and why I always make the effort to keep my calendar free for it each year, is that it feels like the most organic and connecting event I could choose to attend, to start off the New Year.

Many Unitarian events at the Nightingale Centre have a specific theme and timetable often taking place indoors with little time, or plans made, to go beyond the grounds. With W.W.W it is the opposite. You really get that sense of the

place/setting surrounding you. There is always time for chat and catch-up with people you know, or can get to know, and fun and games in the evening. There is the Saturday to enjoy if you still have energy well into the evening, and if you need to save your energy or don't see yourself, and any little ones you may wish to bring with you, as a super intrepid walker never mind. Have no fear, because there are usually 3 or 4 walks of different lengths going on at the same time and the opportunity to change your mind at certain points in the longest walk, if you suddenly feel it is too much of an undertaking.

I was moved to write about it, in particular this year, as it was the first time in decades (Covid aside) that I was worried that it might not go ahead, due to the sudden snow and then the 'Big Freeze'. Thankfully the roads were clear enough for the 20 something intrepid hearty souls to all gather for another weekend of fun, friendship and foot-treading.

This year the longest walk, at roughly 7 miles, started at Hathersage village going gradually up and up past queuing sheep, foggy/misty valleys, alongside icy paths and eventually Arctic sun-Lit, deep, snowy hills. Mercifully, there was a wind-free final ascent towards our highlight of the walk, Stanage Edge.



In all the years I have been going and all the different routes, and distances I have experienced, I can't ever remember going up to this place. As you can see from my pictures, it was well worth the climb with such breath-taking and contrasting views from all sides.

It became easier, the further up you went. If it was good enough for the brave mountain bikers it was certainly good enough for us. To be able to have our well earned lunch rest, with such splendour and views for miles in each direction, was all worth it.



The highlights didn't completely end there as we navigated our way carefully along the cliffs, seeing the flat moonscape land to our left and many other peaks across to our right, as well as finding special secret hidey holes. To further explore back down to the icy road, and to take a short-cut back down the fields to complete our circle. Passing all manner of curious things, including Quad Bikes, a Vineyard, and a well kept grave. To pay our respects to a well known stick-wielding giant who loved a good joust on a flowing river or wherever you dared to face him. Finally heading back past the outdoor swimming pool and climbing into the cars to warm up and shortly head back to the centre.



At the Chapel on the Sunday morning, before the weekend departed, we also managed to open up for the first service of the year and it was a joy to have extra visitors. As always, extra attenders are more than welcome to join us and use Old Chapel for reflection, song, and of course, tea and biscuits and hear about our chapel, snow capped or not.

I highly recommend a Winter Walking Weekend. All the regulars I see, year after year, would agree, I am sure. Contact the Manager Kathryn Breen on 01298 871218 or [info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk](mailto:info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk) if you wish to join us Next Year!

Tim Baker





# Gaza Resolution

for the 2025 Unitarian General Assembly

Humanitarian action in the world

in the spirit of the Golden Rule

“Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.”  
(Jerusalem Talmud)

“Whoever saves one life saves all of mankind.” (The Qur’an)

The purpose of our 2025 GA motion is to encourage determined action in the world in the spirit of the Golden Rule in order to save lives. The motion expresses full solidarity with the vital humanitarian work of the UN Relief and Works Agency, ministering to suffering Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the UN Refugee Agency and the World Food Programme, encourages timely support of Disasters Emergency Committee lifesaving appeals and encourages fellow Unitarians to honour our 2024 GA Annual Meetings Resolution 6 on Gaza by supporting the Middle East Humanitarian Appeal of the British Red Cross for urgent medical and other humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

Honouring and acting on our GA resolutions

We may in our humanitarian actions be inspired by several previous GA resolutions in this spirit of empathy and engaged compassion.

Our 2013 GA resolution, echoing the UUA Seventh Principle, ‘promoting greater awareness of the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part and recognising the dignity and worth of all living creatures’.



Our 2014 GA resolution, supported and seconded by the then GA Executive Committee, calling for action ‘in the spirit of the Charter for Compassion and its message of empathy and universal compassion’ and urging fellow Unitarians to respond ‘generously and wholeheartedly’ to life saving British Red Cross emergency appeals.

Our 2015 GA resolution ‘recognising the universal kinship of all sentient beings affirmed by the world’s great religions, philosophers and sages’ and urging action to save human and non-human lives.

Our 2016 GA resolution on the plight of millions of refugees, particularly the victims of war, calling on Unitarians to ‘respond with compassion and generosity’ to British Red Cross and other appeals ‘for urgent medical aid, food and shelter’ for ‘the care of millions of refugees, including many vulnerable children and elderly people in desperate need of humanitarian aid and shelter’.

Our 2021 GA resolution urging support of the British Red Cross Global Coronavirus Emergency Appeal and other urgent medical appeals ‘in the spirit of the Charter for Compassion and relevant resolutions and calling on Unitarians ‘as one immediate and direct way to be a force for good in the world’ and to ‘work with the Religious Society of Friends and other faith communities’ in taking timely action to aid ‘victims of wars, conflicts and natural disasters and to act decisively to help save human lives worldwide’.

Saving lives and honouring and acting on our 2024 General Assembly Resolution 6 on Gaza

‘The suffering being inflicted on children in Gaza is unfathomable’, according to Save the Children. ‘In 15 months of conflict, over 17,000 children have been killed. Many more

perished from hunger and disease. Behind these appalling stats are the stories of individual children. They are buried under the rubble, cut off from their families, alone and afraid. The survivors face constant hunger and horrific violence. Many are stricken by terror and grief... Because right now, Gaza is on the brink of famine. Malnutrition and disease threaten children's survival. They urgently need food, shelter and medicines.'

According to the United Nations, the International Red Cross and other international relief agencies, at least 46,707 people have been killed in Gaza, including babies dying in incubators. Over 100,000 people have been injured. The health system has collapsed. Over 1000 health workers have been killed. Nearly 1,900,000 Gazans have been internally displaced.

In response to our 2024 GA Resolution 6 an urgent appeal has been launched. It is supported by our GA President, Professor Geoffrey Levermore, and several former GA Presidents and other prominent Unitarians.

If you wish to support this emergency appeal please send a cheque payable to The British Red Cross and kindly earmark it on the back to the **British Red Cross Gaza Crisis Appeal** and send it to the British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL You can make an online donation at [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk) and telephone donations on 0300 004 0338

This humanitarian appeal is supported not only by our GA President but also by the LDPA and a long list of signatories Including many past presidents of the General Assembly.

This impressive statement of concern, culminating in the encouraging words and appeal for financial support for the Red Cross Appeal, comes from **Rev Feargus O'Connor** to whom the editor gives thanks for this contribution.

*Jimmy Timiney concluded his Great Hucklow Winter Walking  
report with a piece which was shared in  
the Sunday Service at Old Chapel,  
at their Sunday Service.*

## **Words of Comfort, from the Afterlife**

The cares of the world concern me no longer.  
I have completed my life.  
My work is done, the children of my heart grown.  
I have loved much and well.

To those I leave behind,  
I hope I will remain in their hearts  
as they will in mine.

Thank you for taking such care of me  
and all of you who have been my friends,  
Thank you for teaching me about life  
and about love.

Go in peace, and in blessings for the day.

Anon.

# The GA Change to a CIO Needs Much More Consultation



David Warhurst

Some active Unitarians will be aware that moves are afoot to change the charity status of our General Assembly to become a ***Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO for short)***.

However, I doubt if many of them will have given more than a cursory glance at the details, content to take the assurance of the legal advisers, **VWV**, that they have carried over all the provisions of the existing GA Constitution into the new documents.

Legal advisers are very good at making sure that documents are legally watertight, even if it does often result in more complicated legal language which can be difficult for the rest of us to cope with (the draft CIO runs to 26 pages plus 12 pages of Bye-Laws and Standing Orders compared with the current constitution which is 6 pages long plus 9 pages of Bye-Laws and Standing Orders!).

However, legal advisers cannot determine important aspects such as definition of membership, voting rights and procedures, motions/resolutions provisions and many other matters which have to meet **our** requirements. I will give examples later. That is why every Unitarian member group, and Full and Associate members, should look closely – indeed line by line - at these details through a thorough consultation process.

Sadly, the consultation process has been, frankly, completely inadequate. The first drafts were notified to delegates to the 2024 GA Meetings immediately prior to the meetings with delegates expected to approve it there and then and before it had been seen by member groups - all done and dusted! This was completely impractical for such a momentous change to be properly considered and, thankfully, approval was postponed for a year of consultations.



What has happened since then? Well on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 **uni-news** announced a CIO consultation period running to 2<sup>nd</sup> September to be followed by a Zoom meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October to answer questions submitted. The timing was most Unhelpful. How many Districts, Churches and Affiliated Societies hold business meetings during August?

The result was that only five relatively minor comments were received by the deadline plus my five-page late submission which I was told would be given to the lawyers for consideration.

*The Zoom consultation on 2<sup>nd</sup> October was attended by less than 25 people, excluding EC members and officers, which could not be considered to be representative although I note that it is listed in the latest Guidance Note from the legal advisers as **'Special Meeting of Members to consult on the draft CIO Constitution – Complete'**!*

Since then there has been no further feedback to members until the revised documents were placed recently on the GA website with a barely noticeable link hidden away in the text of the January and February editions of **uni-news**. You really have to work hard to find this stuff which is why I am sure that the great majority of 'grass-roots' Unitarians are completely unaware of these changes. Most of my submissions have been ignored with not even the courtesy of an explanation.

Compare this with the years of consultations which took place up to 2005 when the last big constitutional changes came in, abolishing the old GA Council and establishing the EC. Remember the **Task Force**? The current approach to consultation which, sadly, we have become used to in recent times, is simply **not good enough**.

Next month the EC will ask the Annual Meeting to approve the draft CIO documents and pass a motion giving the EC carte blanche to make any changes required after consultation with the Charity Commission and to call a Special General Meeting on Zoom prior to establishing the CIO, transferring all the assets and liabilities of the existing GA charity to the CIO and winding it up by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, all without further discussion of the wording of the documents with our members.

**I submit that this is far too rushed and that the final approval should be put back to the 2026 GA Annual Meetings at the earliest to give time for the details of the changes to sink in and be amended if necessary.**

Now, here is a difficult message from me to all Unitarians. I know that ploughing through draft constitutions line by line is not most people's idea of a fun occupation! Indeed, if any readers suffer from insomnia I highly recommend settling back with all these documents for a bedtime read. You won't stay awake for long! The message is that you must steel yourself to go through it all line by line. It really is:

## TIME TO WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE!

Otherwise we stand to be saddled with CIO rules which don't meet our needs.

I want to stress at this point that I am not in any way against the move to CIO status. I appreciate that it offers important clarity and benefits to the GA in respect of a legal identity for ownership of property and employment of staff. I know that there is also a school of thought that CIO status may limit the liability of the Trustees (and members?). I just want to make sure that the changes are thoroughly considered to eliminate problems down the line.

I'm not going to go through the documents in detail here (it would take up most of **Foy News**) but I said I would give some examples so here goes:

- The processes for raising motions at GA meetings has been taken out of the Constitution and placed in Standing Orders. This means that these can be changed by the EC between meetings, subject only to ratification by a majority vote at the start of meetings. Keeping them in the constitution protects them from change because a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority would be needed to amend.
- In the draft CIO document the definition of classes of membership are relegated to page 5 after lengthy sections in legal language on such matters as powers of the CIO and legal constraints on EC members, even though the EC is not described and defined until much later in the document. I submit that this is confusing and unhelpful. My suggestion that it would be clearer and more logical for clauses 9 to 11 (**Membership of the CIO, Members decisions** and **General meetings of members**) and clause 16 (**Honorary Officers**) to come before clauses 4 (**Powers**) and 5 (**Application of income and property**) has been ignored.
- The detailed definitions of membership categories have been relegated from the CIO to the Bye-Laws. In the case of District Associations clause 2.5.2 states that:

# The District Association's minimum Membership shall be 3 Congregations

Whose idea was that? I can tell you that this has caused considerable disquiet up here in the North East where our District, the NUA, has only two churches! Does this mean that we are going to be excluded from voting membership ?

Just examples of changes which are being slipped in under the cover of the CIO process. **Please steel yourselves to make the effort and read it all.** To help you I will ask Hazel to circulate my five-page submission to Foy Members when she sends this **Foy News** out. A handful of my suggestions have been incorporated but the majority have been ignored. I haven't been told why.

## What about The Nightingale Centre?

Since the 1970s until 2024 the General Assembly *"has been considered a parent charity under law to The Nightingale Centre"*. The Centre was, therefore, firmly held within the Unitarian family, something that many of us fought for years to take place after the demise of its former owner, the Northern Sunday School Federation. Apart from its intrinsic value to the movement as the venue for so many Unitarian activities and the base for the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund the Centre is a valuable property and business, worth well in excess of £4 million. Unitarians contribute massively to its success in terms of events, donations to Friends of Hucklow and SACH, and much more as volunteers.

**Last year there was vague mention of proposals for the Centre to become a CIO in its own right. In January we learned from an article in *The Inquirer* that the EC, without any authority from the GA membership, had negotiated the complete separation of the Centre from the GA under its existing charity registration. Unlike the GA, the Centre charity has no members. The Trustees are self-appointing with the only proviso that the GA can appoint up to three Trustees with a minimum of one. There are minimal safeguards to prevent it from drifting away from us in the future, or even being taken over by rogue Trustees professing Unitarian values. How many Unitarians realise that the Centre is now beyond our control?**

I take the view that the way this has been done, with no authority from the GA membership, is nothing short of disgraceful – and symptomatic once again of the scant regard being paid to the views of members. I will be urging the Centre to establish a membership basis when it moves to a CIO so that Unitarians can continue to have a say in its future. **Watch this space!**



# Ramblings .... from Room 10

*(Idle thoughts  
of a not so idle fellow)*

**Richard Varley**

Last October I listened to an audio version of Charles Spencer's book, 'A Very Private School', which tells of his time at Maidwell Hall School in Northamptonshire. It is not all that far from the family home at Althorp, which in turn is a few miles north of Northampton. I'm sure that those who paid for their son's education, from ages 8 to 13, did not expect them to hear allegations, years later, that they had been subjected to physical and sexual abuse from the staff into which whose hands they had been placed.

The headteacher, in particular, was liberal in his use of corporal punishment, leaving some boys marked for life. In my mind, it seems strange that there appeared to be no comeback from parents until after the time Spencer left. Indeed, the headteacher left not long after. It appears to have received little press until Spencer published his book last March. One of the lasting effects it left on him was that for a period of some years, he has received therapy and has found writing the book a very troubling experience.

Now the matter has been reported to be in the course of investigation by the police and more of those who had similar experiences are being interviewed, albeit some fifty years after the period in question. They have asked anyone having troubling experiences at the school, or anywhere else, to come forward. The school became co-educational in 2010 but is to close at the end of the summer term this year due to insolvency.

As I finished the book, came the news that the Archbishop of Canterbury had resigned following increasing pressure over his failure to report prolific child abuser John Smyth, who had been accused of attacking dozens of boys, including those he met at Christian camps in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. Smyth, who was a barrister, and a senior member of a Christian charity, then moved to Zimbabwe and later South Africa, where he abused up to 100 boys aged 13 to 17. By 2013, those at the highest level were aware of Smyth's abuse,



including Mr Welby who took up the top job that year. An independent report said that Smyth should have been brought to justice before then. Failure to report the abuse to the police at that time meant that he continued to carry on this abuse. It was only when a Channel 4 documentary, in 2017, revealed Smyth's abuse to the public that the police launched a full investigation. He died in 2018 without having been brought to justice.

To me, it is a shameful example of such behaviour, not being energetically investigated at the time those who should have acted first knew of it. It took some persuasion by other Bishops that he should resign and that he had not done enough in responding to the reports, which made it look as though he and the Church of England had effectively been involved in a 'cover up'.

Another example of a failure to act upon reports of those subjected to undesirable behaviour concerns Greg Wallace, one of BBC's 'MasterChef' presenters. Some women raised issues as far back as 2015, but no action was taken at the time. When this sort of response is received, it makes those affected reluctant to raise similar concerns. He was accused of inappropriate sexual behaviour, jokes and remarks made during the making of the television shows by several women. He then had to apologise for his defence when he had said that his accusers were a 'a handful of middle class women of a certain age'. A prime example of trying to dig yourself out of a hole by digging further. It appears that the aspirational nature of television work, results in people tolerating abusive treatment being afraid to 'rock the boat'. It therefore suggests that certain high profile presenters as being 'untouchable'. Where attempts have been made by would be TV whistle blowers, their attempts to report have been ignored. Have we still not learnt the lessons of Jimmy Saville et al?

Recently, Lynne and I were driving round parts of Northampton, where the streets are lined with rows of terrace houses. Bearing in mind the current push for people to drive electric vehicles, with the aim of ceasing production of petrol and diesel cars in 2030, followed by hybrids five years later, there needs to be more thought given to the ability for drivers to charge their vehicles from a domestic supply. Fine if you have your own driveway, but if you are one of those who live in one of these areas and sometimes struggle to find a parking space, then it is totally impossible to do so. Even if you do manage to park by your house, it wouldn't be possible to run the charging cable to the car without causing a trip hazard unless a gulley, in which to route the cable, was provided: hardly a feasible solution, especially if you were parked anywhere else. In an ideal world, there would be sufficient kerbside chargers, but the infrastructure implications would be enormous. I have been researching reports about arrangements for the ability for swapping used battery packs for fully charged

replacements. On the face of this, it seems a practical approach to counter the problems, but like other charging solutions, there are significant infrastructure implications.

In recent years, we have holidayed, as a family, in Anglesey for a week in August. Our son kindly takes us in his electric car. Wales is not one of the best places to use an electric car. The custom is to fully charge his car at a high speed charger near Flint: an opportunity to eat a lunch whilst we wait. During the week he must go to use one of the very few reasonably speedy chargers on the island. We have found two in Holyhead; a wrong turn and you could find yourself catching a ferry to Dublin! The bottom line is that when legislating for such change, fuller consideration must be given to addressing all the implications. It is ideal if you can charge your car overnight at your home, only needing public facilities when you make longer journeys. Even so, you need to plan the location, and the time taken to charge, and hope there isn't a queue. Being totally selfish, we will probably be able to buy new or used hybrid cars for as long as we are likely to need to!

I am looking forward to learning more about AI at the forthcoming Foy Conference in May. It is a subject about which I want to hear more, in both positive and negative ways. It is important to recognise the problems that AI may present as well as the positive ways it may be used.

Safeguards against abuse must be robust. There are many modern developments which have presented problems. One only has to consider one of the effects of the internet in education. There are those students who download information for projects and include it verbatim, whereas before use had to be made of seeking information from text books. On the other hand I have found the internet invaluable on finding out how to carry out a particular task.

I was saddened by the observation in Gordon Lothian's piece, in the last Foy News, in which he surmised that Foy, having celebrated its hundred year anniversary, might not survive another ten. The thought went through my mind when I surveyed the members of Foy Council at its last meeting, held on Zoom. Two members are octogenarians, three approaching the same landmark, one in their mid seventies and just three under the age of seventy. Hardly a balanced range of ages.

At the AGM we will be looking to appoint, at least, a new President and Secretary: the former having completed a splendid two year term of office and

latter for personal reasons. A number of us have lived through the decline of UYPL. I'm sure that we would all really prefer Foy to be in a position to continue its role as a ginger group and aiming to stir the conscience of the Unitarian Majority movement as a whole, often with much success. Surely something for Foy to consider a Conference, sooner rather than later?

My tailpieces this time are in the form of a couple photographs I have taken over the past few months.

*(Apologies to our illustrious editor for recording them on my phone: not being a retired professional photographer, I don't carry my camera around with me...!*

*Don't tell him that I haven't done so for goodness knows how long!!)*

*One is a sign on the door to a National trust café – I did ask them if humans were welcome as well! The second is a sign outside a bar/restaurant: there was me thinking that an hour comprised of sixty minutes!*



# Margaret Williams

(née Eccleshall)

known to many UYPLers from a  
bygone era

(particularly the 1960s and 70s)

best known for her performing and  
keyboard skills at  
Pendleton and later as  
Organist at Wythenshawe and  
Dunham Rd (Altrincham)  
for most of her life....



*Ed: Many Manchester area UYPLers who later graduated to Foy Membership will remember Margaret Eccleshall (later to become Williams) It was as organist at Wythenshawe that I first encountered Margaret's smile, her giggles and her radiating affection for the Unitarian social life in Manchester at that time. She was a close friend of my sister Anne and lived nearby, close to Brooks Bar. We were nearby, just around the corner on Upper Chorlton Road. They shared a love of music and **Gilbert and Sullivan** brought them together at the end of the '50s. I well remember some of our early social trips, including travelling together in motor-cars of doubtful reliability.*

*On one occasion, travelling together involved a rather tired Citroen 2CV which I had acquired for £12 (one side of the engine being supported by a block of wood). I was in the process of restoring it, as a 21st birthday present for my sister. On an early test drive with Margaret in the back, there was an ominous loud drumming noise from one of the back wheels. On investigation it was apparent that the source of the noise was the tip of Margaret's folding umbrella which had found its way through a hole in the bodywork and was strumming a tune in the tread of the rear nearside tyre.*

Artificial Intelligence, All you need to Know...



*On another occasion we were on our way home from a Manchester Folk Club and were stopped at the traffic lights, by the Billiards Hall at All Saints, heading towards Stretford Road. As we set off again, there was a loud clatter as the nearside rear door fell off and crashed onto the side of the road. Having crossed the lights I pulled into the side and had the indignity of wading back and collecting the aforesaid door. The suspension on a 2CV was always renowned for its elasticity and, as I arrived at the car from behind, Margaret's mirth was clearly apparent as the car rocked violently from side-to-side....*

*Those were a couple of my own memories of Margaret and at a recent Memorial Service, at Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel, her son Peter spoke of his departed mother with love and affection:*

"I first met Margaret back in 1973 at Crumpsall Hospital. She was as high as a kite on gas, and my immediate reaction was to scream and wet myself - hardly an auspicious start. I think I had to be taken to an incubator for a few hours to recover. We later got to know each other a bit better over rusks and milk and over the years I learned her life story:

Her father Cyril Eccleshall was a policeman for a while and eventually a grocer in Moss Side. He was her rock and probably had more in common with her than any living soul since. He was a gadget enthusiast, had a zest for life and exploration but unlike the rest of the family was tone deaf, to the chagrin of Pendleton Unitarian Church, where he was often relegated to the back of the chorus during musical productions. She told me how she would try and teach him the music and lyrics to Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* where he was one of the peers. She would play the piano while he tried to sing along. It was my grandfather's distorted renditions of Gilbert and Sullivan that spawned a life-long love of Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas in Margaret.

She had a sister, who was also her best friend, called Constance who sadly passed away, far too early, in her 50s. The two of them shared a house together for a while in Manchester during the 60s where they would frequently entertain the local police! who would duck in to watch *Coronation Street* and be served cups of tea and cake by Margaret's excellent cooking. Maybe the less said about this époque in Margaret's life the better .....

What is Artificial Intelligence? How does it work?

She grew up in a household full of music, artistry and learning .. and laughter. The family were heavily involved with the Pendleton Unitarian Church and it was here Margaret became exposed to theatre, musicals and performance with regular pantomimes, musical soirees and social events, that gave her the opportunity to shine.

In her late teens and early twenties she got a side hustle working as a cook in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. Great Hucklow is a great spiritual home for Unitarians, made famous, in latter years, by the 'send a child to Hucklow' charity, sending impoverished inner-city children for life altering holidays in the most beautiful setting.

You'll never encounter more communal spirit than at Great Hucklow. Now, I don't know how popular her cooking was but on one occasion she told me she got back to the centre to find her knickers and bra had been hung out of the window. I never knew how to judge this. A mark of appreciation or a protest against her cooking.

She became involved in the UYPL (Unitarian Young People's League) and some of her best memories are from Great Hucklow and the friendships forged there. She started piano lessons from an early age under the guidance of Miss Whitworth who was a concert pianist with the Halle orchestra. She encouraged Margaret to take on the role of church organist at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church at the age of 16, a feat that attracted the interests of the press, and made her family very proud.

It was at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church she was first introduced to my Dad Colin Williams, a friend of Bill Greaves. Trevor Jones, the minister at Wythenshawe used to organize a folk evening and my Dad came along with his guitar.. and Davy Crocket hat! Colin, when he saw Margaret claimed "She's the one I'm going to marry". That prompted Margaret to move to London and train as a chef, but despite this, Margaret married Colin in 1969.

In 1979 Dad had an opportunity to work abroad and they decided to move to The Netherlands for a few years, specifically Scheveningen on Holland's 'Golden Coast'.

Most of our members booking in for the next Foy Conference simply want to learn more about this phenomenon - Artificial Intelligence

This was only yards away from the front door. I used to come in from school, throw my uniform on the floor and run out to the beach (in my trunks.. although it was a nudist beach !) Mum got involved in various clubs and societies there and became something of a ten pin bowling champion, winning various awards.

Mum and Dad bought a trailer tent and often, we would be picked up from school on a Friday afternoon and drive around Europe having fabulous mini breaks. The fly in the ointment was my Mum's poor night vision; we woke up on a Saturday morning in Italy realizing we had parked up on a roundabout in the middle of a busy road. We were alerted to the mistake when mum unzipped the tent door in her nightie and exposed her modesty to the oncoming traffic!

All too soon the adventure was over and we came back to Heald Green. Dad decided to pack up computing to become his own boss as a hardware shop owner, in Gatley. This was a spectacular flop! He quickly went back to computing but left Mum running the hardware shop for a while. Nevertheless, she made the most of it and spent many an idle hour chatting with the customers over a cuppa. That shop became a hub of gossip - and the only 'Do It Yourself' was when customers had to make their own brew in the back kitchen.

My Dad was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer and died in 1989. Very fortunately an itinerant salesman had sold some insurance policies to my dad so the mortgage was paid out and she had a modest widows pension.

There is a saying : "Out of the ashes, a phoenix arises!"

Mum was left with the worries of private school fees, our wellbeing and her own. It was a very difficult time for Mum and she became overwhelmed and depressed by her new circumstances.

She never gave up or let us down though, Soon there were very significant invitations; the first one was to play the organ for Dunham Road Unitarian Chapel.. and we know how that went... The second was to play the piano for a theatrical production for Heald Green Theatre Club. That launched Mum back once again into the ribaldry and gaudiness of theatrical life.

How can we individually make use of Artificial Intelligence?

About two years ago Mum noticed her breathing wasn't quite as it should be and took herself to the doctors. A few weeks later she received the devastating news that she had lung cancer and was given months to live, at best. But being the contrary madam she was largely known for, she squeezed out another two years and lived those years to the max. We would take ourselves for a drive with no particular destination, throwing fate to the wind, but always ending up having a great adventure at some place or another. We toured Shropshire, Shrewsbury, Derbyshire and Cheshire and in those adventures she would do the rounds at theatres and frequent local cafes with friends. She probably packed as much into those last two years as the previous twenty. Then there was Gwyneth Roper's daughter's wedding in Great Hucklow where, despite the adversity of her health, she determinedly dragged herself there, even if it killed her!

Finally, she was taken to St. Anne's Hospice on 4th November 2024. By this time she was exhausted and thoroughly worn out, apart from her smile. Mum immediately became a hit with the staff due to her glamorous sparkly nails and matching bed set.. and her glorious smile. Even if she couldn't get the breath to speak, she could always grace us with that smile.

On 5th December, 2024 at 4pm, Mum drew her last breath. Moments before she had been smiling and a bit chatty, although thoroughly exhausted. Her final words to me were said with such sincerity, " I do love you! " As her head was cradled in my hands, as she slipped away, looking up with love at a sobbing son, and then she was gone! As I stand here in Dunham Road Chapel and look over to the organ, my Mum is there in spirit, memorialized on a plaque and immortalized in an Oliver Lomax poem. She's there in Barbara's handbag and sparkly top. She's reflected back to me in your eyes. Gone, or just transformed?

I'll end with this quote from Kahlil Gibran:

**“When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,  
and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for  
that which has been your delight.”**

*Peter Williams*

How is Artificial Intelligence in our society, controlled?



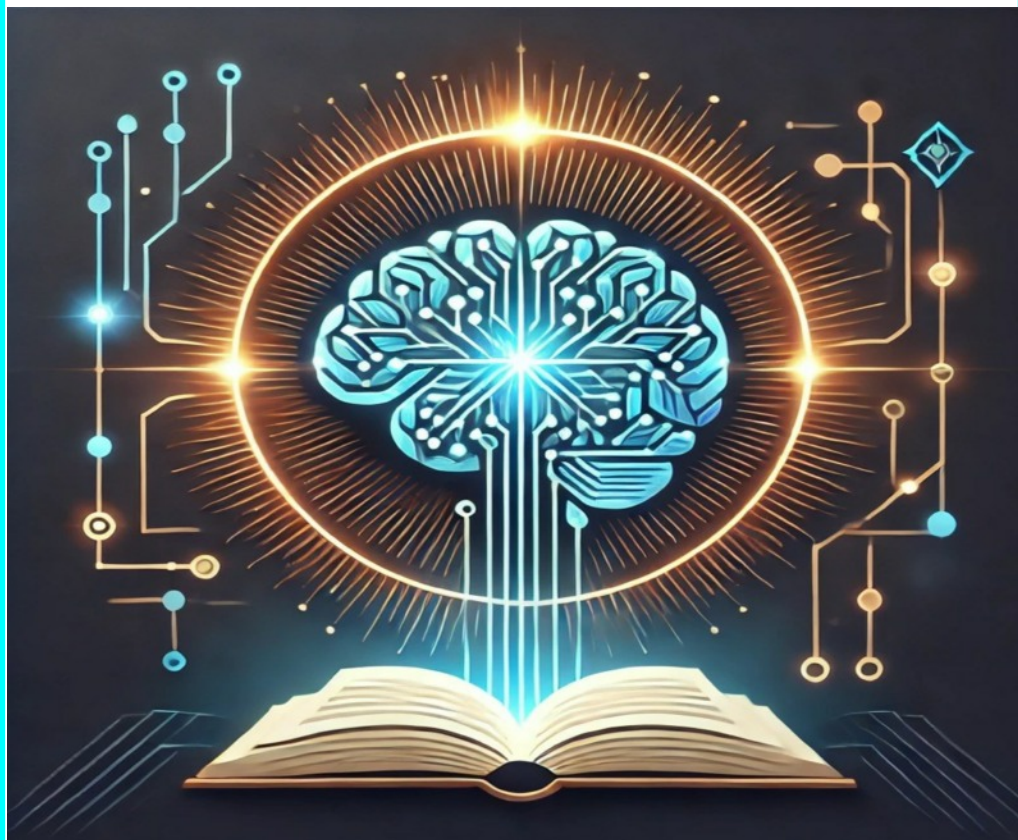


**Foy Conference  
2025**



# ***Artificial Intelligence—AI***

*What you need to know . . .*



**2nd to 5th May 2025 at The Nightingale Centre,  
Great Hucklow, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8RH, UK**

Does the Search Engine in my computer use Artificial Intelligence?

# News of Members



Hazel Warhurst



I would like to record the death of **Margaret (Maggie) Williams nee Eccleshall**. Maggie was a UYPL member in the 1960's at the time when quite a number of our current Foy membership were core members of UYPL- the Unitarian Young Peoples' League.

On Sunday 6th September 2024 a plaque was unveiled in Dunham Road Chapel and Foy past President, Gwyneth Roper, presented Maggie with gifts to mark an amazing 35 years as their organist. A surprise visit from the Provost that day resulted in Maggie being given the Freedom of Altrincham. Maggie battled with health issues for a number of years but was always cheerful. She will be missed.

Our President, Dot and husband John, (who knew Margaret and the Eccleshall family well when she played organ at the Wythenshawe Chapel), after her time being involved at Pendleton, went to a memorial service for Margaret at Dunham Road Chapel. Some of John's own memories of Margaret are on page 28, followed by her son Peter's eulogy, which Peter read as part of this celebration of his Mother's life.

We send our love and condolences to **Becky** (Rebecca Ford) and her family, who now live in New Zealand, on the death of her Mum, **Janet Ford**, in hospital on 11th February.



Janet helps  
Hazel with  
Zette sales  
In 2005

Photograph  
David Warhurst

What do Robots have to do with Artificial Intelligence?

Janet was a regular at the Unitarian General Assembly Meetings. We have missed her in recent years when an increasing lack of mobility prevented her from attending. Janet was a stalwart and could always be relied upon to get up early and sell copies of 'Zette to Delegates during breakfast.

*The editor is sorry not to include a full obituary for Janet in this issue. This will appear in the next edition of Foy News.*

We also have news of the death of Ann Edwards, sister of Donald Dunkley. We send our condolences to husband John, and the boys.

## STOP PRESS:

As we go to press, we have just received the news that Kathy Packer died yesterday. Sadly, she has been suffering from dementia for a number of years. After various ministries in the South West, following retirement, she and Brian moved to the Bradford area.

Some years ago, as a study leader at our annual Conference, Kathy delivered a memorable conference theme on the subject of, "Death". We understand that it was a great success, with a most able external speaker.

## Congratulations:

We send our congratulations to **Gwyneth and Robert Roper** on the birth of their first grandchild in St John's, Newfoundland, Canada. Evangeline Eirwen (who will be known as Eva) was born on 8th December 2024 to their daughter, Lizzie, and Dave Cox.

**Lizzie and her little family are visiting the UK in May and we are delighted that they have booked to join us for part of our Conference when Lizzie will lead a session on the Saturday.**

Is Artificial Intelligence connected with SPIN or FALSE NEWS?



Recent picture of the Ushers with their Family mascot

**Ann Usher** who often sends us news from New South Wales, Australia, shared some photographs of the family taken at Christmas at Lake Tambourie. Some of you will remember Geoffrey and his brother David who first came to our conferences when they were students at Manchester College Oxford in 1980, and most recently from his ministry at Upper Chapel, Sheffield.

Their children, Andrew and Elizabeth are both very musically talented. Andrew is principal cellist with the National Capital Orchestra and Elizabeth composes many songs, sings and accompanies herself on the guitar.

We were sorry to hear from our editor that **Valerie Walker** still has ongoing health problems. To all our members who are struggling with health problems and/or family issues, we are holding you in our thoughts.

## Subscriptions

As we are approaching the end of another financial year I must get organised and chase up those members, who, for one reason or another, haven't renewed their subscriptions. I will remind you of how to pay in the email.

If you have decided you no longer wish to be a member it would be extremely helpful if you could write an email confirming it. This would enable me to finish tidying up my Members' Contacts List.

[hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk](mailto:hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk)

Will Artificial Intelligence undermine my "Ethical views" ?

## Our Next Foy Society Annual Conference

### Our theme: Artificial Intelligence

What is it? How does it work? How will it affect me?  
Who controls it? Can it be regulated? Does it follow a moral code? Does it help opportunists to make money?

Since the Autumn Edition of Foy News, our President has been approached by several of our members with experience in this rapidly developing extension of computer technology. Together we will explore some of the exciting potential available to us if we follow the inbuilt algorithms of current computer technology.

The fact is, modern life is full of an amazing current of fast flowing waters and the sooner we can learn to swim these choppy waters, the sooner we can harness the energy which abounds, and influence the new parameters which will avoid the technology being ethically compromised. Also we will be looking at how infringement of Artistic and Creative copyright needs to be avoided by suitable regulation and important legislation.

If you wish to be involved in leading sections of our programme, please contact Dot Hewerdine. Join us anyway in, what we expect to be, a participatory and fascinating adventure.

[dot@hewerdinefamily.co.uk](mailto:dot@hewerdinefamily.co.uk)

More details & Bookings to our Conference Secretary  
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