



South East Wales Unitarian News

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November 2016

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 4 December – District Carol Service: 11am at Gellionnen, with lunch to follow.

Sunday, 18 December – Highland Place Christmas Service/Concert at 6pm – see Aberdare News below.

Saturday, 12 January 2017 – copy deadline for the next issue of the District News.

FROM THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

Days are growing shorter, the beautiful colours of Autumn are all around us, the first frosts have arrived and I am entering the twilight of my presidency. Once again there is plenty of other good news in the District. I am very pleased that Rev Maud Robinson has taken up the post of Minister at Cardiff Unitarians. Congratulations to the Cardiff congregation and on behalf of the District, I wish Maud Robinson a long, happy and successful ministry at Cardiff.



Joy Foster, Dorothy Hewerdine, Tony Foster, Diana Bianchi

It was so pleasing to see so many of you from across the District attending the Dare Valley Country Park for the visit of the GA President, Dorothy Hewerdine. It was a very pleasant evening with good food in the company of friends. I hope everyone enjoyed themselves. I am grateful to Dot for making the trip to South East Wales and for sharing her reminiscences of times spent in Wales and of her recent trip to the ICUU (International Council of Unitarians and Universalists) meetings in the Netherlands.

My thanks also to Melda Grantham and Gwynn Pritchard for their toasts, Diana Bianchi for the presentation, Lis Dyson-Jones for all the arrangements and to all of you for attending.

I thoroughly enjoyed the service given by Rev Eric Jones on the life of Rev Jacob Davies, held at Capel Penrhiw, St Fagan's on September 11th. Although not the comfiest of chapels to sit through a service, I always feel there is something special about services that are held there.

Joy and I attended a special Coffee Morning in Nottage on 21st October. This was held in aid of Epilepsy Action and over £240 was raised. Well done to Rev Lewis Rees and members of the congregation and thank you to everyone at Nottage for the wonderful welcome extended to us.

I am glad that Aberdare Unitarians have decided to invest in banners for the outside of the church. It shows that we are alive and kicking and that it is not just services on a Sunday that take place inside the building.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the District Carol Service at Gellionnen on Sunday 4th December. I would urge everyone to come along if you possibly can, it makes such a difference when there is a good-sized congregation. The atmosphere at last year's service was superb, and with a real log fire this year, it will be a special event.

Tony Foster

FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITARIAN WELSH DEPARTMENT

The Harvest Festival "season" is drawing to a close, and some people are already looking forward to Christmas! It will be upon us before we know it and one date firmly written in my diary is the 4th December when I shall be attending the SEWUS Christmas Service at Gellionnen.

I attended the Folk Service at Gellionnen this year for the first time, and was delighted to see the cross-section of local people who attended. It's always good to see non-Unitarians looking so much at home in our chapels and churches.

Another special evening was spent in the company of SEWUS members at the dinner to welcome our national President, Dot Hewardine at Dare Country Park. The food, location and company were excellent and it was great to see so many present. It was also good to see Dot and Lis Dyson-Jones the next day at Capel y Fadfa, Talgarreg.

Since the last edition of the newsletter, we have been very fortunate in Wales to be able to appoint two new ministers. The Rev Alun-Wyn Dafis recently took up his post at Brondeifi chapel, Lampeter and the welcome service for him was a great occasion. We are also delighted to welcome Rev Maud Robinson to Cardiff and look forward to some exciting times ahead.

But, as always, there's a lot going on between now and Christmas. Following the presence of BAWSO on our stand at the National Eisteddfod, I have been invited to address a seminar organised by Dyfed-Powys Police Force. Representatives from every police force in Wales will be present and it will provide an opportunity to bring Unitarianism to a wider audience.

There will also be a special event held on the 25th November at Cardiff to which all Unitarians are invited. This is a Light a Candle Event to mark White Ribbon Day which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The day will start with a march at 9am and we are encouraged to bring banners. There will then be an ecumenical service at Llandaff Cathedral between 10.00 and 12.00. The key speaker will be Carl Sargeant Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children. I do hope that some of you will be able to attend this event.

Looking further ahead, preparations are beginning to be made for the GA Annual Meetings which take place in Birmingham again next year from the 10th to the 13th April. Unitarians Wales and the two District Associations will be responsible for the Opening Ceremony on the Monday evening, and we are hoping that some members from Bangor Unitarians will be able to join in as well. If you are able to attend and are willing to participate, then please do let me, or any of the SEWUS officers know.

Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the coming weeks, and please do make every effort to attend at least one event – it really does make a difference when events are well supported.

Melda Grantham

GA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE KEY MESSAGES 12 & 13 SEPTEMBER 2016

1. Training and Education Development Project

"Ministry in all its forms" is a key element of "From Vision to Action: Next Steps" with the aim to ensure the provision of the best possible ministry for congregations. The Executive Committee of the General Assembly (EC) has agreed that we must move with some urgency to develop a modular framework for training, education and professional development that will be accessible by a larger number and variety of people; some of whom may then seek entry into professional Ministry. The need for action now has been emphasised.

This proposal has the full support of the Unitarian College Manchester (UCM) and follows the UCM Residential held in June which drew together many of those active in education and training across the Unitarian Movement. Other key stakeholders, including Harris Manchester College, Oxford as well as those providing lay training and other interested parties will be engaged in the project.

In order to take the project forward, Rachel Skelton will be seconded from UCM to work for the General Assembly for a year from 1 October 2016 as project manager. The plan will be to present a new model to the GA Annual Meetings in April 2017 and then work on implementation. An Advisory Group will be established to steer the project and Rachel will report to the Chief Officer.

2. Nightingale Centre

The Executive Committee was pleased to meet at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire in light of their responsibilities as Trustees of the Centre, as well as of the General Assembly. Members of the Centre Management Committee joined the EC. They were given a guided tour of the building during which Centre Manager, Stella Burney, described the new improvements and plans for the future.

Proposals for the Barleycrofts Cottages, properties owned by the Nightingale Centre, were also outlined. The Management Committee, Centre Manager and all staff were thanked for their contribution to making the Centre such a success. The ways in which the Centre demonstrated Unitarian values in action were highlighted and it was agreed that they could and should be promoted further.

3. Campus Ministry – Cambridge

One of the "From Vision to Action: Next Steps" was to pilot some form of campus ministry initiative. The Executive Committee agreed to support Cambridge Unitarian Church's initiative to establish a University Society in Cambridge University and to match their funding. This will enable the project to continue for one year. A grant of £10,000 has been awarded.

In agreeing the grant it has been emphasised that it would be a pilot project from which there can be learning for others in the Denomination interested in promoting some form of campus ministry. A report will be being produced on the outcomes in the key areas of work which could include a manual for others.

4. General Assembly Budget 2016-2017

The Budget for the year commencing 1 October 2016 was agreed. The congregational quota will remain at £35 per member. The Essex Hall Trust and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association were thanked for their contributions to support the work of the General Assembly. There is a particular need in the year ahead to manage expenditure carefully. We face a number of pressures, but already considerable work has been undertaken by David Joseph, the new Finance Manager, to improve the validity of the underlying assumptions, for which he was thanked.

5. Annual Meetings

The Annual Meetings Panel presented a discussion paper to EC on arrangements for future meetings from 2019 onwards. The increasing cost of the Meetings has been accompanied by growing expectations regarding quality. In thinking about the future it was essential to ensure that all the objectives for the Meetings can be met; doing the formal business required as a charity, providing a programme that will inspire attendees, providing education and training as well as facilitating social interaction and networking.

One proposal would reduce the length of the overall Meetings. It was recognized that the direction, structure and content of the Meetings needed to be widely discussed before any proposals for change were presented for approval. The EC will be guided by the Annual Meetings Panel on how this is taken forward. Andrew Mason was thanked for his work on the discussion paper.

6. Help is at Hand

A report was received from Louise Rogers on updating "Help is at Hand"; the General Assembly's resource for congregational officers. This resource will henceforth be available on the GA website, enabling future updating to be done more easily. This forms one of the "Vision into Action: Next Steps" as part of the "How we organise ourselves" section.

7. What is a Unitarian? Video

The Executive Committee was pleased to hear that the "What is a Unitarian?" video has been viewed 1795 times in the three months since it was placed on YouTube. It is an excellent short introduction to Unitarianism and congregations are encouraged to link to it on their own websites. It is available to view from the homepage of the GA website or on [Youtube](#).

MY OPUS ADVENTURE

By Caroline Boyce

I am a young Unitarian from Cardiff who had the pleasure of going through the Unitarian youth programme and finding my feet and my identity through that. I am currently at a strange bridging stage in my Unitarian life. I am twenty-two years old and clinging on to the youth programme while trying to become more involved with BUYAN. When my former youth leaders Jen Hazel and Sarah Atkinson told us about their previous experience of Opus and how inspiring it was, I jumped at the opportunity. Michael Readett and I approached the FOY society and the youth programme for funding support to make this dream a reality and they kindly granted us this. For this, I am eternally grateful.

I would now like to give you a brief account of my experience of Opus. I will firstly give a quick explanation of what Opus is. Opus is a 5-day annual retreat for Unitarian Universalist Young Adults aged 18-35 which includes worship, workshops, and social justice activities set on a given theme. The theme for this year was '*Dance Magic Dance!*' inspired by the 1986 film starring David Bowie. The theme was based around treasuring and finding all things magical in our lives. This year's retreat took place at Buckhorn Camp in the beautiful Rocky Mountains in Colorado with lots of hiking trails, rock climbing, fire pits, and ponds. Every time I glanced around camp I couldn't believe how lucky I was to be in such a beautiful place.



Carrie is 2nd from the left in second row (wearing ID tag)

Worship and Touch Groups

Worship at Opus was not what you expect it to be in a conventional sense. Completely far from it! It took place every day, mostly in the evening, for about 45 minutes to an hour. I was truly blown away and touched by the rituals offered at Opus. For example, on the first evening we entered a circle and began chanting 'Take my hand' (a UU bridging song). The regular Opus-goers then walked down a path into the darkness and formed a line facing one another continuing to chant the song. The newcomers followed in suit one-by-one being welcomed by the chant. Everyone then sat around a beautiful rock face. An altar was then lit up with fairy lights with a bowl of water full of glitter. Julie Brock, the lead worship co-ordinator, gave a wonderful speech about us entering a magical space where everyone is held and loved and far from the stresses and realities back home. One-by-one we then offered items to the altar that represented us and shared "my magical stardust quality" while throwing glitter dust into the air. This ritual symbolized us offering a quality we cherish and that would enrich one another's week. It was heart-warming to see how keen everyone was to get up and get involved. Julie mentioned at the beginning of worship that worship is a time to activate our 'ritual brains' and I came to realise what she meant by this. The opening ritual took me to a place of contentment, calmness, mindfulness, appreciation, connection and community. In that moment the outside world stood still and everybody was in that special place together simultaneously. Quite an experience for a first jet-lagged day!

Another worship that stood out for me was one focusing on realising the good in you and embracing it at Opus and letting go of the bad. This was done high up in the mountainside with the wonderful views in the distance during sunset. Everybody lined up to have their hands washed slowly with the magical glittery water whilst being blessed with encouraging words by Julie while Christopher Lamb played and sang an inspiring acoustic track on his guitar in the background. A few teary eyes were amongst us during the worship!

Opus also offered touch groups that took place every evening. A time to meet as a small group to process how everyone was doing, feeling, and anything else that was on our minds. These were similar to credo groups that I had experienced at youth events in the UK. I can't recall every single fond moment from my touch group as there are too many to mention. But one included playing the 'HA HA' game by placing our heads on each other's stomachs and starting a laughing chain which went on for ever.

Workshops and Activities

Opus also offered a wonderful selection of diverse and enriching workshops. My personal favourite and most inspiring was the all camp workshop '*Dances of Universal Peace*' which offered an experience of praying and dancing in celebration of diversity and in honour of the unity of all creatures. Our dance leader took us through many chants from different cultures including Arabic and Sanskrit which was accompanied by circle and pair dance movements. It was magical as the group moved as a unity and let go of the

everyday hustle and bustle to connect on a deeper level of meeting and appreciation for diversity and unity. It was equally a meditative experience full of joy and peace. I cannot recommend this practice enough and also recently discovered it exists in the UK!

I also thoroughly enjoyed Christopher Lamb's 'Song writing as a spiritual practice' workshop whereby we worked as a group to offer words and have them turned into a tune together. Amazingly, the outcome became a song about the local rabbits who carry the plague. I guess you had to be there to appreciate the humour in this! It was a unifying process with lots of harmonies and free-style emerging effortlessly. I could not flaw how we all felt comfortable and compelled to offer anything without any judgment and lots of encouragement along the way!

Opus also offered a good balance of free-time and other activities. This included hiking in the beautiful mountains although altitude left us breathless many times! We also had team-building exercises such as human foosball*. Evenings included Coffee house where people shared and enjoyed one another's talents and the 'Black Lives Matter Dance' where black artists were celebrated and appreciated to raise money and support for a charity supporting this in Denver.

Closing Thoughts

Opus has been truly *magical!* It has been a pleasure to meet our counterparts from across the pond, hear their experiences, share our stories together, celebrate our similarities and respect our differences. It was both surprising and refreshing to see an even newer wave of liberalism that extended in terms of sexuality, sex positivity, identity, being sensitive with the language we use and awareness of our own privilege and its effects on others. I also discovered many wonderful alternative ways of worship and had a lot of laughs and fun throughout. Our UU youth counterparts are so passionate, liberal and social justice minded and throw themselves into everything enthusiastically. I absolutely could not recommend the experience enough and can't really put into words how inspired I am by the experience. I really, really, really would go back in a second and hope that I will be able to with funding help once again. I also hope I can spread the word for other young Unitarians to join me and experience the magic of Opus too. I have made some long lasting friendships and have taken away with me so many new ideas and reflected much more deeply about my own spiritual path and identity from the process.

* *Foosball* is a table-top game/sport: '*human foosball*' is just like table-top foosball but with *real* people.

THOUGHT FOR NOW

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

There is only one way to be happy and that is to make somebody else so.

Robert G Ingersoll

ABERDARE

Women's League

Aberdare WL resumed their weekly meetings after the August break on September 14th with a programme planning session. Along with our usual activities the highlight of the Autumn session has been the visit of WL National President, Janet Poole, at our District meeting. Janet gave a very inspiring service at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Chapel, Cefncoed, which was followed by a lovely tea in the vestry, where Janet's husband Bill won a bottle of plonk in the raffle. Thanks to the women of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd for their warm welcome. We are now looking forward to the rest of our weekly programme, with a mixture of speaker, demonstration, Christmas shopping trip, our Christmas meal and decorating our lovely church for our Christmas Service.

PS: Our Christmas Service this year will feature the welcome return of Nathan Jones and 'Rechoir', which was enjoyed enormously last year by a packed audience from across South Wales and the West Country. Everyone Welcome... **Sunday 18th December 6pm at Highland Place Church, Aberdare (CF44 7PN).**

I take this opportunity to wish you all, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy, Peaceful 2017.

With Love and Blessings.... Joy Foster.

On September 11th Rev Eric Jones broadcast a memorial service to the late Rev Jacob Davies on Radio Cymru. He was assisted by Dafydd Jones and Diana Bianchi. He also spoke about Rev Jacob Davies on a programme with John Hardy – 'Cofio'



Also on September 11th a bilingual service on the life of Rev Jacob Davies was given by Rev Eric Jones at Capel Penrhiw, Sain Ffagan. On September 18th, a joint Harvest Thanksgiving Service with Cardiff, Cefncoed and Aberdare Unitarians was held at Highland Place Church. A memorable service was delivered by guest minister Rev Wyn Thomas.

There was also an emotional speech given by Highland Place organist, 18yr old Jacob Jones who has been our organist for 6 years, which made this a very special occasion. Jacob spoke of the impact that Unitarian ideals and Aberdare Unitarians have made on him. We all remember him when he first started as our organist at 12 years of age, when he used to peer over the organ curtains. We have had the pleasure of seeing him develop into an excellent organist and a fine young man. We will all miss him at Highland Place and hope that wherever life takes him in the future, he will keep a small space in his heart for us, we certainly

will for him. We wish him well with his studies at Warwick University and look forward to him returning as guest organist when the opportunities arise.

We are very pleased that his 12yr old sister Grace is keeping up the Jones family tradition and has now taken over the post of organist.

Joy and Tony delivered donations to the Merthyr Cynon Food Bank, including the Harvest Service donations, which totalled 56.45 kg. We were pleased to hear that with our assistance 518 people (315 adults and 203 children) were fed in September. Thank you to everyone for your generosity and your continued support of this much-needed charity.

Five new banners have been printed in order that the world outside may understand a little more about us and to invite people to participate. We display two banners at a time and the banner on Meditation is already paying dividends.

We are pleased to have Bill Jenkins from Hirwaun join us recently.

The final total for Anne and Eric's Coffee Morning was £380. A sum of £190 each has been sent in the name of Highland Place to Alzheimer's Research and NSPCC.

Dafydd Jones, grandson of Anne and Eric appeared on the S4C programme Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol, on Sunday 23rd October. He gave a reading on the fiftieth anniversary of the Aberfan Disaster.

Joanna Foster, daughter of Joy and Tony, featured in the Financial Times Weekend Magazine recently in an article on her work with children who set fires.

Tony Foster

CARDIFF UNITARIANS / UNDO DIAID CAERDYDD

During September 'when the grapes are purple' we shared in an interesting range of services including two conducted by our own members. On the 11th members of both our congregations visited Penrhiw Chapel, St Fagan's for a bilingual service conducted by the Rev Eric Jones, based upon his personal memories of the Rev Jacob Davies. On such a beautiful afternoon, it was good to hear recollections of the man whose birth centenary has been celebrated this year. Several members attended a moving joint harvest service at Highland Place, conducted by Parch Wyn Thomas, the minister of six Ceredigion chapels and Chair of the Welsh Department. Sharing such good fellowship and a wonderful afternoon tea with friends from Aberdare and Cefncoed was a happy occasion and we left with joyful memories and full stomachs.

For much of the last six months, our committee has been working diligently to ensure appropriate preparation for the appointment of a minister. The Rev Maud Robinson applied for the post and we are delighted to have been able to appoint her as our new minister. She will begin her ministry with us on 1st November. It is such an exciting time for us as for many years we have been without formal ministerial leadership, but despite being few in number, we are proud to have ministered to one another and have made our worship together as meaningful as possible. We now face changing times, but working in partnership with Maud, giving her as much support as we can as she faces the challenges ahead, we know we can make a difference. Please think of us in your prayers as we embark on a new journey of exploration and endless possibilities.

There have been concerns about the health of Marjorie Collins who has spent much of the last weeks in hospital and is now slowly recovering from pneumonia. She will remain in hospital for a while yet but our great hope is that she will be well enough to join us when her treatment is complete. We send our love and warm wishes to her.

Those able to attend the dinner held at Dare Park Country Club for the visit of the GA President, Mrs Dorothy Hewerdine had an enjoyable, convivial evening.

Three members attended the District women's League Rally on the 12th October which was hosted this year at Cefncoed. The National Women's League President, Mrs Janet Poole was the guest speaker and she conducted a moving service speaking about her own life journey and reminded us that at times, life can be

like a game of snakes and ladders; ups and downs, challenges and rewards, depending on the throw of the dice. How we react and respond is the point.

Life continually throws out challenges to us but we should remember the response of a small child, when asked "What would you do if your little brother swallowed a key to your house?" He said, – "Get in through the window".

We wish all our district friends a happy and peaceful autumn.

'Look to this day, for it is life, the very life of life. Well lived, it makes sense of every yesterday, a dream of happiness and every tomorrow, a vision of hope' (Kalidasa – a Hindu writer)

Lis Dyson-Jones

CEFNCOED

Women's League

On 14th September a 10-strong group of us boarded a minibus and set off for an afternoon trip to the Royal Mint at Llantrisant. After a security bag-search we were allowed in for a behind the scenes tour to watch through a glass wall and see coins being minted – more than 700 are produced every minute.

It was very interesting to see how our money is made and some of us struck our 'own' £1 coins, which we were then able to purchase at £3 each—quite a mark up! We also saw what a million pounds in £1 coins looks like – *COOL!* – but, needless to say, there were no free samples.

An excellent afternoon tea, enjoyed by all, followed the tour. Given the location, one might have expected being served 'mint tea'—but a 'good old cuppa', with cakes and sandwiches, fitted the bill perfectly.

Our Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held on 25th September and league members arranged a display of flowers and garden produce. There was also a large collection of tins and dry foodstuffs which was later donated to the Salvation Army Foodbank in Merthyr Tydfil.

On 12th October we hosted the Women's League District Rally and were joined by members of Aberdare and Cardiff league branches. We gathered in the chapel and were very pleased to welcome our guest speaker, WL National President Mrs Janet Poole, with her husband, Bill. In her address, Janet reminded us that our journey through Life brings both plusses and minuses – what is important is how we let these different experiences *affect* our life. Tea was served in the Vestry following the service.

Heritage

We have participated in the 'Drysau Agored'/'Open Doors' event for a number of years. First organised by the Civic Trust for Wales, and more recently by Cadw, this event takes place on weekends in September and offers both local people and those from further afield the chance to visit locations that have a place in the history and culture of Wales. Hen Dŷ Cwrdd was open to the public on the afternoons of Saturday and Sunday, 10th, 11th September. We were pleased to welcome visitors to the chapel and graveyard from Aberdare, Gilwern and Penperlleni, as well as from nearer at hand.

On the Sunday evening the congregation-led service celebrated the chapel's 269th Anniversary by the reading of articles gathered from newspaper reports of the time – ranging over the years 1852 to 1917. The later articles mentioned individuals (then in their young days) who are still remembered by many in the congregation – some being a parent, or other close relative, of the present-day Readers.

Thankful People

We committed to harvest thanksgiving in a big way at the end of September. On Sunday the 18th, we visited Highland Place and enjoyed a Joint Harvest Service with Aberdare and Cardiff Unitarians which was conducted by Rev Wyn Thomas (Ceredigion.) It was good to spend time together with friends – enjoying their company afterwards over a cup of tea and the tasty refreshments provided by Highland Place ladies. On the following Sunday, we held our own harvest service at Cefn with the congregation presenting a large selection of harvest readings and enthusiastically singing traditional harvest hymns.

Leo Tolstoy, in one of his short stories, writes, "*with pitchforks on their shoulders and ears of wheat in their hats, the labourers went singing home.*" The 'labourers' at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd may not have been attired in the same rustic manner as Tolstoy's Russian peasantry, but they certainly went home singing! Gifts of tins and dry foodstuffs were delivered to a food bank at Merthyr the next day.

President's Dinner

Eight of us from Cefncoed attended the Dinner held at the Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare on Saturday, 1 October to welcome GA President Mrs Dorothy Hewardine to South East Wales. We enjoyed a most convivial evening.

In our thoughts

We are very pleased to hear that Hetty Corcoran's daughter, Roslyn is making good progress after undergoing surgery.

It is with sadness that we report the death, on 31 October, of our faithful member Roy Lewis, aged 78 years. For many years, until illness prevented them attending, Roy and wife Megan would take their regular place in a rear corner pew, being among the first to arrive for service. We send our sympathy to Megan and daughter Julie, niece Janice and other relatives in their sad loss.

Warm Welcome

From time to time recently it has been encouraging to see a new face (or two, sometimes even *three*) at service. The faces belong to Joyce, Gaynor and Jacqueline and we are very pleased to see them. Gaynor and Jacqueline were members of Hen Dŷ Cwrdd Sunday School in their younger days but Joyce is new to Unitarianism. All three are warmly welcomed.

Ken Morgan

SWANSEA

It's been a lovely summer at our church in High Street. The front of the church has been an oasis of colour and we must thank Lynn for looking after our 'plantation'! We welcomed visitors from Hinckley and Trowbridge.

Our Harvest celebration was conducted by Julianne and we were able to gather an abundance of canned and dry foods. You may remember that the Cyrenians in Swansea had to stop working with the homeless a couple of years ago but, fortunately, Caer Glas has taken over some of the work with the homeless and we were happy to be able to donate to their foodbank.

Six members of our congregation enjoyed the dinner at Dare Park held to welcome the GA President, Dot Hewardine, to our area.

We are sad to report that Freda Thomas, a member of our congregation passed away in September, aged 96. For well over 30 years Freda had been a regular and supportive member of our congregation and she will be sadly missed. But she has left us with some wonderful memories.

Kirsteen Reed

TREBANOS

GELLIONNEN

Recent months have been filled with glad and sad news. We were saddened to hear of the deaths of Sue Bowen and Ann Watkins of Trebanos and then the death of Mrs Betty Griffiths, mother of our treasurer, Robert James.

Two of "our girls" are now in university. Katy Clark is studying child education and psychology at Aberystwyth and Siân Evans is studying medical engineering at Swansea. Not to be outdone by the girls' news, Rhys Evans is now in the under-fifteens Northampton rugby team! Grandparents Mair and Clive are very proud.

Our August Folk Service took place in a well filled chapel. As usual, Alun Wyn Dafis did us proud. A bus of Unitarians joined us from Ceredigion and we had a lovely *a cappella* choir, well known in these parts, called The Eclectics. One eclectic, Angela Hughes, introduced herself as the niece of Rose Owen

(Nottage Chapel !) Caradog Jones came with his harp, Roland Emmanuel came with his guitar and mandolin, and we all came with our voices. Thank you, as ever, Lynnford and Sandra Jones and Heather Pudner.

The Folk Service always takes place over the Pontardawe Summer Festival weekend and this year's glossy programme of events displayed a most attractive picture of Gellionnen taken from a painting by the late Phyl Turner – we took up the whole back page and are immensely grateful for the coverage.

Torrential rain one Saturday caused the surface of the lower part of our track to be washed through the chapel gates and onto the paved area at the front of the chapel. A considerable pileup of stones and grit had to be removed and our lovely, newly tiled kitchen was covered with a thick coat of muck. On Sunday morning twelve-year-old Jack Evans Mason rolled up his sleeves and mopped it out.

The harvest service gave us cause to take a large box of dry goods to the Pontardawe food bank. We followed service with bowls of soup and other good things.

We frequently have visitors on those Sundays when we've opened up the building but not had a set service. Rebecca James arrived one morning with Juan Felipe. Rebecca comes from Brittany but has roots in the Swansea Valley. As a little girl she sang at several of our folk events.

Our log burner awaits simple repair, the chimney has been swept and logs laid by. We look forward very much to the District Christmas Service in Gellionnen.

Marian Littlepage

WICK

Our Harvest Thanksgiving Service was very well-attended this year. It was particularly delightful to see so many children. Everyone joined in readings and answered our usual quiz. As usual our Harvest offerings were for the Porthcawl Food Bank and the display was magnificent. Helen and Julianne took the goods to Porthcawl. Just one mishap—the AA had to be called out for Julianne's car –(lack of use), but easily fixed.

The village Remembrance Service will be held in our chapel this year and Julianne will conduct the service at the village Memorial as well. It is really heart warming to be part of a village custom that brings the two places of worship together each year in a joint act of worship, long may it continue. Our best wishes to our friends in the District.

Julianne Morgan

NOTTAGE

We were very pleased to hear that Rose Owen's granddaughter did very well in her A-level exams and gained a place at Bournemouth University to study Nutrition. Sarah's Mum is from Bournemouth, so I'm sure Sarah knows the way home for visits.....and clothes washing?!

While Sarah is studying, her grandmother is keeping busy at art classes. This is a skill new to Rose which has been introduced at her residential home. She is really good at it, and has proudly brought paintings to chapel for us. Well done the Owen family!

We held our traditional Harvest Festival at the end of September, Lewis conducting the service, and as has become our tradition, had a 'Faith and Hope' lunch after. Helen Steele went the 'extra mile', and made us an apple crumble with unwanted apples that had fallen in her son, Shaun's, garden. It was delicious – especially as she had also brought custard! What a treat. Our Harvest gifts were for the Porthcawl Foodbank, which were later delivered by Helen and Lewis. Our contributions are always much appreciated by the Foodbank staff.....and I'm sure, those in need.

We usually meet for coffee at the schoolroom twice a month, but in September we added a Friday, and held a coffee morning in aid of the MacMillan Fund. We all arrived with something to sell, be it cakes, toiletries or a raffle prize, and were delighted to find we had raised £125.

We are also delighted that Lewis has been our Minister for a year this month, it has indeed been a good year for Nottage: thank you Lewis. To 'celebrate' we are also holding an extra coffee morning this month too. It is to raise funds for a charity which is very close to Lewis's heart – Epilepsy Action. We are starting with a donation from Jean Thomas's brother in Australia! Dennis (Aston) was also brought up at Nottage under the 'watchful' eye of E.J Williams, and has happy memories of chapel and Sunday School members. We have also had a very generous donation from Joy Foster who, on finding out about our coffee morning, donated her pulpit supply fee. Thank you very much, both of you.

Keep warm and out of the winds!

Avril Protheroe

MEN'S GROUP

Our first meeting of the Autumn took place on 20th September. We met for an 'Educational' walk around Pontypridd Common and the weather was very kind to us. We visited the 'Rocking Stone', the War Memorial and had a splendid view over the valley. On returning to the cars we made a slight diversion to take photos of Rocking Stone Cottages for Melda Grantham, where her great-grandmother was born. Lunch was at the 'Bunch of Grapes' which is well known for its own brewed ales. There was the bonus of the car park having a blue plaque with sections of the old Abercynon canal, plus a lock, still visible.

Tony Foster

DITCHLING OLD MEETING HOUSE

I recently attended service at Ditchling, a beautiful ancient village in West Sussex.

On foot the meeting house can be approached along The Twitten a narrow pathway opening out beside the front wall of the graveyard. The meeting house has a cottage attached and beside that is the Leonard Maguire Memorial Garden. The late Leonard Maguire had been a historian whose considerable research into the story of the General Baptists is unequalled.

Inside, the eighteenth century building is comfortable, attractive and timeless. There is an ancient clock and a very modern baby grand. Service was led by the Rev Ashleigh Hills who told me he is now retired, but it does not seem so! My visit to Ditchling was a delight.

Marian Littlepage

FURTHER PHOTOGRAPHS



Rev Eric Jones at Capel Penrhiw
Foster

Photo: Joy



Opus Adventure – Carrie is 2nd from the right

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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