

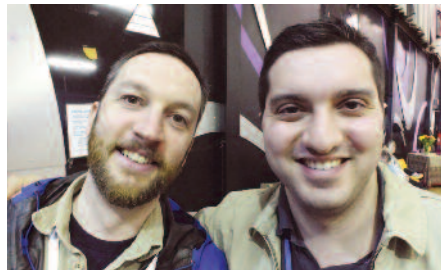
The official Newsletter of the Bahá'í Council for Wales

Autumn/Winter 2014 – 171 B.E

BECOMING A DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY

“(The Guardian) feels sure that the Welsh people will not only respond to the Message if given opportunity, but contribute to the Faith a distinctive share of their own, when they arise in its service.”

From a letter on behalf of the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cardiff of 30 January 1957



What makes the Bahá'í Council for Wales heart overflow with love?

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MESSAGE FROM THE BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL FOR WALES

The vast majority of time in Council meetings is spent considering the needs of each cluster. The Council is lucky that having just 4 clusters to oversee means we can receive detailed reports on the activities in each cluster. It is such a source of joy and inspiration to hear the stories of your teaching efforts that it truly makes our hearts overflow with love for the valiant friends in Wales. We hope you can find some of the same inspiration in the pages of Undod.

In addition to the work in each cluster, we must mention the fantastic Welsh Bahá'í Summer School, held in August at the Llangrannog Urdd Centre. Profound thanks are due to all those involved in its organisation. Once again, we created a spirit of friendliness and fellowship that was exemplary even by the standard of Bahá'í events. Of course, this spirit is also reflective of Welsh culture. Indeed, holding the School in a centre for Welsh language and culture seemed to bring out the Welshness of the Welsh Bahá'í Summer School, and what we discovered was a wonderful harmony between Welsh cultural values and Bahá'í values.

As the recent cluster meeting in South Wales discovered, it's difficult to put your finger on what Welsh culture is. But it exists, and provides the context for all our Bahá'í service in Wales. The principle of the oneness of humankind does not imply uniformity. Rather, in the words of the Guardian, it calls for *"a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life ... and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units."*

It is, of course, important not to deal in stereotypes: Welsh people are not all the same, no more than English people are, and like in England, the different regions of Wales each have their own distinctive characteristics. But overall, it would be fair to say that Welsh culture is typified by friendliness, by a strong sense of community spirit, and by such qualities as solidarity, co-operation and mutual support, creating a natural harmony with our own pattern of community building. Indeed, these qualities have been repeatedly emphasised by the Universal House of Justice in its messages.

A letter on behalf of the Guardian to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cardiff of 30 January 1957 states that the Guardian *"feels sure that the Welsh people will not only respond to the Message if given opportunity, but contribute to the Faith a distinctive share of their own, when they arise in its service."* The current Plan provides the means for us to fulfil the Guardian's vision, and help Welsh people discover their own distinctive contribution to the transformation of society.

With Loving greetings,

The Bahá'í Council for Wales

NORTH WALES CLUSTER REFLECTIONS



Bahá'ís in North Wales held a lovely cluster reflection meeting on Saturday 8th November at Alicia Bancroft-Lloyd's home in Gronant near Prestatyn. Several Bahá'ís have recently moved away from North Wales, so it was lovely to welcome Winona and David Hardy who have moved into the area from the Netherlands.

There had been changes to the way the cluster is administered in the last year that meant that the three-monthly cycle of reflection meetings had got a bit lost. The focus of the meeting was on how we could rekindle the energy and enthusiasm from when the intensive programme of growth was launched. We started by looking at the following passage from Insights from the Frontiers of Learning.

'The House of Justice has explained that the pattern of action unfolding in clusters that creates a vibrant community life may be viewed from two equally valid perspectives. One of these involves "The three-month cycles of activity through which a community grows—the burst of expansion experienced as a result of intense action; the necessary period of consolidation during which increases in ranks are fortified . . . and the opportunities designated for all to reflect and plan".'

This was followed by a lively discussion around what this meant for North Wales and how we could make the two-week expansion phase more meaningful in the context of our own lives in a way that is realistic. For some people this could be taking a very small step. We heard about activities across North Wales and particularly about the 'parents and chat' group, mainly consisting of friends of the Faith, in the Bangor area. This group has now evolved and is splitting into two groups based on the needs of the participants and their children. It is possible that some of these activities may evolve into core activities, but it is early days yet. It is very much a process of learning for the friends and the institutions that are working closely with them.

Louise Reynolds Doughty

TRANSFORMATION

After days of cutting leaves and hours of tying them to a 'Unitree' that the local Green Light Built group were installing for an Environmental day in the Wyeside centre, I made my way to the Riverside centre looking forward to a quiet sit down at the "Transformation for Service" weekend that the small but intrepid Baha'ís of Built had organized.

How wrong was I! Mind you, I should have known better, as it was Viv and Fleur facilitating. Saturday morning was sublime as our delving into the nature of the soul invoked that pure and wonderful spirit of Bahá. This set the scene for a practical look at our dual nature, with motifs from the Swindon project giving insight into working with Youth and Junior Youth. For those who missed this session, Viv's book, Nurturing a Healthy Human Spirit in the Young, is now available.

Having looked at the soul and how it works through our dual nature, it was now time to face facts;



"Dost thou reckon thyself a puny form when within thee the universe is folded?" Well not any longer! On Sunday morning we focused on the nature of talents, where we identified and vocalized each other's talents – an incredibly important activity that can be done at many gatherings, be they between friends, a family meeting, Bahá'í feast and so on. How can we possibly not accept and develop the talents that God has put us on this earth, at this time in human history, i.e. the Day of God, to use for the service of our fellow man? It truly was an inspiring and transformational weekend with a clear focus on Transforming to Serve.

Penny Kemp

HUQUQU'LLAH – THE RIGHT OF GOD

"The Blessed Beauty—may my life be offered up for His Dust—hath emphasized through His decisive Word that the utmost honesty hath to be observed in matters related to the Huqúq. The institution of Huqúq is sacred."

'Abdu'l-Bahá. (Compilation – Right of God: Huqúqu'lláh)

If you would like to study, deepen in or discuss this Mighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh please contact Kathryn Delpak:
email: kath.delpak@talktalk.net or tel: 01446 771053

JUNIOR YOUTH MENTORING

I left North-Wales and came down to Mid-Wales. Mehran had lived in Builth Wells for many years, and, after Cynthia had moved there, I also felt attracted to serving in Mid-Wales and moved there last July.

Inspired by the document Insights into Frontiers of Learning, my understanding is that there is a way for a pioneer, an individual to arise and with specific guidelines and faith in Bahá'u'lláh at every step of the way, believe that if these activities can happen in other places then they can happen here also. At the Regional Conference in Llandrindod Wells in January 2012 I was made aware of the Junior Youth activities as another core activity. I was almost knocked off my seat as one of the young people sat on the table with the adults and shared their experiences with us! I loved that the young people were inspiring us, and it showed me that everyone has something they can do, and we can all play a part.

In Builth Wells I looked around and said 'There're no young people here, but I've done book 5 and so I'm going to see what can happen.' In the stories I've read of people pioneering, they go, and it doesn't work like they think it's going to work. There's always an obstacle there, and something doesn't work out for one reason or another, but they stick to it. Just being there, they come into contact with somebody, and that leads to the whole thing expanding exponentially. And that's basically what's happened in Builth Wells. Yes, we've had our 'Growing Pains' as Rúhíyyih Khánúm calls them, but we are still moving forward and sometimes we have to just go to sleep, wake up, say a prayer and carry on. I believe these things happen in every community. So, on a teaching day with Cynthia, we were pointed in the direction of a really interesting man (who has raced dogs in the North Pole!) called Nick Evans, who works for the Council, mainly providing services for the elderly, but also for hiring third parties for difference services in the community. I could see right away that we had to change caps from direct teaching to social outreach and offering service to the community. As we started out there was an opening to do things with retired people and so we started a Friday night activity called 'The Night Owl Café'. We made efforts to find youth by ourselves but it wasn't happening, so we went back to Nick, and he invited us to 'Community School Initiative' meetings, where we found they were looking for volunteers to run lunch-time and after school clubs with young people. In the second meeting I brought Tracy Roberts-Jones along with me, and we met a large group of young people there. Tracy offered to run a Neuro-Linguistic Programming course; the Deputy-Head loved that idea and so she ran a very successful eight-week course with about fifteen young people.

After this course had finished, I talked with Kay Hughes about how I wanted to continue service with the young people, and both she and Robina encouraged me to make a

plan. I had started a volunteering agency called 'Green Light Builth', and I made a plan to visit three different youth groups, the Young Farmers, the Rugby Club and the Riverside Youth Club next to my house.

It was at the Youth Club that I met a youth worker, Jess Metcalf, and a couple of the youngsters who had attended and really enjoyed Tracy's course, which confirmed to Jess that I was a trustworthy person and, as my landlord, said, 'a good bloke'! Sometimes you just have to trust that Bahá'u'lláh is giving you all these opportunities and keep going, keep thinking, keep inviting, and you find something happens, taking you to the place you want to be.

Friends from South Wales supported the initiative by meeting the youth workers and a group of young people with me on the first day that we offered the course to them. The youth workers decided that the specific need at that time was to focus on mentoring, and so the course would be better for an older group to whom they introduced us, and Robina and I co-tutored a group of five 14- and 15-year-olds, running the course focused on the book 'Breezes of Confirmation' for a period of about 10 weeks (with breaks for exams and the summer). They had no problems reading the Writings and fully embracing the course with the different activities, discussions and exercises.

One of the keys for success is, I feel, the visitors, and we've had one of the friends from the Bahá'í Council for Wales, one from the Training Institute and one from the Auxiliary Board who came as a team to Builth on a monthly basis, as well as visitors from South Wales, who are continuing to consult with us and visit our activities. Some of the outcomes of this project are that the youth have learned about the importance of practising and developing virtues, they feel they now have a vision for something better in the community and they have gained the confidence to feel more comfortable speaking with people in the street and in town. Their self-esteem has grown, and they enjoy assisting the younger members of the youth club, as well as enjoying being looked up to!

Two significant things happened: for the first time, Jess went to the primary school and recruited youngsters for the new session, with the young people (who had completed the course) accompanying her, with the knowledge that they would be mentors to the new recruits. The other is that many of them also chose to work with Jess during their work experience week, and this helped them see how they could be of service in their community. All the group felt the course had helped them have confidence in themselves with a greater vision of who they are, as well as experiencing happiness through being of service to others. We look forward to the next step in Builth with the young people there, and we ask for your prayers as we take the project a step further.

Thomas Rowan

MEET AS MANY AS YOU CAN

My name is Mavis Bodenham, I'm 74 and I live in Parc Panteg, Griffithstown in South Wales.

In the house next door to me are a young couple who have two dogs, called Honey and Lulu. It was actually my cat that introduced us, because she would go over on top of the garden shed, look down at the two dogs and really annoy them. When I realised what she was doing, I knocked on their door to apologise, and they said they weren't bothered by it. We got chatting, and I invited them into my home to have some tea and scones, and they came over a week or two later. We had general chit-chat but I didn't think it was the right time to introduce the Faith, because they didn't know me and I didn't want them to think I was pressing something on them that they didn't want or weren't ready for. I felt it was better to become friends and then gradually introduce things later on.

Next door is an elderly couple and their daughter. He is Italian and she is Welsh, and they are very friendly people; he brings in my bins for me, and what I do occasionally to show my appreciation is give him a packet of biscuits. It's not much but it's a way to say thank you.

The couple opposite have a three-year-old daughter. So as a way to get to know them, after our Naw-Rúz party I went over and explained, "I've just come back from an event where they were handing out sweets and I know you have a little girl and I thought she might like these!" Nearby are

another couple whom I also invited for scones and tea, but the husband couldn't come and his wife was looking after the baby, so I brought the scones to their house instead.

The other way I've made contact with people is that I've named my house 'Táhirih', and when people ask me what it means, I tell them Táhirih was a famous Persian poetess, and she was the first woman in Persia to speak out for the rights of women. I tell them the story of her life and how she was very brave to embrace a new religion that was sweeping through Iran. I tell them that before she was strangled with her own scarf she said, "No matter what you do to me, you'll never stop the emancipation of women". My Italian neighbour, when he heard this, said, "Good for her!" So people can empathise with her courage, and at least, with that story, I've broken the ice.

I'm proud of the fact that I'm a Bahá'í. My advice to anyone wanting to teach the Faith is always to be friendly and to meet as many people as you can. For example, when I walk through the estate, I see people with their dogs and I stop and say hello, asking them what breed their dogs are and if I can stroke them. With your immediate neighbours, as they are the ones you'll meet the most, you can invite them over and just start chatting.

So my next step now is this: as Christmas is coming, I'm going to invite my neighbours over again for a cup of tea, a mince pie and some more conversation.

Mavis Bodenham

THE HIGHLIGHT OF AN OPEN-MIC EVENING

Musical friends of ours organise open-mic nights at which many local talented people play, sing or recite poems during a very sociable evening. Talents young and old get a very warm reception, and I have often been invited to join in. However, I don't sing, play an instrument or write poetry, so I wasn't sure what I could do. The evening has a very local flavour and atmosphere to it, and I didn't want to contribute something that would grate with this.

One evening I decided to present my Táhirih monologue, not sure how it would fit in, but it was August, the anniversary of her martyrdom, and I prayed for Rita Bartlett to accompany me and give me strength. Later the organiser told me that she had been concerned about the performance until many people had come up to her and said it was the highlight of their evening. The night concluded with "Summertime Blues", a favourite song Viv, Rita and I used to sing together, which seemed confirmation that I had performed well and touched hearts too.

At the next one I didn't have anything I had written, but I decided to present two of Mahvash Sabet's prison poems, with a portrait I had done of her. This was much more sober than the previous presentation, so I didn't expect the same reaction, although one lady offered me her raffle ticket and asked me that if it won a prize would I send it to the lady in prison. I found this deeply touching and, again, the night ended with the same song!

I feel that inspirational and heroic stories are really needed at this time and would love to write and perform more. This is why, for me, it is important to talk about the culture of the people we live amongst so that I can learn what best suits and most touches their hearts. It is also important to have a platform in the Bahá'í community for expressive arts, where we share our talents in a supportive environment, assist one another to compose songs, poems or plays, and are then encouraged to go out to a wider audience.

Christine Abbas

SUMMER SCHOOL – LLANGRANNOG 2014



After being in the Youth Conference in New Zealand 2013, it was exciting to hear that the UK summer schools were going to use those conference materials. I was unsure what to expect, but enthusiastic for everyone to experience what many youth all over the world had been through together in those short few days of study. The spirit and knowledge gained at the conferences became starting points for a wide range of activities, whether it was sharing understandings with friends or by supporting one another in study circles, junior youth groups and children's classes as just some examples.

Not having attended a UK summer in school for many years, I found it very interesting to see how things have changed. I thoroughly loved that summer schools are now a period of time where everyone focuses on the same thing all over the UK, even though I know it might have been a struggle for some people to relate to the material, as it was referring to youth. I felt the topics helped everyone read from the same page, and the activities that followed gave us the space to come together and relax after some heavy reading, at times. There was plenty of time to have fun and get to know those around us in such a beautiful area of the amazing Welsh coast.

Hopefully, all involved got from it that everyone in a community has an important role to play in making this world into another. You can think of it this way: ocean waves transport energy over vast distances. Each wave is as important as the next, so it is a fact that if there are no waves then there is no change.

I want to thank all those who contributed to making this Welsh summer school possible. I had such a great experience and wonderful time there.

Mona Abbas



"I found summer school so inspiring and refreshing; it taught me and my family so much, and we were overwhelmed by the kindness and love we were shown at our first time in summer school."

Kelly



"Steve, the boys and myself had a lovely time, they loved the spirit of the whole thing, the activities, the setting, the atmosphere, and the friendly faces and warmth."

Sarah



Two highlights for me – apart from the whole school of course – were successfully completing the high ropes course, a great confidence booster, and singing 'Calon Lan' in a morning devotional!

Louise

SOME THOUGHTS ON WELSH IDENTITY AND GROWTH OF THE FAITH IN WALES

At a meeting when 'unity in diversity' was being discussed, someone stated that 'diversity' is so difficult to handle it was like a 'spanner in the works!'. A wise reply instantly corrected this - 'it is not a spanner in the works, it is the works!'

Questions are beginning to bubble to the surface in the Bahá'í community – is Wales a diverse nation in the body of nations that make up the world? What is 'Welsh identity' as distinct from, say, English or French identity? Does Wales have a culture or something different to offer the world as its unique contribution to a world civilization? And the reason for asking these types of questions is linked with our attempts to enable more Welsh people to enter the Bahá'í community without being tested by cultures, or aspects of cultures, that they cannot feel at home with.

Consideration of these points is very sensitive. In general there is no agreement on what is 'Welsh identity'. Attempts to force the issue through the promotion of the Welsh language have caused division in Wales, which may repel believers not wanting to talk about 'Welsh identity' as it could evoke Welsh nationalistic feelings. Even on occasions when trying to identify what is 'Welsh culture/identity' there is no uniting view. Unfortunately this has further impact on a reticence to discuss the issue. Paradoxically there is no confusion about Irish or Scottish identity. Why?

I do feel we need help on this issue, as a united view will enable more Welsh people to enter and stay in the Faith. Let us then turn to the Guardian of our Faith for this help. The Guardian outlines several elements to be considered if we are to avoid 'uniformity' in our attempts to unite. The Faith's purpose, he writes, does not aim at stifling 'the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts... It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world.' (1)

So, Welsh people can feel proud of being Welsh provided we do not stray into an unintelligent, insane patriotism. We can be both Welsh and world citizens. But let us consider the other points. Welsh people are primarily Celtic in ethnic origin and not Anglo-Saxon. Sharing a climate similar to our neighbours, the landscape is hilly with many valleys, rivers and a long coastal region – all aspects that have helped shape Welsh ancestors in their everyday lives. Welsh history tells of a subject people having to 'follow' rather than take the lead – perhaps a negative influence on the development of confidence in the population. Attempting to preserve Welsh identity, the Welsh Nationalists focused on promoting the Welsh language, as they could see 'Welshness' being eroded by a 'foreign' language and culture on a daily basis. Materialism has also played its devastating role. So successful

has been this erosion that a great many Welsh people now identify more with an imposed language and culture than with their own.

Shoghi Effendi wrote about the 'sister' communities of the world, not merging as one huge 'melting pot'. He proclaimed 'unity in diversity' as the 'watchword' (2) of our Faith. If we take our eyes off it, it may slip out of sight, with the consequence that indigenous peoples will not feel they belong in the Faith as it belongs to 'others'. Our role is not just to 'copy' what we have learnt from 'others'. Ownership is essential for progress, and the Welsh people, as with all other peoples, need to experience that ownership.

In the 50's Shoghi Effendi wrote a number of messages to the Spiritual Assembly of Cardiff stating: 'The formation of the first Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly in Wales is an event of great historical significance.' (3) In these messages are a handful of principles that all Bahá'ís can unite around regarding 'Welsh identity'. The Guardian stated, 'With an Assembly in Cardiff, in Edinburgh, and Dublin, the representative character of the Faith in the British Isles is fully established and the National body greatly reinforced.' (4) By using the term 'representative character' the Guardian appears to be saying that in each of these three areas of the British Isles there is a distinct difference of identity! In fact the word 'distinctive' is directly used by the Guardian when describing the contribution of the Welsh; 'The Welsh people will not only respond to the Message if given opportunity, but contribute to the Faith a distinctive share of their own, when they arise in its service.' (5) 'Distinctive' means 'of distinguishing characteristic', and 'distinct' means 'not identical: separate: individual: different in kind or quality: unlike'. (6) Apply all these adjectives to the Welsh people and we get some idea about how different and unique will be the contribution of the Welsh people when they arise in the service of the Faith. We also have to ponder on what is meant by the Welsh people responding to the Message if 'given the opportunity.' Has not the teaching work in Wales to date given the Welsh people this opportunity? Or is a deeper reflection on this statement needed?

The Guardian also praises the production of the first pamphlet in Welsh; he stated that he was 'simply delighted' (7) to get it and added, 'This booklet in their own language will do much to convince sincere Welsh truth-seekers of the respect and consideration with which we Bahá'ís approach all minorities.' (8) The beloved Guardian recognised that the Welsh are a 'minority' nation and as such must have characteristics that set it apart from other nations or minority peoples – an underlining of the fact that Wales should not be seen as just an adjunct of England. Finally, the Guardian called the Welsh 'a talented race'. (9) Unfortunately the Guardian did not state in what way the Welsh are talented. Have you any ideas on this point or, indeed, on any other points made?

Viv Bartlett

Due to space constraints, we regret we are unable to print the references to this article or the full feedback from the Keele training (articles following). If you would like either of these, please email Fleur at fleurmiss@icloud.com and we will send them to you.

SHARING INSIGHTS AND LEARNING

Thenna Abbas and Chris Wagg share their experience of a week of tutor training at Keele University

Individuals from around the UK were lucky enough recently to take part in an in-depth study of the Ruhi materials at Keele University. Studying the theoretical and spiritual concepts underpinning this incredible educational model filled participants with a new respect for the transformative power of the courses. The challenge we faced at the seminar was (and would be even more so afterwards) communicating this to others! As a starting point the question, 'What makes a good tutor?' was asked. Qualities such as the spiritual perception to see others' deep-seated needs, and steadfastness and belief in the Writings were highlighted among the twenty or so other qualities.

Through consultation the participants identified that a study of one of these courses might start with the following factors:

Desire (stemming from the belief in the truth of the Words of God): Generally speaking accomplishments are greater when a tutor actually wants to start a book of their own volition; Invitation: Communicating what we are doing in terms that others can understand is key here. What good is there in trying to move someone through Books 1 – 7 if they think it is simply what they need to do to be a Bahá'í? Far better to communicate the concept that from the very beginning of their study they will be planting the seeds to transform themselves to then help others along their spiritual path; Responding to the needs and reality of our area: Do we understand the make-up of our local community? By that is meant everyone we 'know' and, harder yet, those who are unknown. As Bahá'u'lláh Himself declares, 'Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration.'

The seminar posed as many questions as it gave insights, and it reminded me of the benefit of reflecting on and reviewing what I have done so far. Is my motivation to be a tutor different now to what it was when I completed the sequence myself? Can I identify ways to expand my horizons and engage in meaningful conversations with increasing numbers of people? What is the specific purpose of each of the units of the Ruhi books, and how does that fit in with the overall aims of the Cause? At the seminar, however, I was reminded that in the hundreds of years that it will take to reach the promises foretold by the Blessed Beauty, all I am being asked to do is to make what effort I can as a contribution to raising the edifice.

Thenna Abbas

One week at the tutors' gathering was a very intense but truly joyful experience. The most beautiful landscape was awaiting us, a fitting setting for our new understandings that would follow. Using the arts in varied ways brought great joy and humour to the training sessions, creating an atmosphere of devotion and joy.

Studying the letter to the Iranian believers and the Ridvan 2010 message, we gained greater insights into the focus of our actions. We saw the two forces at work in the world, both signs of the ushering in of mankind's maturity: The dismantling of ways that do not work anymore, and the integrating forces, which we can work with, infusing all facets of society with the oneness of humanity. People's souls long for this force that calls for a re-conception of relationships and a complete restructuring of society. Empowerment and transformation accelerate this process and, once begun, the momentum needs to be sustained. This requires us to learn by our actions, reflections and constant study and reference to the writings. We are then the ones who are the agents of our active learning in a group where there is no exclusivity of any kind.

With the above understanding and vision for our clusters, we can start to approach our friends through spiritual conversations that can, in time, lead to an invitation to a study circle. We need to realize it will be different for each person and must not expect all to progress in the same way. Any spiritual advancement of a soul should be seen as our goal. We can go individually to accompany some of them, depending on the eagerness they have to share the prayers, to serve their neighbours or to invite their friends to a devotional or a fireside etc.

These periodic gatherings are to improve the tutors' capacities and share our insights and learning. We know we need to start somewhere, but if we have the vision of how the future could be, we will, I am sure, begin the conversations needed to invite people to learn with us.

To conclude, the 2010 Ridvan Message from the Universal House of Justice (para. 10.) states:

"...supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of the knowledge that each one possesses at any given moment and avoiding the tendency to divide the believers into categories such as deepened and uninformed is an accomplishment of enormous proportions. And therein lie the dynamics of an irrepressible movement."

Chris Wagg

SPIRITUAL LESSONS, WHILE WATERING THE GARDEN

During the summer months, there is often too little rain for the plants in my garden to grow properly and be fruitful. A prolonged drought will cause them to shrivel up and die completely. They need to be watered regularly to keep them green and healthy. Let us consider how this can be done. What are the essential elements?

First of all, there needs to be a SOURCE of water – perhaps a well or a water butt in the garden, but more commonly these days, a convenient TAP, a point of access into mains water. But I can't just turn the tap on and expect the water to flow to where it is required. I need a HOSE which is FIRMLY ATTACHED to the Source - firmly enough not to come off when the water pressure builds up, particularly when it meets some resistance at the other end!

The hose needs to be of SUFFICIENT LENGTH to reach the furthest plant in the garden, and it takes quite a bit of EFFORT to get it down to the bottom of the garden, I can tell you! The hose needs to be FLEXIBLE enough to get around any natural obstacles in the garden and to avoid damage to any delicate plants in the way.

If the hose becomes OBSTRUCTED in any way, for example kinked back on itself, the water will not be able to get through. Care must be taken to store the hose properly and unwind it carefully before use to prevent these kinks developing. If there are any HOLES in the hose, water will leak out and the watering operation becomes less effective. The bigger the leaks, the less efficient it becomes. A serious leak may render the hose useless. Care must be taken to maintain the INTEGRITY of the hose.

To avoid wasting water in dry periods, the hose must be POINTED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. Those plants capable of producing good fruit or lovely flowers should be PRIORITIZED and barren areas avoided. Finally, watering the garden is not a one-off operation – it needs to be REPEATED again and again during the dry season.

There are many spiritual lessons to be learned by watering the garden, so get watering!

I AM NOT THE WATER, I AM THE HOSE.

Phyl Gordon-Harlow

THE WRITINGS IN WELSH

O Arglwydd! Atat Ti yr ymgiliaf am lochs ac am Dy holl arwyddion rwy'n dyheu. O Arglwydd! Pa un ai'n teithio neu yn fy nghar-tref, wrth fy ngalwedigaeth neu yn fy ngwaith, rhoddaf fy holl ymddiriedaeth ynot Ti.

Y Báb

(2001 Authorised by The Bahá'í Council for Wales)

O Lord! Unto Thee I repair for refuge, and toward all Thy signs I set my heart. O Lord! Whether travelling or at home, and in my occupation or in my work, I place my whole trust in Thee.

The Báb

(Compilation, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 55)

A STORY - THE FUND

To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

Bahá'u'lláh

A Baha'i from Wales went on a course but left his belt behind. As he was skinny that mattered a lot. When his wife rang to tell him, he replied by saying, "I'll manage, give what the postage would have been to the fund"

There are so many little ways we can find to save money: not having that Mars bar, or coffee, not buying some expensive meat, choosing a veggie meal instead ... whatever; but if one put that saving away each time, and everyone did that, it would make an important collective contribution. Making that small sacrifice regularly would be so brilliant.

(By an anonymous contributor)

It would be lovely if other people could share with Undod any personal stories they have about the Fund.

Louise Reynolds Doughty



OUR COMMUNITY

A PLACE TO MAKE OUR CONTRIBUTION



The Pearce family (and friend)

As our family has travelled around a lot, I have awe and admiration for those who stay put long enough to forge real ties of friendship in this country. In China it takes about six months, but in the UK, I'm thinking typically six years or more. That takes commitment, patience and perseverance. So when we decided that it was time for our family to return to the UK, it was natural to be attracted to somewhere where someone else had already done the hard work. My sister-in-law blazed that trail

when her kids were little – at the toddler group, in the playground, the school yard, and yes, even the soft-play. Now she, my brother and their friends are holding regular devotionals and running a children's class and a junior youth group. So Morryston, in Swansea, offered multiple advantages: being close to family, being close to people we knew we could work with, and being in a context in which our family could make a contribution. Even so, I had some reservations before we came. Would we fit in? Would we be perceived as outsiders? Did they really need us? Would we just upset the apple-cart?

Since we arrived, I have been amazed by the friendliness and openness with which we have been embraced by this mini community. I feel very blessed and confirmed. The process of getting to know these friends was given an early boost by attending the Welsh Summer School. It not only gave me a window on the larger Welsh (and a bit of the English) Bahá'í community but also provided the opportunity for chatting with the families that live in my locality, including the husbands, who are often on the periphery of my social world.

Now a small group of us are studying Book 3, with the purpose of improving and, hopefully, expanding the children's classes offered in our locality. I am really impressed with the tenacity and the practicality of these women: everyone is busy, everyone is tired, and everyone could easily be somewhere else, but, with the children in mind, we choose to be together, moving forward one step at a time.

Jane Pearce



WEDDING OF CHRIS AND PHYL

Chris Evans and Phyl Gordon-Harlow were married on 22 September 2014. Chris says, "The civil part was in Bridgend Registry Office at 11.30 a.m., and the Bahá'í ceremony was held in our home, officiated by Peter and Sandra Jenkins on behalf of the Swansea Assembly. Bahá'í witnesses were Javad and Ceredwin. There were 25 guests, including many who were not Bahá'ís, and everyone was interested in our Faith. Our honeymoon was a few days in the North Yorkshire Moors." The Editors and readers all send our best wishes!" See a few of the photos below from the happy day.

BAHÁ'Í COUNCIL FOR WALES

Council Secretary:
bcw@bahai.org.uk

PUBLICATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

Under the terms of the Child Protection Act images of children may only be published if parental permission has been received. Permission may be implied by the sending of a photograph by a parent or legal guardian, otherwise it must be given in writing or by email from the child's parent or legal guardian when submitting the photograph/s to Undod's editorial team. Please continue to post or email photographs to Undod **accompanied** by the necessary permission.

Bahá'í Council for Wales

Change of Address?

Please email: records@bahai.org.uk
Telephone: **020 7584 2566** (office hours)

Join the 'Undod/Unity Bahá'ís in Wales' Facebook group to see more photos, suggest ideas, thoughts and articles. This is a complementary way of keeping in touch with each other. Bahá'ís and friends from outside Wales are also members – and have photos, stories and thoughts to share!

DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE TO WRITE FOR UNDOD?

Did you know that some contributors to this and previous Undod/Unity issues were assisted to write their articles? Not everyone feels confident to write, or would even know how to start writing an article. But we feel this should not stop anyone making their contribution and sharing their stories with us all. So if you have a teaching story (however large or small) to share, thoughts about the progress of the Faith or a report on an event you attended and would like some assistance, contact the editors (details on page 2, under the deadline!) and we can interview you on the phone, or send you some questions by email, or meet up and have a chat; taking notes and formulating an article can be as easy as drinking a nice cup of tea! Your voice is important. We are all friends, and our stories are much loved.

Go on, be brave! ☺

PURCHASE OF APARTMENT IN BRISTOL WHERE 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ VISITED



The National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the UK, with great joy, announced on 5 November 2014 that, on behalf of the Bahá'í community, it has purchased one of the apartments within the former Clifton Guest House, Bristol, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá

visited twice, once for three days in September 1911 and again for one day in January 1913. On both occasions 'Abdu'l-Bahá was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Tudor-Pole.

In an account written by Mr. Tudor-Pole we read that the *"Master went all over the Guest House blessing and dedicating each room to the service of Bahá'u'lláh and promising that the house would become a centre of peace and rest for pilgrims from East and West."* The property is now entirely residential and has been divided into a number of apartments.

It is the intention of the National Assembly to renovate the property to bring it closer in appearance to its condition at the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited, and eventually to open it for visitors.

Facebook



Join the 'Undod/Unity Baha'ís in Wales' Facebook group to share and see more photos, suggest ideas, thoughts and articles.

This is a complementary way of keeping in touch with each other. Baha'ís and friends from outside Wales are also members – and have photos, stories and thoughts to share!

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Bahá'í Books UK

NURTURING A HEALTHY HUMAN SPIRIT IN THE YOUNG

by Vivian Bartlett

NEW

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SPECIFICATIONS

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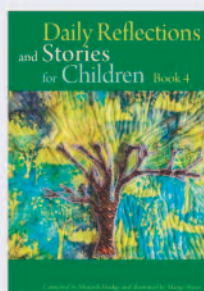
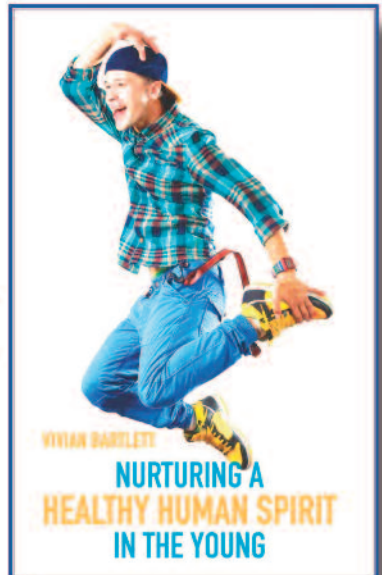
Many young people are beset by a host of fears, worries, anxieties and insecurities that make for superficial and discouraging relationships, lack of motivation, and confused, escapist or hedonistic lifestyle choices that can determine a future riddled with problems almost impossible to extricate oneself from; emotional responses appear uncontrollable, with frequent rage outbursts or overwhelming melancholy. Our affluent societies have seen a sharp increase in antisocial behaviour:

alcohol and drug abuse, carrying a weapon in case of a fight, vandalism, general rowdiness in gangs, cruelty to animals, stealing, threatening behaviour and so on. Bullying or mobbing, teenage pregnancies, suicidal tendencies, rejection of education, family upheavals, eating disorders, depression and the like are all rising. There is increasing statistical evidence that society has a problem with its young that defies rectifying by established interventions.

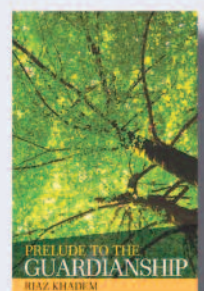
For Vivian Bartlett, the opportunity came in 2000 to join with a group of Bahá'ís in the United Kingdom to devise and pilot programmes for disaffected youngsters, and so the Swindon Young People's Empowerment Programme (SYEP) came into being. The group eventually came to realize that these young people were 'dispirited' and that if at least the glimmerings of a healthy human spirit could be detected by them as possible within themselves, then they would be inspired to view the world and their lives in a more rewarding way. Huge successes were experienced over the years with over 1,000 dispirited, vulnerable youngsters who were referred to the Empowerment Programme by a growing number of primary and secondary schools in Swindon. These successes demanded that a book be written about the Programme.

The Programme focused on two ideas from key Bahá'í scriptures, as encapsulating all others – that the individual is full of potential, a 'mine rich in gems of inestimable value'; and that individuals need to be focused on service to others. These are two sides of the same coin: we need to recognize that we have something to offer, and then understand that we can make a huge difference to the community. The journey towards this is however not simple.

Parents, carers, educators, and anyone interested in the well-being of young people will find in this book not only principles of nurturing a healthy human spirit in the young but also an array of successful, down-to-earth, practical ways of doing so.



OTHER NEW BOOKS



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