



Easter bonnets



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Traditions at our Meeting House

Each Easter as well as having chocolate and a (now) dilapidated hen sitting on eggs in a beautiful basket, some of the women in the congregation wear hats – often decorated with Easter themes. The photos to the left (top with Paulette in her hat and Minister Lewis) and below (with Beatrix in a hair band and no Paulette) show some of the bonnets worn this year. Rosemary's hat was extra special as it was decorated by her husband Ivan. The sunny weather meant we could share coffee and tea outside.

Spring Concert – Saturday 4th May 6pm

Another of our traditions is to hold a Spring Concert where members of the congregation and friends gather to entertain one another with songs, playing music, readings of prose and poetry and any other form of entertainment. Robert Waller is organising the concert and is looking for more entertainers please. Some of our regular musical contributors have moved away – to France and Devon. Can you sing? Tell jokes? Play an instrument? Do you have a favourite poem to share? We look forward to you joining our concert. We also welcome all visitors and friends for the audience. It is an opportunity to invite people who may be interested in our historic building, but may not be as keen to join us for a service. Often once people have been inside the Meeting House, they realise just how special and beautiful it is and why we are working to restore and maintain it. Entry to the evening is free and there will be refreshments with a collection in aid of our Restoration Fund as people leave.

Open Churches Trust and Us

How and when did it all begin? Way back in 1995/6, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Brigadier Gurden visited the Meeting House and proposed what was then the revolutionary idea of us opening up the building, other than on Sundays for worship, so that more people could come in and see and enjoy its beauty and appreciate some of Ipswich's heritage. The trustees debated the idea, put it to the congregation and so it began. The project was funded by the Open Churches Trust. Some members felt it was their duty to volunteer their time to enable this to happen and other accepted the small payment that was offered and so it continued. The OCT funding was for five years and that has all been spent. We have kept the building open to the public for three afternoons (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) from 12.noon to 4pm from May to September. One very loyal volunteer from another congregation in the town gives of her time simply because she is interested in history and now there is only one person who is paid from general funds. Each year the Trustees debate whether or not to continue with opening to the public ... every year the answer is 'yes'. Do we reduce the number of days? Which days do we keep?

As you will know we have a huge restoration project on the horizon. A detailed report was prepared highlighting the most serious defects. Starting at the roof and work your way down, there is something which needs to be done. With hope of attracting funding to keep this 'gem of Ipswich', our spiritual home in good shape (i.e. watertight and in good repair), we will have to 'put ourselves out there', let people know that the building is there, its purpose and uses, engage more with the community, to be better known and even more welcoming.

So please be prepared to do your bit and a little bit more to see this project get off the ground.

By Paulette Reed.

Rosemary Hamilton has put a rota in the entrance to the Meeting House to invite people to sign up and cover the opening hours this summer – please add your name too.

Events in May

2nd – Local elections

4th Spring Concert – 6pm all welcome

14th Taizé Singing Group 10am to 12 noon £3.

19th Yalda Davis and Sheida Davis in a cello concert at St Mary's Church Thornham Parva – 3pm

20th Trustees meeting

21st East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group meeting – in the Upper Hall, 11.30 to 2.30

Beryl tells us too about a regular "Quiet Hour" which is offered at St Mary Elms church on Elm Street (near our Meeting House) on Thursday lunchtimes from 1 to 2pm. All are welcome to go to rest their feet, and soothe their soul for an hour.

Services in May

All services led by Minister Lewis Connolly – all start at 10.45 and everybody is welcome.

Sunday 28th April - Anniversary service, followed by a shared lunch

Birthdays in May

Happy birthday this month to –

Lewis Connolly on 3rd; Simon King on 16th; Gerrie Hudson on 28th; Ben Harvey on 30th; Paula Chapman on 31st.

Churches to visit

Have you checked out the ['Explore Churches' website](#) yet? Our Meeting House is on it and you may be tempted to visit other churches you find on it too.

... and breathe ...

What became a very tightly fitting iron girdle around the ginko tree has been removed by the resident of a flat overlooking the tree, giving it a new lease of life. The metal plaque bears a dedication to 'Prof. George S Cooke. Born in Egypt Sept. 6th 1892. Died July 14th 1970.'

Who was Prof GS Cooke and how did it come about that a tree in our flower bed was dedicated to his memory?

This tree can now grow out its last years hanging loose and feeling the breeze!

By Paulette Reed

Post service meeting with Laura Emmins from Historic England on Sunday 14th April

Laura came to talk about the Taylor Review Pilot Project which runs until March 2020 and about how we can as a congregation reach out beyond our own community to get feedback and to keep up the repair of our building. Originally the Review, published in 2017, focused on Church of England congregations and buildings and on sustainability in the short and long term, whilst the current pilot project is open to all faiths and denominations who operate within a listed building. The pilot covers four areas: support and advice from a Fabric Support Officer, support and advice from a Community Development Adviser (Laura's role), workshops (on maintenance, community development and project management), and a minor repairs grant. The maximum grant for repairs funded by the Project is £10,000 and has to be for a discrete purpose, with the idea that if smaller repairs are tackled early, it may avoid more serious problems later. The Meeting House is already in receipt of a minor repairs grant under the scheme, and Laura is in on-going contact with the Trustees over community aspects.

Laura emphasised how important it is for us as a congregation to build awareness that we exist, both as Unitarians and as a historic building, which may be relevant to people with no religious interest. Many churches establish a Friends Group for support. We could do this by inviting people interested in the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House – for various reasons, whether religious, historic, local interest or secular and if we can involve local business or organisations, we could set a higher 'membership' fee for them. She emphasised that she has no magic wand, but had come to introduce herself, to put a face to her name and to facilitate our conversations.

The discussion continued with us sitting round the central table. Thank you to everyone who contributed and to all who obviously care about the future of our Meeting House.

We talked about-

- Ipswich Borough Council encouraging people to live in the centre of town.
- Businesses (such as Willis) to speak to and the difficulty of finding the right person to contact.
- Using the Meeting House more as a place to meet and to hire out – the restrictions of using the upper balcony for insurance reasons;

- The lack of toilet facilities in the main building; the heating challenges.
- Involving professional fundraisers – which we have now appointed and we are awaiting their first report.
- The need to think forwards to the next 30 to 50 years.
- The need to prioritise projects and to find potential funding for these, holding our focus on keeping the building water tight to be able to start other projects.
- To focus on what we can do rather than risk being overwhelmed by a project which is too big.
- The current project to repair the roof with a development grant from Historic England alongside our longer term sustainability plans

Laura reminded us that there is not enough money available just to fund things for the benefit only of our congregation, as funders have their own requirements that also need to be met. The money from funders usually needs to demonstrate benefit for the wider community, especially if it is coming from a public funded source, so part of our activities needs to focus on how we can be involved with the area and people around us. We need to talk to people and to other communities (including other churches with similar issues) to find out what is needed and what we may be able to offer. Then we work up a project that demonstrates both public value and community need, whilst funding towards the building to help safeguard it for the future and our current worship.

By Tessa Forsdike and Laura Emmins



The scaffolding has now gone up and work has started on repairing and replacing tiles on the roof. Paulette has collected samples of what has been removed, which are in the MH – just see how heavy they are!

Taizé Update

The Taizé singing group continues to meet in the Upper Room on the second Tuesday of the month from 10.00 – 12.00 (in May on 14th). Some people attend almost every time, others just when they can – this is no problem! With Liz and Jan making no charge for running the sessions, over £500 has now been raised for Meeting House funds by way of the requested donation of £3 since the group started to sing together in August 2017.

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches Election to the Executive Committee (EC) 2019

Result of ballot:

MARION BAKER (Upper Chapel Sheffield) 933
ELECTED

REV JIM CORRIGALL (Golders Green Unitarians)
808 ELECTED

HILDA DUMPLETON (South East Wales District
Unitarians) 876 ELECTED

ROBERT INCE (Fulwood Old Chapel Sheffield) 737
ELECTED

SUSAN LOUDON (Chowbent Chapel Atherton) 709

REV DR ROB WHITEMAN (Dundee Unitarian
Church) 759 ELECTED

Congratulations on his election to Jim Corrigan, who was interim Minister here in Ipswich after the retirement of Rev Cliff Reed.

GA Annual Meeting

John Ellis went as our representative to the GA annual meeting from 16th to 18th April, together with Rev Cliff Reed, Rev Lewis Connolly and Adam Whybray. Cliff has brought back leaflets and copies of service sheets for anyone to read – they are on the centre table at the Meeting House. John will be writing a report on his experience for our next issue.

Correction

In the article 'Background to our Congregation' in the April newsletter, there was a mis-copying of part of the article. It should have read '*Miss Marianne Prime discovered and gave the copy of the first sermon by John Fairfax. In the 19th century the Independents built their house in Tacket Street ...*'

Thank you to June Teape for clarifying this. As June also said, Miss Prime was one of our great workers in the 20th century.

Unitarians in East Anglia

Have you ever wondered about other Unitarian Congregations & individuals in East Anglia? For those who have, or those who already know, here's an opportunity to come together & meet each other at Framlingham Unitarian Meeting House.

Date: Sunday 30 June 2019

Time: 3pm

Place: Unitarian Meeting House, Bridge Street, Framlingham, Nr Woodbridge, Suffolk. IP13 9AJ

The afternoon will start with a service led by the East Anglian Unitarian Women's Group, followed by the opportunity to go on a guided walk around Unitarian 'hotspots' in Framlingham or just time to do your own exploring or chatting. To round off the afternoon tea & goodies will be on offer back at the Meeting House.

It would be appreciated, though not essential, for numbers planning to attend to be sent to the EAUWG, Email: lindapendal@gmail.com or c/o Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House, Friars Street, Ipswich, IP1 1TD.

Disclaimer –

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community

Contacts Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Friday 24th May – to ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS
To contact our Secretary, Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email mjack76748@aol.com
To contact our Minister, Lewis Connolly, ring 01473 422528/email revdlewisconnolly@gmail.com
Website - <http://unitarianipswich.com>

Thought for the month

You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection - Buddha