

Ipswich Unitarian



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June 2018

Spring Concert



At our Spring Concert on 12th May we were fortunate enough to welcome the Equinox Voices (above) to sing a grand finale after contributions from members of our congregation had also played music, sung, read poems and prose extracts, all on the theme of Spring. Afterwards we shared refreshments and sociable chat. The collection for our Restoration Fund came to £271.00 and we are very grateful to all who contributed money, song or refreshments. We hope all who came will also join us for the Classics and Cream Tea on 30th June.

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Restoration Fund

Since we became aware that we had more than a little work to do to restore our beautiful Meeting House and to ensure it stays safe and sound, we have been raising funds with various events, sales and donations. Miranda McIntosh held a yard sale recently and raised a small amount to go with the sponsorship money she collected for her bike ride (on a stationary exercise bike as part of her rehabilitation programme). People have contributed in many different ways. Since November 2016 we have raised £2676.81 and have enjoyed ourselves along the way.

Our next big event is our **Classics and Cream Tea** event on **Saturday 30th June at 2.30pm.**

Professional cellist Yalda Davis along with her accompanist James Recknell on piano will be entertaining us with music by Fauré, Françoise, Beethoven, Granados, Elgar and Casadó. Yalda has an aim of playing in every church in Suffolk. We are grateful to her for agreeing to come for a full concert in our Meeting House.

Following the concert we invite you to take a cream tea on the green beside the Meeting House – what a civilised afternoon! We will be taking donations for the Restoration Fund for the concert and for the cream tea and as there is no set ticket price, we hope you will be as generous as possible – and bring along all your friends too. We welcome any volunteers to help with this event – whether you have muscle power to help erect and later take down the marquee, are a whizz at making scones, are able to serve teas and coffees or will chat to our visitors and explain our restoration project, please do let Tessa know – we have a job for every willing helper!

Group Turkish Meal



Every so often we gather to experience a different cuisine – first it was at the Maharani, Indian restaurant and as that was such a success, we then visited the Ottoman Turkish restaurant – both in Ipswich. We can recommend the food, the atmosphere and the company at both! Keep a look out for the date of our next gathering. It gives you the chance to have a ‘proper’ chat to other members of the congregation.

Phillip Hewett – part three

In my article on Phillip Hewett in the April newsletter I inadvertently said that Phillip and Margaret Hewett had “two sons”. June Teape quite rightly pointed out this error in the May newsletter. Maybe some information from Phillip himself would both be of interest and shed further light on this and other aspects of his life.

In his autobiographical paper, ‘Odyssey’, which I heard him give at the Ministers’ Conference at Great Hucklow in 2015, Phillip recounted how he had met Margaret Smith in Switzerland in 1950 at the founding of Albert Schweitzer College. Margaret had been the 1949/50 National President of the Unitarian Young People’s League (UYPL). This was not their first meeting – they had, as Phillip put it, “met intermittently at various gatherings during the previous four years” – but this was the one that led to their engagement three months later. They married “in the summer of 1951” and, as Phillip writes, “We subsequently had two children and four

grandchildren”. Their two children, a boy and a girl, were (and are) named Barton and Daphne. Margaret’s ill-health in later years was a great personal tragedy for the family. Phillip writes of it, “Unhappily, Margaret spent the last 25 years before her death in 2006 contending with the increasing ravages of rheumatoid arthritis.” Some Ipswich members may recall meeting Margaret at the Meeting House, which she last visited with Phillip before her condition made travel from Canada impossible.

I wrote in my previous article about Phillip that when they came to Ipswich in September 1954, the congregation was suffering from low morale. I stand by this, one of my principal sources for doing so being Phillip himself – both in private conversations and in what he wrote in his ‘Odyssey’. There he recalled that when he told “those of my colleagues who were familiar with the situation at Ipswich” that he had accepted an invitation to be minister here, they “thought I was out of my mind”. So what did Phillip and Margaret find when they arrived? He wrote: “*on the negative side the list was long*”, by which he meant the following:

“The neglected graveyard... was so overgrown that it was impossible to read the notice-board from the street. The meeting-house itself was not being used for services. It was very dirty and reeked of coal-gas leaking from the pipes that served its lighting; its hot-water system had been allowed to freeze up...and the pipes had burst. The adjacent hall (which was demolished in 1975) was being used for services, but it too was in poor condition. The ancient slow-combustion stove had rusted almost through and consequently disgorged fumes; an external tap on the wall had leaked water, leading to rot in the floor, which had gone unnoticed until the piano fell through. The congregation was tiny and elderly; the average attendance for the previous year had been seven.”

This dire – if not yet hopeless - situation was only prevented from ending in closure by the intervention of the Eastern Union and the General Assembly, who responded to Ipswich’s

Phillip Hewett – part three cont.

last ditch request for help by facilitating Phillip's appointment. He wrote:

"Why then did I go there? Quite simply because the congregation was honest about its predicament. They knew they were hovering on the brink of extinction and were prepared to support any desperate remedies I might propose...There would be no opposition in Ipswich to my trying to build upon the experience Margaret had gained at the Fellowships Office in Boston and I had applied in my work ... in Montreal."

So how did Phillip and Margaret set about restoring the situation once they had moved to Ipswich and got to work, with only limited funds available to them? Phillip recalled the following:

"We had work parties to cut down the tangled elderberry growth... We began more striking and unconventional advertising in the press, and I cultivated the newspaper's editors and columnists..."

A remarkable opportunity to publicise the Meeting-House came along when the London Philharmonic Orchestra – conducted by Sir Adrian Boult – were due to give a concert in Ipswich. Phillip recalled:

"Knowing that Sir Adrian was a Unitarian, I wrote to ask him if he would ... speak at a Saturday night meeting under our auspices, and he graciously agreed. We now had a deadline to complete the work renovating the hall with a new coat of paint and colourful drapes."

The result was a great success, as Phillip tells us: *"The place was packed, and in its report the 'East Anglian' newspaper had a front-page photograph of Sir Adrian with myself. It had been so successful that the following year we invited the former Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, to come...with similar results."*

There was good news about the congregation itself, too: *"A trickle of newcomers began to appear at our services...a few became part of the congregation. By the end of the first church year we had ... a handful of new members and were at work on restoring the meeting-house. A party of UYPL members came up from London...to clean it, and we were fortunate in having that work taken up by a new caretaker, Sandy, an enormous woman from a neighbouring*

cottage... The old gas-lamps were taken out and electricity installed, with heating under some of the...box-pews that made the place usable except under the most extreme weather conditions. By the end of the second year average attendance had quadrupled – from 7 to 28."

Phillip had received an invitation to the Unitarian Church in Vancouver after only one year at Ipswich, but he deferred acceptance of it for a further twelve months because *"the progress at Ipswich was still so precarious that it might not survive a change of ministry."* Phillip and Margaret finally left for Canada in 1956, but what was his verdict on what happened in Ipswich afterwards? Phillip wrote, *"I was relieved in due course to see that the gains were not lost. Instead of the intermittent short ministries of which mine had been the last, my successor Nick Teape was there for 17 years and his successor Cliff Reed for 36."*

Congregational morale was indeed low when Phillip and Margaret came to Ipswich in 1954, but if that was no longer the case in 1957 (as June Teape tells us) much of the credit must surely go to the Hewetts and their remarkable two years at our Meeting House.

By Cliff Reed

Reading this article certainly brings our current challenges with the fabric of the Meeting House into perspective and reminds us how grateful we are to previous congregations who fought to save this Grade 1 listed building. – Ed.

Working Party

On Saturday 2nd June a group of us will be gathering to clear the overgrown area behind the Meeting House. The holly and the ivy growing on the walls are helpful for greenery at Christmas time, but we have to keep it all under control and at the moment the growth is just too vigorous! We meet at 11am with secateurs, brooms, hedge trimmers and enthusiasm. David will be bringing his shredder in the hope we can shred the greenery to produce a mulch to slow any re-growth. Volunteers to make the volunteers coffee are also welcome!

Put Out The Lights

Half a dozen of us went to see 'Put Out The Lights', a Red Rose Chain production at the Avenue Theatre. It followed a fictionalised love triangle in the 16th Century here in Ipswich (or rather, 'Gippeswic', as the old medieval name is used throughout). The three protagonists find themselves torn asunder across the religiously turbulent lines of the mid-16th Century, a period in which the country broke with Rome under King Henry VIII, before being momentarily brought back into communion with Rome under Queen Mary I (Aka 'Bloody Mary'), a reunion which proved fatal to many within the country, particularly amongst those with the most vocal protestant inclinations. Martyrs of which Ipswich had its fair share. It was interesting to see the personal and local impact of events which we are otherwise familiar with when considered at the national level. The play captured the trickling influence of European reformation ideas, slowly changing religious sensibilities away from submission to 'the Church', towards a personal piety, typified by their joyful appreciation of the gospels that they could read for themselves in their own vernacular. The play loosely revolved around one such notable Ipswich martyr, 'Alice Driver'. The program highlighted to me the presence of the martyrs memorial in Christchurch park, standing in memory to the 'Nine Ipswich Martyrs.' The play was very enjoyable, entertaining, and an excellent way to learn more about the history of Ipswich.

by Lewis Connolly

Sad news

Dear All - It is with very heavy hearts that we write to inform you of the tragic death of our youngest son Charles (age 36) from a heart attack whilst playing American Football last Sunday (20th May).

We are reeling from the loss whilst preparing to return next Thursday (31st May) to assist with funeral arrangements etc. Your prayers at this time would be much appreciated and we hope to see some of you before we return to Florida on July 1st
Jerome and Francesca Mack

We send our condolences to The Mack family, remembering when Charles was a member of our children's programme many years ago.

Events in June

6th, 13th, 20th and 27th (all Wednesdays) – Quaker Quest - 7pm to 9pm – presentation and discussion on - The trouble with Faith; The trouble with Jesus; The trouble with Prayer; The trouble with Sin.

12th - Artificial Intelligence: Ethical Issues? – meeting with Humanists at Co-Op/EEFA Meeting rooms, 47 St Helen's Street Ipswich IP4 2JL

16th – Wendy Mitchell reads from her book 'Somebody I used to Know' (Radio 4 book of the week), which follows her journey from diagnosis of early onset Alzheimers Disease. Norwich Octagon 11am to 1.30pm. Free – donations welcome.

17th Orwell Challenge – walk/run/ cycle the Orwell estuary for charity - www.orwellwalk.co.uk

21st – Suffolk Day - www.suffolkday.co.uk

30th Classics and Cream Tea – concert 2.30 at our Meeting House

1st July – www.ipswichentertains.co.uk/ipswich-music-day-free-music

Birthdays in June

Happy birthday on 2nd to Zoe Bradbrook; on 6th to Alison White; on 13th to Cat Connolly; on 14th to Ian Gray; on 16th to Ivan Hamilton; on 17th to both Stephen Reed and to Malcolm Hawes; on 30th to June Teape.

Services - All services in June will be led by our Minister Lewis Connolly at 10.45 – all welcome. The collection on 24th will be to support the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

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 for the next newsletter to Tessa please before the deadline of Wed 27th June 2018 – to ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS
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Thought for the month

"Once you choose hope, anything's possible."
Christopher Reeve, Unitarian Universalist, Actor