

OUR  
PRECIOUS  
HERITAGE

BY  
C. E. CARD

1/9

# OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE.

THE COMING OF THE FAITH TO WALES  
+++++

By

C. Edmund Card

DEDICATED TO THAT GALLANT 'ARMY OF GOD' WHO, THOUGH FEW  
IN NUMBERS, WERE VALIANT IN FAITH AND WHO SET FORTH TO  
'CONQUER THESE COUNTRIES THROUGH THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE  
ILLUMINATION OF DIVINE TEACHINGS.'

## Acknowledgments

To Mrs Christine Abbas, foremost among many who encouraged me to make a start. To my dear wife, without whose willing co-operation the task could never have been undertaken. To Mrs Rose Jones, Hugh McKinley, Brian Giddins and others for their invaluable recollections of the early days. To a long succession of Assembly secretaries in Cardiff who have carefully preserved voluminous archive material over a period of nearly forty years.

Finally to David and Barbara Lewis for their correction of a (very) rough first draft. To all these kind helpers, my heartfelt thanks.

Carl



The FIRST SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY of the  
BAHA'IS of CARDIFF.

Standing;-

Hugh McKinley, Joan Giddings, Suzanne Solomon, Geo. Rowley

Seated,

Fred Stahler, Claire Gung, Violet McKinley, Rose Jones  
Ata-o'llah Khochbine.

## OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE

This brief treatise on the coming of the Bahá'í Faith to Wales is but one minute facet of an almost unimaginably vast epic. In the contemplation of this story one may see but a small reflection of a process which has its counterparts in many a thousand other locations, in different lands, in diverse cultures among many nations scattered throughout the length and breadth of this our planet.

As it is therefore but one, not very significant story typifying the gradual unfoldment of the Divine Plan for the regeneration of mankind it is essential that we should first look briefly at the matrix within which the story will unfold.

Accounts of the beloved Guardian's painstaking building up of the Administrative order, firstly in the United States and subsequently in the other continents, over a period of sixteen years have been thrillingly portrayed in other volumes; notably in "Twenty five years of the Guardianship" by Ruhíyyih Khanum. From her book we learn that the above protracted labour of love was but a prelude to the launching, in 1937, of America's first Seven Year Plan.

"It was the first joint activity on a large scale, nationally organised and flowing into an international field, that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh had ever undertaken anywhere in the world." and in which he, "... led us seven years down that mighty pioneer trail which would cover North America, into Alaska, down to Panama, all over Central and South America across the Andes and into the West Indies."

Inspired no doubt, by the success of that stupendous campaign the believers in Gt. Britain, at their Annual Convention in 1944, resolved to write to the Guardian suggesting that they too should have a plan.

Back came the earth-shattering cable;- "Advise formation of nineteen spiritual assemblies spread over England, Wales, Scotland and Eire."

It has been said that had the Bahá'ís of England of that time known what they were inviting they might have had second thoughts; (for the five local assemblies and the vast majority of believers then, were all located in England.) Truly a formidable task confronted them, - in six short years to accomplish such an expansion; but it was the Guardian's wish, it was part of God's plan, it was not only possible

but fore-ordained. So everybody - well, almost everybody - sat back and waited for it to happen.

How often this pattern has been repeated during the course of Bahá'í history. Mulla Husayn was but one of several of the disciples of Siyyid Kazim but he was the one who said, - "Come then, let us seek for the Promised One as our leader has bidden. When Abdu'l-Baha sent the Vehicles of the Divine Plan to the believers in America, only Martha Root and a few other valiant souls arose to fulfil the Divine Mandate.

Similarly with Britain's first six year plan, everybody believed in it, all talked about it, but few arose - so that after 15 months, in August 1945, the beloved Guardian wrote, "I grieve to learn of the slow progress of the six year Plan which the English believers have so nobly conceived...." And again in December of that year - "I am anxiously waiting for news of the progress...."

Two years had come and gone, the third begun when the Guardian wrote - "The activities of the English Bahá'í community, in pursuance of the Plan which in its scope and potentialities is wholly unprecedented in the history of the Faith in the British Isles are now approaching a critical stage, and will, if not relentlessly expanded and consolidated fall far short of their ultimate objective. They have now entered the third year of their plan and the work that still remains unaccomplished is considerable....."

A dire warning indeed; but the seeds for future growth had already been planted and the first tender green shoots were beginning to break through the barren earth and to turn towards the sun.

Let us consider briefly the standing of the Cause in our homeland at that time. There had been five assemblies in England but of these two had been disbanded. It had now been resolved that nine more towns were to be chosen to achieve assemblies before the end of the third year; this constituted the first phase. A few 'pioneers' had arisen but nothing like the 'flood' which would be essential if success was to be assured.

Meanwhile, in October 1945, Marion Holley had come over from the Americas to marry David Hofman. Marion had had the benefit of experience in the prosecution of the U.S. Seven Year Plan, which, it will be recalled - "Was the first joint activity... nationally organised... ever undertaken anywhere in the world." The proving-ground, as it were, for the world-wide campaigns which were to follow in the future.

Philip Hainsworth, on pilgrimage in Haifa, had spent six weeks with the beloved Guardian. At Teaching Conference in 1946 and again in 1947, and during the annual conventions, these souls, together with a few others of like mind, integrity and enthusiasm, from home and overseas alike,\* brought home to the British believers a more profound appreciation of Shoghi Effendi, the Sign of God on earth and inspired them to turn to him with deeper trust and ready obedience.

At last the realisation dawned upon one and all that they were the ones who had to arise, and to serve, and to sacrifice in order to win the 'goals' set before them. So stupendous was the impact of the resurgence of spirit that, before the close of the Six Year Plan, 60 per cent of the Bahá'ís of Gt. Britain had arisen to pioneer; a record never surpassed, before nor since anywhere in the Bahá'í World.

### Chapter One

Mrs Rose Jones had moved to Cardiff from London in 1942 following her marriage. She came with the blessing of the London community and so became (so far as is known) the first Bahá'í to live in the Principality. Rose testifies, - "I first heard of the Faith when I was very young attending children's classes.... our spiritual leader was Mrs Florence George (affectionately known to one and all as 'Mother George') an artist who lived in Chelsea. As we got older we were invited to the adults so I went on from there and had the honour of meeting the very early Bahá'ís. I was the only one who continued to attend and I thank Bahá'u'lláh for the great bounty. Claire Gung (who later joined Rose in Cardiff and who shared her home in Werfa St. Roath) had also attended Mother George's classes.

Rose accepted Bahá'u'lláh at the age of 12 (the later age limit of 15 had not been introduced at that time) in 1918/19. Two daughters were born during her nine year residence in Cardiff, both of whom are now (1985) pioneers overseas. Irene (Tafaaki) is head of the New Era

\* The ideal, for an author, would be to mention all names of none at all. As the former is impossible and the latter too coldly impersonal, I rely on the generosity, tolerance and forbearance of those concerned to understand, and to forgive.

School in Panchgani, India, and has recently written the lovely children's book, 'Horse of the Moonlight'. Valerie pioneered to Africa in 1968 and is now in Botswana.

When Cardiff was chosen as the Goal town to open Wales to the Faith it was evident that pioneers would be essential. Joe Lee from Manchester was the first to try. Joe came to Cardiff and sought long but unsuccessfully for accommodation for his wife, Elsie, and their growing young family. Regretfully he had to return to Manchester.

Now it is late 1946; nearly two years into the Plan and problems and set-backs were besetting the community, both nationally and locally. It is evident that the history of 'Wales' cannot be considered without reference to the national scene - the 'Mother' communities to whom we owe our birth and sustenance. Indeed it is true to say that eleven years were to elapse before Cardiff was able to support itself without the influx of pioneers; but that is anticipating my story - so let us return to that eventful Teaching Conference as recorded in the Baha'i Journal of March 1947 -

"The dynamic focus of this years Teaching Conference January 4th-5th in Manchester, was the dedication to the 25th Anniversary of the Guardianship. It was a theme which was never out of mind among those present; it opened up new areas of thought and understanding and its quickening effect can surely not be overestimated. More than 75 believers from all parts of the British Isles participated in this historic occasion.... the reports from goal towns and communities (all personally represented except St. Ives) proving of great value and stimulus."

Hugh McKinley reports, - "It was one of the coldest winters on record. All heating had been cut off as we huddled in Jeff Joseph's warehouse, some on chairs and some on packing cases while Honor Kempton and Marion Hofman brought Ruhiyyih Khanum's booklet on "25 years of the Guardianship" to life. On the journey home there was no heating in the railway carriage and Dorothy Ferraby's hair froze to the window glass as she slept.

From that Teaching Conference was sent the following cable, - "Dedication to 25th Anniversary Guardianship, our rock of strength, source of guidance, raised teaching conference fresh heights of vision, endeavour. Conference gratefully, joyously, humbly offers beloved Guardian steadfast devotion. Pledges service as never before."

To this the Guardian cables his reply, - "Profoundly moved message. Greatly appreciate noble sentiments. Praying depths grateful heart continued success magnificent collective efforts. Deepest love - Shogh'i" And three weeks later the N.S.A. was able to cable Haifa, - "JOYFULLY REPORT JOAN GIDDINGS OFFERS PIONEER CARDIFF."

But once again matters were not that simple. Joan's husband, Brian, not at that time a Baha'i, was away at sea. Joan was in need of medical attention and had to decide whether to wait for her operation or to proceed to Cardiff and hope to obtain the necessary treatment there. After much hesitation and delay the latter course proved to be the only practical one. Brian gladly gave his consent to the move and decided to leave the merchant service and seek alternative employment in Cardiff on his return from sea.

On April 21st, Ridvan 1947, Joan, newly arrived in the Capital, met Rose at her home at 14, Werfa St. Roath and held there the first ever meeting of resident Bahá'ís in Wales. The first stage was accomplished; the formation of a nucleus was declared and minuted.

It was necessary to record this as the first meeting of 'resident' Bahá'ís for it was not in fact Cardiff's first Bahá'í meeting. That had taken place, amazingly enough, 22 years earlier. Treasured among the archives of the Cardiff Assembly is a news-cutting from the Western Mail dated November 15th, 1925, which records that Martha Root accompanied by Mrs Florence Schopflocher visited Cardiff and there addressed the Esperantist society, the Theosophical Society and held a reception in the Park Hotel.

The report reads as follows, -

"Two women have been in Cardiff on a very interesting mission. They are Miss Martha L. Root, a Pittsburg journalist and Mrs Florence Schopflocher of Montreal. They met in England by accident, both being independently engaged in a World tour for the same purpose, and came to Wales together for the weekend. Their purpose is the spread of the knowledge of the Bahá'í religion. This is a movement which started in Persia and has spread with marvellous effect.

Its twelve basic teachings are;- The oneness of mankind, independent investigation of truth, the foundation of all religions is one, religion must be the cause of unity, religion must be in accord with science and reason, equality between men and women, prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten, universal peace, universal education,



spiritual solution of the economic problem, a universal language, an international tribunal.

The adherents believe that their creed is the world-uniting force.... These two women have, between them visited practically every country in the world - moved to this voluntary mission by their profound faith.

Those interested in this movement may obtain full information from Mr J. C. Craven, 27 Derby St. Altrincham."

It is difficult if not impossible for us at the present stage of the development of the Bahá'í cause in Great Britain, to appreciate fully the extent of the sacrifices made and of the suffering endured by these gallant early pioneers. It is recorded that one pioneer used to spend every winter evening in the railway station waiting room because his landlady would not allow him a fire in his bed-sitting room. Brian Giddings tells us, - "In 1947 houses to rent were almost non-existent and buying was extremely expensive (pro rata to wages) and to get us into Cardiff, Joan had to take two rooms in a house in return for looking after an old bed-ridden lady and her husband; cooking, cleaning, etc., etc."

It was more than two years before they were able to move from these rooms in Coplestone Rd, Llandaff, to Plasturton Avenue.

One can see that running a home, caring for two elderly people, a husband and a small son left but little time for Baha'i activities. Nevertheless, Joan put in a tremendous amount of dedicated work getting the Faith known and organised in Cardiff. Rose Jones also had her very young family and her husband was a staunch catholic, (little if anything is recorded about him but he must have been a very tolerant person), yet one of the first resolutions (April 26th, 1947) was that a percentage of the local Fund should be donated to the National Assembly. Feasts were observed methodically and weekly Firesides commenced as a prelude to their first, and later a series, of public meetings.

But hardly had they got themselves organised, with their sights set comfortably on Assembly status by 1950 when another bombshell burst. That was confirmation from the secretary of the N.T.C., dated May 30th 1947, - "Dear Bahá'í friend, as you know, the Guardian requires a Spritual Assembly in Cardiff by next April. Fred Stahler, the first pioneer to arise this year\* will be coming to join you on Monday, 2nd of June."

\* i.e. 104 B.E.

The momentous events of these early months are briefly portrayed in an article which appeared in the Bahá'í Journal No. 68 and, at the risk of some repetition, it would be appropriate to quote an extract.

On April 21st, 1947, resident Bahá'í Rose Jones welcomed Joan Giddings to Cardiff and the nucleus of a Bahá'í community was formed. After devotional readings these two friends, both of whom had non-Baha'i husbands, and young children to care for, solemnly dedicated themselves to work for the cause of Bahá'u'lláh in Wales. We arranged to meet weekly and to hold Feasts on the correct day. Meantime every endeavour was made to interest those around us in the Faith and to bring them to Fireside meetings.

We realised that it would be slow, arduous work to make a firm foundation for a future assembly in Cardiff. However the magnitude of our task was increased, when, on May 30th, we received news from the National Teaching Committee that Cardiff was to be a 'Goal' town and have an assembly by 1948."

On the 2nd of June, Fred Stahler from Birmingham, a young man in his early twenties, duly arrived and was lovingly welcomed by Rose and Joan.

Hugh and Violet McKinley, mother and son, Bahá'ís in the Torquay area were anxious to move to where they could most profitably serve the Cause - but again there were impediments. Let us hear how 'difficulties were removed' in Hugh's own words.

"Far away in Devon... Violet McKinley and her son Hugh were on the fringe of the then unlimited area of the L.S.A. of Torquay of which Violet had been an early member at its foundation before the war. Working as horseman and tractor driver on the farm, Hugh had appeared before an Objector's Tribunal at Bristol in 1943 and had been granted non-combatant status provided he complied with the 'Control of Engagements Order' and remained in Agricultural work. In September 1946, while on a motor cycle journey from Chudleigh to nearby Torquay, where he was going to give a talk at the Baha'i centre, Baha'u'llah ordained for him a miraculous accident. Undoubtedly the prompt action of the National Youth Committee in session, cabling the Guardian for his prayers at the shrines, helped to restore Hugh to life from Base fracture of the skull and facial paralysis.

Three months later, after his release from hospital, Hugh was registered as a disabled person and freed to take employment anywhere. It was decided by the N.T.C. that initially the McKinleys should move into Torquay to augment their teaching plan. The magnet of greater obligations in the pioneer field soon drove Violet and Hugh to seek

a more challenging goal and on the 27th of September 1947 (under the direction and with the blessing of the N.T.C.) they arrived in Cardiff, asking for the 'bus to Llandaff and the 'Cow and Snuffers' public house, near to which the Giddings rented their two room accommodation. - The Cow and Snuffers is a centuries old pub which stood on the banks of the old, but now obliterated, Glamorganshire canal and in what was then the 'tiny' City of Llandaff. -

There they participated in a joyful 19 Day Feast and stayed for two or three days finding their feet. Then they moved into the city, into cheap hotels and commenced wearing out shoe+leather walking the surrounding streets, knocking on every door, trying to find furnished rooms. It took nearly three weeks before two temporary rooms were found and after two months they moved to Pontcanna St. where they stayed for a year...." -- As an indication of the 'changing times', their landlady at Pontcanna used to wash not only the step, garden path and pavement, but also an apron of the road every week with hot soap and water. -

Five resident Bahá'ís, six months to go and four more still required. Now the tempo of the Teaching work accelerated. Dick Backwell (July 22-3) and Alma Gregory (29th and 30th) were among those who visited this little group to encourage, advise and inspire. Firesides were arranged for them and though the atmosphere was one of confidence and joy very few contacts came.

Then, on October 14th 1947, the long planned, eagerly awaited First Public Meeting. To continue with Hugh's narrative, (for we have the inestimable benefit of the testimony of one who experienced these early trials and triumphs;) -

"How are you? Are you well? Are you happy? These words of the Master's became the standard of Bahá'í life in Cardiff for all the pioneers felt lonely, living in an unknown land on the frontiers of the Faith's penetration. They called in to make these enquiries two or three times a week, just to 'see a Bahá'í face' and to exchange news of the day to day progress of the Six Year Plan."

The first public meeting was held in the Park Hotel (where Martha Root had held her reception twenty two years previously) - with Philip Hainsworth as speaker.

All that day Fred and Hugh strode in the shopping centre and main streets of Cardiff distributing a 1000 pink and blue handbills to

passers-by. Twelve enquirers came; a number were Theosophists; members of the U.N.A., the International Club and others were brought to the knowledge of the Faith."

One of the enquirers who signed the 'Visitor's Book' at that meeting (a book which is still in our keeping) was a lovely Viennese nurse, Suzanne Solomon. On March 18th of the following year Suzanne became a Bahá'í. Cardiff's first declarant and the sixth member of the Cardiff community.

Suzanne served the Cause zealously for some ten years, and though personal problems sometimes intruded giving rise to many difficulties which unhappily led eventually to her withdrawal from the Faith, she was, after all, Cardiff's first confirmed believer and as such must have a place, an honoured place, in the Annals of the Faith in Wales.

## Chapter Two

It is only possible to convey a rough idea of the increasing volume of work undertaken by these five stalwart pioneers during these months of accelerating activity.

Joan Giddings, who had been 'elected' Secretary\* to the initial group of two in 1947 held that office until compelled for family reasons to return to Bradford nine years later.

Correspondence with the National Assembly, and with the N.T.C. in particular, with travel teachers and with other local Assemblies, all mounted in volume. Apart from the organising of Feasts and Firesides - sometimes twice weekly - and now public meetings, a vigorous and sustained effort had been made from the earliest days to secure a Baha'i Centre. Every possible avenue was explored but always premises proved unsuitable or, more often, too expensive. (This cherished desire alas, remains unfulfilled to this day, 40 years later.)

\* Except for about six months in 1954 when Dennis McArthur was secretary.

Many of the meetings were held in a rented room at 'Ty'r Cymru' (the Welsh House) at 11, Gordon Road. Many receipts for this hire are extant; e.g., 'Received the sum of 7/6d, rent for room August 28th 48.' In that year the Annual Account lists, - to rent Ty'r Cymru, £19/12/6, rent for room; some 25 meetings in all. And of course there was also the constant stream of inspired guidance coming through the National Assembly from the beloved Guardian. Words of praise and encouragement, admonition and warning, advice and exhortations. Sometimes the guidance would come while the problems were still the subject of consultation; such as when in May 1947 four localities had to be selected for Assembly status by Ridvan next. From Bahá'í Journal, Aug '47 pp.2

"The selection of towns for this honour was discussed throughout the community, as well as by Convention and more specifically by the National Teaching Committee. A directive from the Guardian settled the problem for us in a manner which none of us had visualised, but which we now see bears the unerring stamp of that guidance which we look for in our beloved Guardian.

He asks us to develop the nuclei established last year in Cardiff, Dublin, and Edinburgh into 'fully fledged assemblies ere the expiry of the present year.' Here then are three of our goals for the present year, and the N.S.A. has approved the committee's recommendation that Bristol be the fourth...to complete the initial phase of the plan."

Five months after the receipt of the above mandate, Cardiff had the honour of its own 'first' letter from the Guardian; dated Nov 1st, 1947, it was sent in reply to our report to him of the holding of our first Public Meeting.

Dear and valued co-workers,

I wish to add a few words in person and assure everyone of you of my deep admiration of the spirit you manifest. The services you render and the determination with which you are initiating the great historic teaching enterprise in Wales. You are, I assure you, often in my thoughts and I will supplicate the Beloved to bless continually your high and meritorious endeavours.

Your true and grateful brother,

Shoghi

Now in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales the signs of increased activity were everywhere apparent. The first trickle of new believers were declaring their faith in Bahá'u'lláh - some being from the newly opened territories. A nationally organised circuit of Travel Teachers was instituted, visiting the communities and 'goal' towns at least once every month; addressing firesides and public meetings, encouraging, assisting and inspiring one and all. So much so that, in contrast to the cables of '45 and '46 quoted in Chapter One, the Guardian wrote in October of 1947, -

Dear and valued co-workers,

A gigantic task, now being so energetically and successfully carried out by the consecrated and firmly knit British Bahá'í community, constitutes a glorious landmark in recent Bahá'í history, and will, when viewed in proper perspective, deserve to be regarded as one of the most outstanding enterprises launched by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the opening years of the second Baha'i century. Alike in its magnitude and significance this momentous undertaking is unprecedented in the Annals of the Faith in the British Isles, and deserves to rank as one of the most compelling evidences of the creative power of its Author, marking the rise and establishment of His institutions on the European continent...."

Cardiff was not the least of those favoured by these wonderful Bahá'í teachers; the mere catalogue of their names appears like a page from a Bahá'í Burke's peerage'.

The most frequently used venue for the public meetings was the Royal Hotel in Queen St., with three or four in the Park Hotel and one at least in Cardiff's City Hall. It was there that the second public meeting was held on November 18th. This was addressed by Hassan Sabri, (at the time living in Birmingham).

On November 29th, May White at the Royal Hotel and also at Gordon Rd. From London, on December 16th, Mrs Mary Basil Hall. Mary came again on January 20th, 1948 - this time accompanied by Mrs Muriel Mathews and Deborah Coleman. Deborah was the first new believer to declare in a goal town. - Dublin in Eire had that honour.

May White paid her second visit to the Royal on February 11th and shared the platform with Joan Giddings. She spoke to the title "True Education". On the 23rd, this time at the Angel Hotel,

International Youth Day was celebrated. This took the form of a Symposium: Winifred Knowles of the Theosophical Lodge and Brian Giddings were guests on the panel which included Joan Giddings, Muriel Mathews, Arthur Cole and David Hofman.

Let us break at this juncture to record two events of major importance which took place about this time. A kindly disposed Welsh clergyman, Mr Gwyn Daniels presented to the Cardiff Bahá'ís a translation into Welsh of the 'Unity Prayer'. In her greatly appreciated contribution to these reminiscences, Miss Beatrice Newman informs us that this Welsh version has been recited in Haifa, at the Temples in Frankfurt and Kampala, in Iceland, in the Orkneys, Shetlands and the Fair Isles; in Tanzania and in Kenya, in Oslo, Malta, Cyprus and Jersey as well as in all the Capitals and Major centres in the British Isles.

The other great occasion came on March 18th when Mrs Suzanne Solomon declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh and was accepted by the National Assembly. Suzanne first heard the Bahá'í message at a Fireside on Sept. 28th conducted by Ms Clara Weir of Los Angeles.

Our next visiting speaker, (March 12th and 13th) was much beloved Hasan Balyuzi. On the 20th the platform was shared by David Hofman and Hassan Sabri. Nine Baha'i friends and one visitor (there may well have been others) signed our visitors book at the Unity Feast to celebrate Naw-Ruz. On April 2nd Olga Mills and Elsie Cranmer came to share their experience, their love and their wisdom. Elsie Cranmer was 'standing in' for Lady Kathleen Hornell who deeply regretted being unable to come on this occasion. The last meeting at the Royal Hotel before Ridvan 1948 was held on April 12th and there was also a Fireside gathering at Gordon Rd. on the 16th presided over by Marion Hofman.

Some idea of the intensity of the teaching effort during these past nine or ten months can be seen when one notes that in addition to the sixteen hotel meetings listed above, forty or more fireside and/or deepening classes were held at Ty'r Cymru. Many of the speakers at the listed meetings were also able to attend the Fireside gatherings.

Such then was the spirit of love and devotion exemplified by this little group of five, each with the cares, responsibilities and post-war restrictions of the time, which enabled them to sustain so high a level of organised activity. Such too was the spirit of selfless service which inspired their helpers who came, many from far away, in the hope that somewhere, sometime, a 'waiting soul' may be awakened to the call of Bahá'u'lláh.

All of these meetings were widely advertised; regular notices appeared in the local Press; gradually the name Bahá'í was being brought to the notice of the people of Wales. One of Cardiff's Bahá'ís, Mrs Doreen Bartlett who declared in 1965, tells us that she recalls having seen these adverts 18 years before she attended her first Bahá'í meeting. We really do not know what impact our efforts have on the general public. --- There was an occasion a few years back when a member of the Cardiff Assembly was sitting on a 'U.N.A. Sponsored' committee organising a 'World Faith service of Prayer'. This member was putting in a plea for a Bahá'í prayer to be included in the service. One of the local Clergy objecting to this said, "... after all you are only a little minority group. I don't suppose there are a thousand of you in Cardiff altogether." - "Well, no, not quite," he replied. (We were 12 at that time) "... so that each one may become like unto a regiment, ?"

A very fine, indeed, an exciting account of the events of that year, 104 B.E. appeared in the Baha'i Journal of September 1948 and it will be good to read from the report which the Cardiff friends themselves submitted, summarising the closing stages of that year long campaign.

"A succession of radiant teachers came monthly, and we regret that space precludes mention of their names. As yet no centre or meeting room had been found, and as the friends were mostly in lodgings it was difficult to hold successful (home) firesides. Cardiff is a slow town to respond to new ideas, and it was not until the 16th of December that our advertising and contact work was rewarded by the attendance of 26 non-Bahá'ís at a script presentation with Mary Basil Hall as speaker.

From now on the tempo of the work visibly quickened; on December 27th, Charlie Dunning arrived for a two month visit prior to going on to Belfast. His wonderful contact-making ability and radiant spirit were a further inspiration to us. In January we obtained the use of a room for our meetings on one evening per week, and could commence that regular and persistent publicity which brought a slow but steady trickle of names for the address book .... Crisis occurred in March when Mr Sugar's illness, and a transport strike prevented the outward success of a series of classes he was to have taken; (the programmes had already been printed). Nevertheless, during that week our first Declaration was received....

Charles Dunning was now in Belfast, but the group was enlarged



by the arrival, on March 29th, of Ata'u'llah Khochbine from Teheran, via Paris, and of Claire Gung from Northampton, making eight residents. The ninth believer was George Rowley, loaned to us by the Birmingham L.S.A. for a long settlement project. RIDVAN 105 B.E. - April 21st 1948 - witnessed the Declaration of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cardiff.

The certificate of this, the first Bahá'í Assembly in Wales, bears the signature of: Mrs Rose Jones, Mrs Joan Giddings, Fred Stahler, Mrs V. McKinley, Hugh McKinley, Mrs Suzanne Solomon, Ata'u'llah Khochbine, Miss Claire Gung and George Rowley.

### Chapter Three

The Cardiff Assembly's Minute Book records; -  
April 21st 1948. "All nine members were present and each took part in the devotional reading of the scriptures and prayers. The Officers were then elected as follows - Chairman, Hugh McKinley; Vice-chairman, Fred Stahler; Secretary, Joan Giddings; Treasurer, George Rowley. Appointed librarian and keeper of Archives, F. Stahler.

A letter to the Guardian, Shogi Effendi, was composed and in agreement with a suggestion made by Isobel Locke that the letters from the four Goal towns be sent under one cover it was despatched to Edinburgh.

Letters were sent to the National Assembly, to the National Teaching Committee and the Assembly Development Committee."

The five Assemblies in Gt. Britain had, within the space of four years, grown to fourteen. The four 'Goal towns' for 1947/48, namely, Dublin, Edinburgh, Bristol and Cardiff had all been achieved.

Telegrams of congratulation were sent to the other three new Assemblies and we received congratulatory wires from the N.S.A., the N.T.C., and from the London and Birmingham Baha'is. Letters were also received from Dick Backwell, Isobel Locke and Dora Weekes (Bristol).

Then, on October 17th, after some postal delay, the Guardian replied, -

"Dear and valued co-workers,

The formation of the first Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly in Wales is an event of great historical significance. I congratulate you on this splendid achievement which, I trust will be a prelude to still greater victories in the service of our Glorious Faith. I will supplicate on your behalf the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh, that your work may prosper, your plans bear abundant fruit, and your hopes realised for the propagation of the Faith and the establishment of its nascent institutions."

That then may certainly be regarded as the end of a glorious chapter, 'an event of great historical significance' in the beloved Guardian's words; but it was only the beginning of the story. In his cable to the British Bahá'í community of April 25th the Guardian affirms; - "Sister communities East West marvel (at the) victory won (of) such magnitude (in) so short a time by community so sorely afflicted, so small numerically, so circumscribed in resources yet so alive, so sound, so resolute." At the same time he pleads; - "Urge valiant promoters (of) so momentous a plan (to) guard against dissipation (of) resources (and) relaxation of effort (and the) forfeiture (of the) hard-won prizes."

It soon became evident that in Wales at least the friends were not going to rest on their laurels. The study classes were maintained and the monthly public meetings held as before. Still the Teachers came from far and wide. George Rowley would have to return to Birmingham before many months were up; Ata'u'llah to London before the end of the year. So the strengthening of the community was essential if the Assembly was to be maintained. To this end several 'ad hoc' committees were appointed; one for youth activities; one for advertising; one for flowers and one for L.S.A. meetings and Feasts. As well as these, two members, Joan and Fred were on the new S.W.R.T.C. appointed by the N.S.A., to cover Wales and the West of England.

The half yearly report of 1948 mentions one very interesting feature. The committee for L.S.A.'s and Feasts was to ensure that one person did not have more meetings at their home than another. This soon ceased to function "for we found that we had progressed beyond the point where anybody minded where, so long as it was convenient for the purpose."

The next meeting for the public at the Royal Hotel was on May 15th and it was addressed by Mr Chas. Mason Remy. After this, on May 26th, the formerly postponed visit by Lady Kathleen Hornell. Three more meetings were held in June, on the 11th, 14th and 30th, in addition to a well attended gathering at Ty'r Cymru on the 18th of June. Cardiff also had the privilege and joy of welcoming during this, their first 'assembly' year, Mrs Dorothy Ferraby, Dick Backwell, Mrs Mehrangiz Munsiff (for eight days), Ursula Newman, Peter Robinson from Bristol, May White, and, from, Australia, Mrs Olive Routh; also David Hofman and Prudence George. Some of these visitors came on two or three occasions. Another visitor from the Antipodes was Mrs Ethyl Dawe, a member of the N.S.A. of Australia and New Zealand. We also had the benefit of a week long visit by Constance Langdon-Davis.

But let it not be thought that public meetings and visiting teachers were the sum total of Bahá'í activity. The 'Unity Prayer' had already been translated into Welsh and now the friends felt that a Welsh pamphlet would be essential to reach the Welsh speaking populace. Early in the year an effort was made to find a translator for the popular yellow pamphlet, "The Baha'í Faith." There are innumerable references both in the L.S.A. Minutes and in the correspondence to the gradual progress of this project. By April 22nd, it was reported to be in manuscript form; by Oct. 5th after all the requisite processes of cross-translation and checking it was submitted to the Priory Press and on January 28th 1950, five copies were despatched to the World Centre. Our accompanying letter is worth quoting in full for its historical import if for no other reason,-

Dear and beloved Guardian,

We are very happy to send you the first copies of the Bahá'í pamphlets in the Welsh. This was translated by a young man whose name we do not know, who was studying for the church, and has special qualifications in Biblical Welsh. The printer assures us that his compositors from North and South Wales found it easy to understand and a Welshman who knows of the Faith was very impressed by it and said that he had learned more of the Faith from it than he had from the English literature. He also said that the prayer of Bahá'u'lláh was very beautiful in Welsh.

We feel that the appearance of this pamphlet will open a new phase in the teaching work in Wales and will enable us to approach those who are at present limited by the ardent nationalistic movement here, in their own language.

Consciousness of the Covenant and of the sustaining power in the Guardianship is our constant inspiration, and we learn with joy of the progress of the work on the Shrine of the Bab. We pray that Bahá'u'lláh may sustain you in all the extra work that this entails, and ask your prayers for the Welsh people that they may respond to the Faith; and on our behalf that we may be assisted in carrying it to them so that their spiritual regeneration will fit them to take their rightful place in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

With deepest love and devotion,  
The Local Spiritual Assembly.

Intimately interwoven with the recounting of the major events are the stories of the Bahá'í helpers and pioneers who made this epic a reality. From a statistical stand-point alone it is a remarkable story. From a human stand-point it is one of courage, determination, self-sacrifice, love, devotion and selfless service which was to lead eventually to the opening of the whole of Wales to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Would that it were possible to do full justice to those gallant workers to whom we, of the new Bahá'í generation, owe such a debt of gratitude; but that is a task beyond my ability and I can but endeavour to tell something of their arrivals and departures and of the parts they played as the newly formed assembly strove to achieve both stability and maturity.

Wonderfully supporting these, our ever-welcome pioneers were those precious souls who were attracted by the message and who declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh, the Redeemer of mankind.

In the fifteen years at present under review these newly-won souls numbered thirty. Of them five were youth under 21. Of the 25 adult declarants, two still remain in Cardiff; seven have pioneered to other goals; eight have withdrawn; four have passed to the Abhá Kingdom; and the destinies of the remaining four are unrecorded. Of the youth declarants one remains a stalwart worker for the cause.

We have no way of knowing how these figures compare with those of other areas, but, deeply though we may regret the loss of those who, for whatever reason, feel that they are unable to continue in the Faith, tribute must be paid for the service each has rendered according to his or her ability. Without them the assembly may well have foundered and the progress of the Cause set back, possibly for decades.

George Rowley, having given yeoman service to the Faith in Cardiff, finally left us to return to Birmingham in July. After functioning with eight members for four months his place was taken by Wales' second declarant, Miss Elizabeth Gorvett on November 21st.

In December '48 with the return of Ata'o'llah to London. we were down to eight again. The declaration of Dennis McArthur of Penarth, a young man of 20, increased the numbers but not the assembly. At the close of the first year, on the eve of Ridvan 1949, Fred Stahler made his second pioneer move when he went to maintain the assembly in Bristol.

Cardiff's assembly was saved by the return of Charles Dunning from Belfast - plus one other pioneer who, however, was unexpectedly recalled to India even before the L.S.A. had met to elect its officers.

The City of Cardiff and the adjacent town of Penarth were separated in those days by a large area of marshland, over half a mile in parts. Today this area is largely developed. However, Penarth retains its separate identity and is now part of the district of the Vale of Glamorgan which has its own local assembly. In the 1940's and 1950's assembly areas were less restricted than they are today and our near and dear neighbours in the 'Vale' will be interested to know that Dennis McArthur was the first Bahá'í in their district. On reaching the age of twenty one in July 1949, he took his place on the Cardiff L.S.A. Three months later, fired by the longing for greater service, he achieved the distinction of becoming the very first of 'Cardiff's own' pioneers when he moved to Blackpool, then striving to achieve its first assembly.

Charles Dunning had also left Wales to go to his second pioneering post; that of opening the virgin territory of Sheffield. At Ridvan 1950 the assembly was maintained by Miss Siri Bischoff of Norway and Miss Ruth Schar from Berne in Switzerland.

The year 1950/51 witnessed even greater changes in the Cardiff community. In October we said a sad but fond farewell to two of our founding members, Violet and Hugh McKinley. Hugh had been asked to take over the secretaryship of the consolidation committee by the N.S.A. and it became advisable for him to live in London. Two months later Miss Gorvett had to return to Norway. In January 1951 the third of our founding members left. Claire Gung set sail for Africa to her historic

pioneering post.

Here we must digress briefly to relate to the national scene. April 21st, 1960 had seen the glorious consummation of the British Bahá'í community's Six Year Plan - the election of no less than 24 assemblies. The original five had been maintained plus the nineteen new L.S.A.s called for by the Guardian. This plan was succeeded by the "Two Year Africa Campaign", designed and destined to open that continent to the Faith. Hugh's appointment to the consolidation committee was to relieve Philip Hainsworth who was also preparing to go to Africa. In November our beloved Claire wrote to inform the assembly that she had obtained a post in Tanganyika and that she would be sailing on January 4th.

In five short months we had suffered the loss of no less than five of our members and we were only saved from becoming inquorate by the declaration of Mr Andrew McArthur, Dennis's father. He became a Bahá'í in September and he took his place on the assembly shortly after. The re-establishment of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cardiff in 1951 reads like a fairy tale. Hassan Sabri had joined us in February, to be joined later by Isobel Locke on the occasion of their marriage. Dennis McArthur had already found a lovely Bahá'í bride in Blackpool and they had now decided to return to Wales. Then, on March 26th we had two more declarations. Thomas and Patricia Roberts of Grangetown, Cardiff. Now we have eleven believers - but Bristol still needed two. Though Hassan had only with great difficulty obtained accommodation for himself and his bride, they willingly abandoned this to cross the channel to Bristol, thus saving another assembly.

Four days after that truly memorable Ridván came yet another occasion for rejoicing. We can only imagine the excitement and joy in every heart when Brian, Joan Gidding's husband, became a Bahá'í. And so the steady flow of pioneers continued; some to stay for a few short weeks, some remaining to serve for months - and on into years. This was the pattern which held until 1959.

In that year Cardiff enrolled seven new believers and since that day they have not only been self-supporting but Cardiff Bahá'ís have in their turn pioneered; in Wales, to Gt. Britain and to lands across the seas. (As an interesting 'footnote' to illustrate this, there are today, in 1986, seven Bahá'ís residing in the Western Isles, all of whom started their Bahá'í lives in the City which the Guardian had designated 'The pivotal Centre for Wales.'

To return now to the teaching work we will go back to 1949 when, on November 27th, Philip Hainsworth, on behalf of the N.T.C. came to

consult with the assembly. Many plans were considered, chief among which was that we should now try to reach the suburbs. Eventually meeting rooms were found in five districts. These were, - Maindy Recreation Centre; Canton Community Centre; Rumney Memorial Hall; Roath Park Huts and the Clive Hall in Grangetown.

Posters were displayed outside of each Hall and hundreds of postcard notices put into local shops. Visiting speakers, May White and Prudence George came to help and in January, between the 12th and the 18th, a meeting was held in each of these centres. Finally a reception was held for enquirers at the Royal Hotel. The report sent to the National Teaching Committee thanked the visiting teachers and praised them for the excellent contact work achieved. This series of meetings was followed up by five weekly study courses held on Friday evenings from February 3rd to March 3rd.

It was during this month also that we had welcomed the two young lady pioneers, Siri Bischoff, a Norwegian came to us from Oxford, Ruth Schar, a newly declared Baha'i from Berne. The arrival of these two radiant souls ensured that the assembly could be redeclared come Ridvan of this vital year, 1950.

One cannot let this critical and highly charged last few weeks of the Six Year Plan go without special mention. The final surge towards victory following the N.T.C.'s 'Impassioned plea' to the entire community of March 27th.

There were 24 days left twenty-nine vacancies still to be filled. The success of the plan to date and the immense effort to achieve these really staggering results had fired the imagination of the entire Bahá'í world. Three National Assemblies had that weekend united in prayer for our success. John Robarts, chairman of the N.S.A. of Canada, having turned down teaching requests throughout his homeland in order to enjoy three weeks holiday gave up his plans in order to spend the time in helping us. From London he visited eight 'Centres', in England, Scotland and Ireland in the space of ten days. Before he left Canada a young lady had said to him, - "If they need one more to 'get the Plan' wire me and I will go." The N.S.A. of Canada cabled, - "Delighted privilege participate through John Robarts in closing historic days your Six Year Plan stop whole Canadian Bahá'í community join their prayers for overwhelming victory."

That the victory was achieved is now enshrined in the Annals of the Cause of God in our Homeland.

## Chapter Four

In recalling these momentous days it is not easy to know what to include and what to omit. If all were recorded the story would not only assume impossible proportions but it would become rather boring as well; if anything is left out it could well be that important and interesting items are sacrificed for lesser matters. Yet how often it is that the apparently 'little' things are the 'leaven' which enriches the whole. Let us cite two such incidents, one from way, way back and one much more recent.

One of our early contacts from the very earliest days was Mrs Mary Fuller, a war widow. Early in 1951 Rose Jones had to have an operation on her arm; at the same time her young daughter, Irene, became very ill. Mary became a constant visitor to the home, fetching and cleaning, shopping and helping in every possible way until the emergency was passed; a real friend in need. Mary was a faithful supporter of the Cause for 17 years before she decided to declare. That was in 1966. She was over 80 when she passed to the Abha Kingdom in 1982 and she is buried in the Cardiff Western Cemetery in the Bahá'í plot which holds the mortal remains of the Knight of Baha'u'llah, Charles Dunning and those of another Bahá'í, Mrs Élise Ham. Élise was a friend for many years standing of the Card family. Both Élise and Mary had served on the Local Assembly. Shortly after this time Rose lost her husband. Being in poor health and with her two young daughters to bring up, she had, very reluctantly to return to London. In September 1951, Cardiff's first Bahá'í and an L.S.A. member since its inception in 1948 was welcomed 'home' by the London assembly - whose secretary at that time was her former Cardiff co-worker, Hugh McKinley.

Our next story came in reply to the Author's appeal in the Bahá'í journal of March 1985 for recollections of 'the early days in Wales'. An example, is it not, of one of the seeds which are left by the 'wayside' oftentimes forgotten, yet destined to blossom in God's good time into yet another 'flower' for his garden. I thank the writer for permission to include it.

"I read your request for reminiscences of the early days in Wales. I am afraid I don't have any, but I do have a more recent one (although I can hardly believe it is an 18 year old memory). The memory of a visit from Joy to my nasty little room in Newport Rd. on Christmas eve, 1966. Joy was the first Bahá'í I ever met and although I didn't keep in touch with her I never forgot her kindness and when I eventually stumbled across the Faith some four years ago it was the memory of that kindness which encouraged me to investigate....



Very best wishes,

Ann Aljabar

Ann and Joy are happily in touch once again.

The twelve months from Ridvan 1950 to 1951 were regarded as a breathing space during which Bahá'ís, after exhausting efforts of the Six Year Plan, could consolidate their positions, marshall their forces take stock and generally prepare for the tasks which lay ahead of them. The two year Africa campaign began officially in April 1951 but preparations for this next stage in our development had been going on long before this with the call for pioneers to prepare for an even more demanding challenge.

By March 1951 the Bulletin of the Africa committee reported, - "We have already had contact with twenty-six believers desiring to pioneer to Africa. Two have succeeded in arriving there, at least a dozen or more have fully committed their hopes and efforts to finding ways and means..... and others are in the stage of consultation. The fact that this great response to the Guardian's heartfelt call to Africa has occurred before the 'formal' opening of the British Two Year Plan, which commences next convention, gives bright promise for the unfoldment of the Faith in this vast continent."

The Africa Committee's faith was fully justified. At the outset the National Assemblies of Gt. Britain, America and Egypt collaborated and the story of that great campaign's progress will be the subject of a far mightier tome than this. That is, for obvious reasons, beyond the scope or purpose, of this little volume; (though we do feel we have a very intimate link through our very dear Claire). Let it suffice then for the present to read again the Guardian's cable to Convention of 1953.

"Warmly congratulate assembled delegates Bahá'í community British Isles celebrating most great Festival Holy Year on magnificent victories achieved African continent, exceeding highest hopes. Plan formulated two years ago, originally conceived (as a) mere prelude (to the) African campaign, assumed such proportions, yielded such fruit, (as to) deserve (to) be regarded (as a) distinct stage campaign launched British Bahá'í community beyond borders homeland....."

Meanwhile consolidation on the home front could not be allowed to suffer. This was emphasised again in the Guardian's message to Teaching Conference of that year. "Appeal attendants Conference focus attention fleeting months ahead consolidation home front constituting

vital phase second collective enterprise British Baha'i history."

In Cardiff this three year period followed the pattern which had obtained during the previous five. Public meetings and Firesides with visiting teachers and speakers; publicity through the press and personal teaching continued. Each year at Election time the struggle to ensure that, come the Most Great Festival, our numbers would be sufficient for the Assembly to be maintained. Ridvan 1952 though was a landmark. The first time for the assembly to be elected and not declared Elizabeth Gorvett had returned from London, Miss Evelyn Baxter moved in to replace Rose Jones, and, on April the 1st the declaration of Jack Gould brought our numbers at Ridvan up to ten.

When the Assembly was re-declared in 1953 only two of the original nine members remained. They were Mrs Brian Giddings and Mrs Suzanne Solomon. In five years 27 Baha'is had shared the honour of serving the Cause in Cardiff. This year, Ridvan 1953, saw the launching by the Bahá'í world of the beloved Guardian's 'Ten Year Crusade'. There were now twelve National Assemblies and these were called upon to conduct this decade long campaign to take the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the rest of the world.

Initially fourteen 'Goals' were set before the British Bahá'is as their contribution to the Plan. These included, among others, the purchase of a National Haziratu'l-quds; the opening of eleven virgin territories ranging from the Faroes in the North down to South West Africa. Also to double the number of assemblies in the British Isles from twenty four to forty eight.

The time had now come for even greater emphasis to be placed on the need for expansion throughout the principality.

We had had five years in which to establish a firm foundation in Cardiff, but as yet the number of native believers was very few. Already Newport to the East, Pontypridd in the North and Swansea, 40 miles to the West had been seriously considered for extension teaching programmes but the 'home base' was still subject to periodic fluctuation between numerical weakness and strength.

Many of our much loved and valued supporters, both from among the newly won souls and those who had pioneered in to maintain the strength, had, for a variety of reasons, been compelled to leave us, some to return to their former posts; others to pioneer to places where the need was greater. Dennis, Penarth's first Baha'i, and his wife, Eileen,

left for a new life and a new field of service in Australia, that was in 1955. Sadly, but inevitably, there were those who gave of their time, their talents and their service for a while only to withdraw or to cease from active participation. Six years of the Ten Year Crusade were to pass - twelve years of the Cause in Wales - before the need for 'replacements' finally came to an end.

Not only pioneers but still the flow of visiting speakers came to help and inspire. In May 1953 Mr Eruch Munsiff presented a film of the Holy Shrines to a gathering of twenty Baha'is and their friends. Mr and Mrs Stanley Bolton, ex-chairman and secretary of the N.S.A. of 'Australasia', addressed a public meeting and a fireside in August. In September, also from the Antipodes, Miss Marie Dunning presented a slide show. In the following March a visit by Mr Nemat Sabour, Nemat was an Iraqi Baha'i student studying in Swansea where he had done a great deal of work in making the name 'Baha'i' known in that town. Dr Grossman visited us in July '54, followed by Marion Hofman, Mrs Beale and Ruth Moffat. Dan Jordan, studying music in Baliol College, Oxford, divided his spring vacation between Torquay, Bristol and Cardiff. These are but some of the well-known, greatly loved servants of God who helped to lay the foundations of the Faith in Wales.

By February 1955, the Cardiff community was at its lowest ebb ever, counting only four active believers. Mary Sabit moved in to bring the numbers up to five. Captain Brian Giddings returned home from sea. Phyllis Lewis pioneered from Liverpool just before Ridvan and David and Marion Hofman left Oxford for Cardiff to enable the Assembly to be re-established. Phyllis, unable to find work or accommodation, had to return to Liverpool but she was replaced by Dr Ernest Miller. Dr Miller, now approaching his 70th birthday, sold his practice in Liverpool in order to pioneer to Cardiff. Even so, in the interest of historical accuracy, it must be recorded that it was touch and go whether the Cardiff Assembly would be maintained on that critical Ridvan of 1955, for having lost our ninth member immediately after the declaration on April 20th it was necessary to confer with the National Assembly, and ultimately with the Guardian himself concerning our status. Significantly, the beloved Guardian cabled reply was addressed to 'The Cardiff Spiritual Assembly'.

From four believers in February to the recognition of the Assembly by the N.S.A. in their letter of July 19, Cardiff had come through its most severe crisis and reached the turning point from which they slowly but surely advanced towards complete stability and which opened the way for the extensive teaching programmes which were eventually to carry the message of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the whole of

Wales.

In May 1956, Joan Giddings returned to Bradford with her husband Brian, and after a short spell they pioneered once again, this time to Canterbury where they became founding members of the Cathedral City's first Spiritual Assembly. Thus was severed the last link with the eight original pioneers who opened Wales to the Faith. Brian, in his reminiscences, recalls, -

"Looking back all those years it always seemed to me that Joan put in so much work and dedication into the Faith and yet somehow never saw the positive results of her work."

Work and dedication and sacrifice there certainly was, and, looking now from her home in the kingdom of Abha, - Joan passed away in October '78 - those 'positive results' are such as would gladden any heart.

It seems that the period from 1956 to '58 marked a stage of transition which may in some ways be likened to the passing from the 'Heroic Age' of the development in Wales, to the 'Formative Age'. Now the long hoped for, long dreamed of, process of expansion slowly began to take shape. David and Marion Hofman and Dr Ernest Miller had been in Cardiff since 1955. May 23rd '56 saw the declaration of David M. Lewis. In August of that year Miss Barbara Simmonds joined us from London. David and Barbara Married two years later, in 1958. Suzanne Solomon, Jack Gould and other local declarants and later the Knight of Baha'u'llah, Chas. Dunning, all helped to maintain the Assembly and its activities during these crucial years.

In 1957 the National Assembly asked Cardiff to nominate a 'Goal Town' for extension teaching. The town chosen was Pontypridd. Once again the pattern which seems to be repeated so often, applied. The first 'seeds' had been planted as far back as 1948 when Claire Gung spent a week in the home of Mrs Newman, and her daughters Beatrice, Mary and Florence in Cilfynydd. It used to be said, - "Wherever Claire goes, her sewing machine goes too," and this week in 1948 was again a dress-making appointment. There the Newman family first heard the name 'Bahá'í' but they were Baptists, staunch and true; Beatrice being a deaconess in their church. The idea of a new Revelation was intriguing, but.....

In 1956, the Tidings were brought once again to their notice. Dr Miller had given a pamphlet to a friend who was also a colleague of Beatrice's and, seeing it in his possession, she said she would like to read it, 'if he had finished with it'. The re-awakened interest led

her to get in touch once again with Claire (now at her pioneering post in Africa) who put her in touch with Dr Miller. Consequently the Newmans were invited to attend the Week-end School being held at Porthcawl.

The Porthcawl Week-end School should have a chapter to itself. Held at the Esplanade Hotel on the 10th and 11th of November 1956, it was the first ever to be held in Wales. Planned over many months with meticulous care and great enthusiasm it attracted supporters from far and near. Bahá'ís from Sheffield and from Eccles in Lancashire attended, the total being in excess of twenty five; few perhaps by today's standards, but it was a start. To this school came Beatrice and she was astonished to be greeted, and introduced by Mrs Hofman to the company assembled as 'the friend of Claire Gung' (not realising perhaps what a 'closely knit' community the Bahá'í World was). There did not seem to her to be anything about the 'teachings', or about the Bahá'ís themselves to which she could take exception; but surely it was not possible that any soul, any prophet however greatly to be honoured, could take the place of her beloved Jesus.

Following this school, this message was addressed His Eminence, Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Israel.

"Beloved Guardian, the Cardiff Spiritual Assembly held their first Week-end School at Porthcawl. The forerunner of future Welsh Summer Schools. All send their loving greetings and we enclose a copy of the programme and photograph taken on that happy occasion.

With devoted love,

Cardiff Spiritual Assembly

In his reply the Guardian expressed his delight that the Faith is progressing in Wales and stated that he, "felt sure that the Welsh people will not only respond to the message.... but (will) contribute to the Faith a distinctive share of their own...." He hoped that there would indeed be Welsh Summer Schools in the future. Baha'is of today, with memories of 'Harlech' and 'Llandrindod Wells' will appreciate the extent to which that hope has been fulfilled.

During the summer of 1957 Mrs Loise K. Sparrow of the U.S.A. spent several months 'planting the seeds' in Llangollen in North Wales and some twelve months prior to this, David Hofman, travelling in connection with his publishing business met up with a young salesman in a Newtown Hotel. He was Eric Kent, a member of the Pentecostal

Movement in Caerphilly and as eager to spread the Gospel of Christ as David was to speak of 'His return'. They discussed their particular views on religion at some length and on parting agreed to keep in touch. David took his new-found friend's address - and promptly lost it.

In the following March, travelling by train to visit an exhibition David and Eric found themselves in the same dining car and this time resolved not to lose contact. Eric became a visitor to the Hofman home where he discussed the Faith with Marion and where he met the other Cardiff Bahá'ís.

Meanwhile the customary pattern of programmes continued locally and similar events were now being organised in Pontypridd. A series of public meetings were held with resident and visiting speakers, mainly at the Pontypridd Y.M.C.A., and when, towards the end of 1957 the 'Christ and Baha'u'llah' Campaign took place one of the meetings organised was held in Pontypridd's Coronation Hall. This Campaign followed the publication of the book by Hand of the Cause George Townsend entitled "Christ and Baha'u'llah". Five hundred invitation cards were printed and distributed; 200 programmes produced; advertisements were carried on the buses and also in the local papers. Many of the invitations were sent to the clergy of various denominations and several received a copy of the book. In addition an "Open letter to the Christians" composed by Dr Miller was widely distributed and a copy was submitted to the local Press.

Then another milestone was reached in the development of the Faith in Wales when Eric Kent declared. Thus was opened another Welsh town to the Cause of God, Caerphilly, seven miles to the north of Cardiff.

## Chapter Five

I know not how I may befittingly portray the mind-numbing, heart-shattering event which next overtook the Baha'i World - so I shall not try to do so.

On November 4th 1957, suddenly, unexpectedly but peacefully, the Beloved Guardian passed away.

He who had unerringly led the believers for thirty six years since the passing of the Master was no longer physically in our midst.

Should any of the younger generation of Baha'is wish to glean, in at least some small measure, an understanding of what this tragic event meant to those who had learned to love, respect and to follow their 'True Brother, Shoghi,' let them read - "The Passing of Shoghi Effendi" by Amatu'l-Bahá Ruhiyyih Khanum.

Now the Beloved Guardian's wisdom and foresight became manifest more clearly than ever before. The half-way stage of the Ten Year Plan, that great Global Crusade, destined to culminate in the election of our supreme body, The Universal House of Justice, had been reached when its inaugurator and inspirer was taken from us. But the plans had had been made, the goals set and the end ordained. The Institution of the Hands of the Cause had been established; the International Baha'i Council appointed;\*the Hands of the Cause had been designated in the Guardian's last message to the Baha'is as "the Chief Stewards of the Embryonic World Commonwealth of Baha'u'llah," and the crusade, - as though endowed with a momentum of its own, surged onward to its triumphant conclusion - still beneath the guiding hand of Shoghi Effendi, our Guardian.

Throughout 1958, with the willing co-operation and assistance of Beatrice Newman the work in Pontypridd continued and in January 1959 she accepted the Lordship of Bahá'u'lláh and declared herself a believer - realising that this was no denial of her Lord but rather obedience to His command.

Even then it had not dawned upon the friends in Cardiff that their first objective had been achieved for it was not until Miss Newman was en route with others of the community to Teaching Conference in Blackpool that the full significance of her declaration dawned upon them; for they learned that Cilfynydd was actually within the administrative Borough of Pontypridd. The cable to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land from that Conference included the words, - "Declaration opens Pontypridd."

Those lovingly planted seeds, having taken root, now began to flourish. In April Beatrice's sister, Mary became a Bahá'í followed in May by Jack Tomlinson and Gethin Jones. Then a Regional Teaching

\* In 1961 this Council became an 'elected' body.

Committee was appointed for Wales, (the previous R.T.C. having covered the whole South Western Region). Its members were, - David and Barbara Lewis, Eric Kent and Beatrice Newman.

Introducing themselves to the friends in their Open Letter of July 10th they wrote, "We have the Faith, the whole of Wales - and about seventeen believers." Though this 'history' of necessity concentrates on the County of Glamorgan we must not forget that the Light had been kindled in other parts of Wales as well. Jean and Arthur Pitcher 'held the fort' in Tal-y-bont, 7 miles South of Harlech, (Arthur declared in 1961). Rafi Mavaddat was in Bangor and for a while there were two other pioneers with him. Abermman had a lone representative in Mrs Kelleher and there were two Bahá'í youth at school in Dolgellau, Bahiyyih Nakhjavani and May Hofman. It may therefore be said that through the functions and operation of this committee the whole country of Wales was now the object of extension teaching from the Pivotal centre and its two, newly fledged, Goal towns.

But first we will re-direct our attention to the exciting events in Pontypridd and in South Wales generally. Four months later Jack's wife Nancy declared. This followed a visit made by Ali Nakhjavani as reported in the Bahá'í Journal NO. 141 of November 1959.

"Ali visited Pontypridd for 12 days from 8th to 19th of August. A number of Firesides were held and three Public meetings, two in Rhydyfelin and one in Beddau. New contacts were made and a great interest aroused. His visit was preceded by a four column article in the local Paper which was headed, - 'The Baha'i Faith takes root in Pontypridd.' Ali held an intensive training course to help us to teach the Faith. His approach was to show proof of Christian prophecy in relation to Christ and Baha'u'llah.....

September 1st saw our fifth declaration since January, Mrs Nancy Tomlinson, (which) gives us our first Bahá'í family in Pontypridd."

This article in the Pontypridd Observer covered 28 column inches. It related in detail many of the events recorded above together with personal details of the members and it concluded with a comprehensive (and almost accurate) account of the birth of the Bahá'í Revelation and of its main tenets.

In April a One Day School had been held at Ogmere-by-sea; in July a picnic at Wig-fach. Paul Adams - on leave from his pioneer post in Spitzbergen - attended the picnic and he also visited Cardiff



and Pontypridd. On October 17th a One Day School was held in Caerphilly - a 'first' for that town. All in all 1959 was a year of unprecedented expansion for Wales, and its telling can be summarised in no better manner than by quoting, more or less verbatim, from the News Letter issued by the W.R.T.C. in January 1960, -

"..... in January 1959, Beatrice Newman became a Bahá'í and now, one year later, we are happy to report that hers was the first of nine declarations in this area during the year. These were - Mary Newman, Jack Tomlinson, Geth Jones, Nancy Tomlinson and Weavy Jones, all of Pontypridd and Carl Card, Joyce Card and Terry Delacey of Cardiff. The work in South Wales has indeed been blessed..... Our previous letter announced the arrangements for the visit of Mrs Meherangiz Munsiff. This was a most successful visit and we continue to reap the harvest sown by Meherangiz in her tireless service to the Cause in Wales. On sixteen separate occasions in ten days she spoke of the Faith, at public meetings, Rotary Clubs, firesides, to non-Baha'i groups and at a Welsh Chapel in Caerphilly. Perhaps most important of all she appeared on the I.T.V. News bulletin, seen in Wales and the West of England, when well over half a million people heard her speak directly on the Faith, and, in reply to six questions, tell the most important facts of the Faith and its relationship to Christianity. The South Wales Echo and several local papers had articles on Meherangiz's visit and talks. A direct result was that one of the technicians at the television studio sought her out after the programme, eager to hear more of this wonderful message. He is now a member of the Cardiff Bahá'í community,....."

"The One Day School in Caerphilly was attended by nine people... and was very successful. On the following day (October 18th) Carl Card, who had attended the School called at David Lewis's house to ask what he had to do to become a Bahá'í. He had first heard of the Faith when David Hofman addressed a meeting in Cardiff on the 30th of September."

Carl and his wife, Joyce, had been followers of the Theosophical movement and it was a friend whom they had met there who told them about the forthcoming Bahá'í meeting of September 30th. There they heard Mr David Hofman speak on "Thief in the night." A new book by Hand of the Cause, Bill Sears which was about to be published. Intrigued by this new Revelation and attracted by the sincerity and friendliness of the Bahá'ís they met, they accepted the invitation to attend Firesides at the home of the Lewis's. A second meeting, this

time addressed by Mrs Munsiff and, on the following week-end, the One Day School in Caerphilly. There had been fireside meetings at the Lewis's home every week for three years. In that period there had been one new believer, Yvonne Williams; but now the rapid expansion previously referred to took on even greater momentum. In nine months from October '59 to August '60, Cardiff doubled its numbers by declarations. Joyce Card and Terry Delacey followed shortly after Carl. In March Charles Stafford declared; in June Dermod Knox and in August, Peter and Gwyneth Hassan. This was the opportunity for which David and Marion had been waiting. From a community of five, only 5 years previously there was now a community of fourteen and at its meeting of September 23rd the Hofmans announced that they would be leaving for London prior to taking up their new pioneering post in Watford.

It was naturally with a measure of regret that their departure was accepted - but it should always be remembered that Cardiff, and Pontypridd also, had enjoyed the special privilege of close association with three of the future members of the Universal House of Justice. Mr Ian Semple and Ali Nakhjavani as frequent visiting teachers, and David (together with Marion) for their four and a half years of invaluable and unstinting service.

## Chapter Six

What other highlights illumined the year 1960 up to Ridvan 1960? In February Eric's wife, Beatrice became a Bahá'í and Caerphilly headed for 'Group' status. In May Dorothy Gibson's declaration brought Pontypridd's number up to seven. Also in May a well attended Week-end School in Bangor and we were grateful to the friends in Chester and Liverpool for their constant support of this goal town. Bangor is over 200 miles by road from Cardiff; narrow, twisting and often mountainous roads for the most part. However, at Bangor's next Week-end School in October a car load of friends from Cardiff and Pontypridd did make the journey by car. The green and russet and gold of the Autumn foliage that year, amidst the wild, Welsh hinterland was a memory never to be forgotten; nor was the fact that twice an electrical fault all but set the car on fire and that the return journey on the Sunday night was undertaken with virtually no lights. (The two policemen who stopped us were very understanding.)

In Cardiff a Bahá'í display at the Horticultural Show in September was manned for three days by relays of friends from the three centres and arising directly from this, another declaration; in March Mrs Ruby Woolway became a member of our growing community.

Just four years after the first historic occasion another Weekend School was held at the Esplanade Hotel in Porthcawl. Among the invited speakers were John Morley of Reading, Marion Hofman and Meherangiz. A wonderful time was enjoyed by all who were privileged to be present.

In January Beatrice Newman was accorded the honour of representing Wales at the dedication of the Kampala Temple. The Bahá'í Journal reports; - "On January 14th the Mother Temple of Africa was dedicated by Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum and we are happy to be able to report that Beatrice Newman, David Hofman, James Robertson and Lisbeth Greeves all attended, representing respectively Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland." On her return Beatrice wrote a moving account of her visit to Africa. Press reports covering the event appeared twice in the South Wales Echo, in the Newport Argus and in the Pontypridd Observer. She also recorded an interview with the B.B.C. which was broadcast on the Welsh Home service on March 8th. Several invitations followed and Beatrice gave talks to schools and to local organisations on her visit to Africa.

In March the Cardiff Assembly was able to report that preparations for Incorporation were well under way and in Pontypridd. Emily Eastgate, who had offered a three weeks 'teaching' visit agreed to remain for three months. Walter Wilkins offered to become the ninth member so that the Assembly in Pontypridd could be established at Ridvan. Their pioneer offers however were not required; the third Newman sister, Flo', and Chris and Betty Seldon all declared that month, - together with Miss Sally Thomas whose home was in Tonyrefail. Four declarations and now ten resident Bahá'ís: Pontypridd elected its first Assembly and the pioneers were freed to move to towns where they were needed. The Bahá'í Journal of June 1961 records, -

"On April 21st not five but six new local Spiritual Assemblies were formed, in Chester, Pontypridd, Watford, Wokingham and Canterbury and Epsom.

Pontypridd is the first 'all native' Assembly to be formed in the British Isles, it is composed entirely of Welsh believers and they had to have an election as they have a community of ten. They established another record too, for all this work has been done without at any stage sending in a pioneer..."

The account goes on to record the other victory as a supreme moment in the History of the Faith - that an Assembly has been formed in Canterbury, the seat of the Primate of the Church of England.

In September 1961 the National Assembly suggested that 'Cardiff' should undertake to write a History of the Faith in that town. A sub-committee was appointed to consider ways and means and, principally to sort out the Archive material. What a good thing that no 'vital' plans depended on its completion. Yes! the writer was a member of that committee.) Well! it has only taken twenty five years, and, of course, it embraces a little more than just 'Cardiff's history as a result. (But I wonder how many other good intentions have 'fallen by the wayside'?)

The Spiritual Assembly of Pontypridd wasted no time in organising functions themselves and on November 15/26th their first Week-end School was held at Glan-y-Mor in Barry. All six sessions were chaired by local believers and the speakers were, David Lewis and Eric Kent from 'home' and David and Marion Hofman and Adib Taherzadeh from away. It was a wonderful 'first' for a new, young Assembly.

So 1961 draws to its close and now we enter the last 'calendar year' of the Ten Year Crusade. In January Beatrice and Flo' became the first Welsh Pilgrims to the World Centre. It is of interest to note that the first 'Irish' pilgrim - at about the same time - was Dermot Knox who, as will be remembered was a Cardiff declarant.

Shortly after this Terry Delacey brought to the Cardiff L.S.A. an idea which was calculated to take the City and its environs by storm. Let us, he proposed, have 10,000 letters printed; an 'Open Letter to the People of Wales', and distribute them in strategic areas door to door. The idea was intriguing - but could it be done? and at what financial cost? The proposition was placed before the National Assembly who involved the National Teaching Committee. Conferences were held and every imaginable implication considered. A new version of the letter was submitted and consulted upon at length. Eventually everybody agreed on a shortened version of Terry's original draft. But the N.S.A. in its wisdom asked, - "Is it justifiable to spend some £300 in one small area, however deserving, when England, Scotland and Ireland have equal, if not greater, need?"

Finally it was agreed that £250 would be allocated for a 'pilot

scheme' in Cardiff and district and that the other three main centres could then have similar campaigns, modified if necessary in the light of experience gained. Cardiff, Pontypridd and Caerphilly were to be covered, not by 10,000 but by 20,000 'open letters'. One significant decision of the planning committee was that the letters were to be regarded as something more than mere 'hand-bills' and that each one should be delivered in its own envelope addressed "An Open Letter to the People of Wales". On the eve of the opening of the campaign some half a dozen volunteer youth from far and near, together with some of the 'oldies' spent the best part of a long week-end at a Bahá'í home folding and enveloping the letters. Some of the visiting helpers who were free to remain stayed to assist with their distribution. The following is extracted from the Assemblies Annual Report for B.E. 119.

"The year commenced with final preparations being made for the Welsh campaign, designed to bring the Faith to the attention of the people of South Wales, and organised by a special committee set up for this purpose by the N.S.A. During the campaign which lasted from May to September, 20,000 letters to the people of Wales were distributed by hand by the friends themselves, and with the assistance of Bahá'í youth from farther afield. Ten thousand letters were distributed in Cardiff and 5,000 each in Caerphilly and Pontypridd.

In Cardiff ninety 'buses carried posters in the week prior to the campaign, thirty shops displayed window cards during the first month, some of which were renewed for a longer period. A week's exhibition in the Temple of Peace and Health coincided with the opening of the campaign in Cardiff. Advertisements in the local Press gave good coverage, and although the papers were at first slow to respond in accepting news of the campaign the South Wales Echo eventually printed a long article and large photograph. Altogether fourteen Public Meetings were held in the area in May with follow-up meetings in June and July in each of the three centres concerned. Of these, a total of seven public meetings were held in Cardiff.

In May, Hand of the Cause John Ferraby visited Cardiff speaking at a public meeting and providing the excellent interview with the Press which led to the article referred to above. On the 21st May a reception was given for John at the Park Hotel to which the Lord Mayor and the Lord Lieutenant for the county of Glamorgan, together with other notables, had been invited. As we had comparatively little notice of the plan the response was not as good as it might have been, but at least the local officials had now heard the name 'Bahá'í'. The 'Bus posters drew a response from the T.W.W. (Television Wales and the West)

programme, and, seeing the name 'Bahá'í had sent a camera unit to St. David's to interview Bishop Richards in Welsh. His answers to questions seemed to be based on his knowledge of the Faith gained in Persia which he had left in 1927.

The T.W.W. authorities had previously said that they would be happy to give Meherangiz Munsiff a further interview in the programme 'This Week', linking the interview with the campaign. This took place on the 1st June and unfortunately they also presented the Bishop of St. David's whose poor knowledge of the Faith, largely gained from its enemies, tended to confuse the interview. However, in spite of this, Meherangiz presented the Faith in a way perhaps only she can do, making a striking contrast to the Bishop's negative attitude.

During the campaign too, books were presented to the Newport Public Library. The campaign closed with an inspiring Weekend School at 'Coleg'y'Fro', Rhoose, which was excellently attended and so set the Seal on the Campaign."

An analysis of the impact made by this prolonged and concentrated effort was made by the National Teaching Committee in their 'Home Front' issue of August '62. In this they chose the simile of seeds which fall upon stony ground to exemplify the apparent lack of response in the City, whereas, in the smaller urban areas continued interest was maintained. Their report continues -

"This lesson is very evident in the Welsh Campaign where after fourteen public meetings and wide-scale publicity.... very little response to the Message is to be seen, whereas in Pontypridd where fewer meetings were held with slightly less publicity, contacts are coming forward, and there is excellent attendance at Firesides. Seeds have been sown in plenty, aided by television where, for the first time in the history of the Faith in this country, an Anglican Bishop appeared with a Bahá'í and discussed the Faith. This achievement alone... will have widespread repercussions in other, more fruitful areas in Wales. It should be realised that these campaigns are of a very experimental nature; we are learning every day; we will make many mistakes; but eventually we hope that we may find the key to the pattern."

The article goes on to outline the plans being made for Scotland which revolve around five principal centres,- Glasgow, Motherwell (their crusade Goal), Inverness, Aberdeen and finally Edinburgh.

During these and the following months a large number of new Bahá'ís were enrolled but it was significant, and to us surprising -

though none-the-less delightful, that they were all youth. They came not only from the three main centres but one was from Newport where no direct teaching had as yet taken place. There had been for a while a Bahá'í resident in Newport, Mr R. Fitzpatrick, some ten years earlier, but it is to Miss Marion Evans the honour must be accorded as the first Bahá'í to declare in Newport in the County of Gwent.

The above account is really inadequate to do justice to the five-month-long intensive effort on the part of the South Welsh Bahá'ís, continually and unstintingly supported by fellow-believers from near and far to promote the spread of the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the peoples in their region. To do it full justice, to catalogue the long hours spent in committee; the long journeys from far afield; the voluminous reports and correspondence; the tendering of estimates and finalised accounts; indeed, all the work that went on behind the scenes in addition to the briefly out-lined account of the campaign itself - would occupy space in this brief history somewhat out of proportion in the context of the twenty five years or more which we are attempting to cover. Let it suffice then to quote a 'summing up' made by the National Spiritual Assembly in their letter of August 13th, openly addressed to all who were concerned.

Dear Baha'i friends,

The National Assembly has been very pleased indeed with the work which has been done in S. Wales during the campaign. Some events stand out strikingly and are of historic importance - the interview on T.W.W. television service of Mrs Meherangiz Munsiff and the Bishop of St. David's is the most outstanding of these but equally important is the determined and united effort made by all the friends in South Wales to carry the message to the Welsh people. This earnest desire to bring the Faith to the people gave birth to the campaign and there is no doubt whatever that that purpose has been achieved. Now that the campaign is entering its last stage, the National Assembly sends to you all a message of warm appreciation of your splendid efforts. A Spirit has been generated in Wales which cannot help but bring great results, and these may well come in the not too distant future... We are deeply indebted to the Hand of the Cause, Hasan Balyusi, for kindly directing the propagation Board member, Marion Hofman, to the (forthcoming) consultative meeting, and thus bringing to your deliberations the bounties and blessings which flow through the institutions of the Hands.

The National Assembly assures you all of our deep gratitude for your wonderful and sacrificial efforts, and of our firm conviction that the seeds sown in this first concerted Campaign in Europe will yield a

great Harvest. We pray that the consultation this week will be most fruitful.

With warm Baha'i love from us all,

In His Service, Betty Reed, Secretary.

The concluding paragraph of the Cardiff Assembly's Annual Report for the year 119 B.E. records that Travel Teachers from Cardiff, during that year, visited Dublin, Cambridge, Salisbury, Munford, Norwich, Northampton, Exeter, Torquay, Hove, Brighton and Belfast. All of this, in addition to their involvement with all the local activity, which says much for the dedication and spirit of service which animated the Bahá'ís of Gt. Britain during the closing months of the Guardian's Ten Year Global Crusade.

That Great Crusade was destined to culminate in the gathering of Bahá'ís from all over the world at a Great Congress in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh in the garden of Ridván, together with, the glorious culmination and successful conclusion of the Crusade itself. I recall that for a long while back it had become the custom of Bahá'ís, when parting for an uncertain length of time, to bid 'Farewell' with the words, - "See you in Baghdad". Then came the news from the World Centre that, owing to the political situation, for the Bahá'ís to meet in Iraq would be inadvisable; therefore the world Congress, celebrating The Most Great Jubilee would be held in the Albert Hall in London. This was stupendous news for many, especially those in Britain, for whom a visit to Baghdad would be difficult if not impossible.

But there were six months or more to go and the laurels yet to be won. Should you wish to have some idea of the excitement and tension of these last few months refer back to the account of the closing stages of the first Six Year Plan; but this time there were 48 Assemblies to be won, not 24; and many other Goals to be achieved, one was the Incorporation of the Cardiff Assembly which was registered on the 14th of March 1962. Pontypridd, starting the year with ten Baha'ís were reduced to eight when a Baha'i family moved out from the district. Success had to be total; the old Assemblies must be maintained as well as the new ones established. A declaration in October brought their number up to strength again. Wales had achieved its goals and as a bonus both Newport and Swansea were opened. Swansea by the transfer in of Major Eric and Mrs Mary Payne.

Thus it was in an atmosphere of great joy and eager anticipation



some 25 Bahá'ís from Wales set out on their journey to London and to the Albert Hall; to such a gathering as the whole world had never seen before. Bahá'ís from every continent, from every land, from every race, from every ethnic group, from Alaska to the Antipodes, from Japan across the continents of the globe and back again to the Far East; all gathered under one roof to give praise and thanks to Bahá'u'lláh, their Lord and the Lord of the Age for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God on Earth. To greet and to listen enthralled to the Hands of the Cause of God who had so nobly assumed the burden placed upon them with the passing of their Beloved Guardian and who had led the Bahá'í World to this glorious consummation. Finally to meet the newly elected members of our first Universal House of Justice, that August Body, unique in this age-long Adamic cycle; and to wonder at the Act of Providence which had ordained that the first ever meeting in session of that Supreme Body (following their inaugural meeting in Haifa), had been held in our own humble Haziratu'l-quds.

Twenty of the believers from Wales assembled one afternoon for a group photograph. They represented the six centres in South Wales now 'opened' to the Faith, together with dear Claire Gung, 'the Mother of Africa', and one of Cardiff's own founding members. (Claire remained at her pioneering post in Africa for thirty three years until her passing to the Abha Kingdom in 1985.)

To tell the whole story of those never-to-be-forgotten six days is naturally an impossibility. Each and every one will have his or her own special memories; but the Welsh believers had one special joy which was theirs alone, - for it was noted that on the very next night after the congress closed, and the Bahá'ís of the world went their several ways, the Albert Hall was filled again when a thousand Welsh voices were raised to sing God's praise at 'Cymanfa Ganu', their Festival of song.

The Book of the Prophet Daniel, closes with the words, - "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." "Then" wrote Abdu'l-Bahá, in interpretation of this promise, - "Then, on this day, will the faithful rejoice." (Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era).

That day had come. That prophecy, at last fulfilled.

## Chapter Seven

This 'sixteen year long history' to date has been likened to the "Heroic" and the "Formative" ages in the manner of their development. We may have a long way to go before we attain to the "Golden Age", but the next ten years may well be classified as the 'silver' age, or, more precisely to the 'quick-silver' age - for it was a period of unprecedented mobility.

Activities beyond the confines of the County of Glamorgan had been sporadic and disconnected. For a while there had been an isolated believer in Aberdare and one in Neath. Baha'i students had attended college in Swansea and in Bangor; Mr and Mrs Pitcher had found a retirement home in Talybont and Dr Miller in Anglesey. But only in Bangor had there been organised and sustained teaching activity - supported by friends from further afield.

The launching of the Nine Year Plan, the first 'Plan' given to the Baha'i World by our Universal House of Justice, and which lasted from 1964 to 1973, saw the linking of these formerly disconnected teaching efforts into one intensive, centrally directed, universally supported drive to spread the Good News of the coming of His Kingdom throughout Wales. The choice of Swansea and of Aberystwyth as 'goal' towns in addition to Bangor, began the process of encircling the whole of the Principality with beacons of light which were destined in time to illumine also the interior of this, our lovely country, - even as the sacrificial services of the early pioneers had brought the knowledge of the Love of God, in those now far off days, to our little corner in the South East on the Borders of England.

There were at that time (before the Boundaries Commission changed everything) twelve Counties in Wales. Of these five had resident Bahá'ís. The goals of the Nine Year Plan included the establishment of four new Spiritual Assemblies (a 200% expansion) and the opening of each of the seven remaining Counties. To help in the achievement of these goals the N.S.A. appointed a Welsh Teaching Committee who set to work to co-ordinate the efforts and activities of the several centres.

One of the first acts of this committee was to suggest to the committee responsible for the Midlands area that they should adopt Bangor (N. Wales) and that we in exchange would take over responsibility for Newport (Mon.) - at that time an 'English' town. This arrangement having been amicably agreed the Cardiff, Pontypridd and Caerphilly Bahá'ís then set about the task of extension teaching; firstly in Newport

and Swansea and also in Aberystwyth.

In their report to Convention at the end of the first year the W.T.C. stated - "The Committee held its first meeting on May 23rd and considered the goals presented to it by the National Assembly. A time-table for the achievement of these goals was decided as follows. The formation of the L.S.A. of Swansea, and the opening of the Counties of Brecknock and Carmarthen by Ridvan 1966, the opening of the five remaining Counties by Ridvan 1967... the establishment of three L.S.A.s, .... by 1971. The remaining two years of the Crusade to be devoted to consolidation."

Slowly at first, then with increasing momentum, the score or so souls from Mid-Glamorgan began their siege of these citadels. Sometimes a single car-load, more often three or four would make the journey to Aberystwyth or to Swansea to support a fireside, a public meeting or a week-end school or a one-day school.

The first pioneers began to move in; Jeremy and Denyse Fox to Swansea; Derwent and Nora Maude to Aberystwyth; Dr and Mrs Firoozmand to Newport to join Viv and Rita Bartlett; and after the pioneers, the first declarations followed.

Gradually the Faith was becoming established. Swansea achieved the distinction of being the first Assembly to be formed and they were followed by Aberystwyth. No sooner was the Assembly formed in Swansea than we began to move still further west to Llanelli and though it was a journey of nearly 60 miles each way the Cardiff friends, together with Swansea, laid siege to Llanelli and our fourth L.S.A. goal was now before us.

Thus history was repeating itself, but the stage was no longer a City of 250,000 inhabitants but a country of two million. The journeys were no longer made on foot or by 'Tram ', but in cars, coaches, mini-buses or by train; its participants no longer a dozen or so gallant pioneers in an almost 'alien' land, but native believers who had answered His call and whose sole desire was to take the news of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh to their countrymen throughout the length and breadth of the land. Nor should it be forgotten that at our Week-end schools in particular, as well as on other occasions, we were always and amply supported by friends from Bristol and Bath, and Exeter and Torbay, and even further afield.

Thus began the process which has continued until today and

doubtless will into the future when every County, then every district will have its own 'point of light'; ultimately perhaps every town and every village will be brought into the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh and have its own elected Local House of Justice.

For the present, the glorious culmination of the Most Great Jubilee, together with the brief look at the decade which followed it, will constitute a fitting climax with which to bring to a close this little story of the coming of the Faith to Wales.

It is a heritage of which we may not only be proud, but also eternally grateful. May it continue to inspire 'Generations of Bahá'ís' who have not as yet awakened to 'This Evident Light' to arise to serve this cause with the same spirit of dedication, the same enthusiasm, the same joy which enabled our Spiritual Forebears to forsake the comfort and security of their homes in order to bring to Wales the Glad Tidings of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

\*\*\* \*\*