

BAHÁ'Í COUNCILS AND TRAINING INSTITUTES

Bahá'í Council for Scotland

Warm greetings from the Bahá'í Council for Scotland

External Affairs news

Two Council members were privileged to spend two days working side by side with Dan Wheatley from the Office of External Affairs. Dan, the National Spiritual Assembly's Government Relations Officer, came up to Scotland for the International Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The first half of the conference was held in London, with the second half in Edinburgh.

Delegates were parliamentarians and journalists from all over the Commonwealth. Copies of the Bahá'í International Community's statements were distributed to many high level parliamentarians with several leaving their card for future contact with their own country's National Spiritual Assembly.

Approximately 10% of the delegates stopped by to investigate the Bahá'í exhibition which featured social and economic projects happening throughout the Commonwealth.

Wanted - help with Orkney Bahá'í Centre

The Bahá'í Centre in the Orkney Islands is in need of some basic maintenance work. For example, the window frames need to be painted. If you think you could provide a valuable service by visiting and doing some odd jobs, please don't hesitate to contact the secretary: Mrs Rosemary Mclaughlin, Tel: 01856 761624, e-mail: <mailto:rosemary@laughlin.demon.co.uk>

Bahá'í Council for Scotland - Secretary - Anwen Shahim, 2 Burgess Hill, Linlithgow, West Lothian EH49 6BX Tel: 01506 843343 e-mail: <mailto:anwen.shahim@cwcom.net> e-mail: mailto:council_for_scotland@bci.org

Winter School in Scotland

Wed 27th December - Tues 3rd January at the Loch Lomond Youth Hostel, by Duck Bay, on the A82 between the Balloch and Arden roundabouts Info from the Secretary, Council for Scotland Tel: 01506 843343 e-mail: <mailto:anwen.shahim@cwcom.net> e-mail: mailto:council_for_scotland@bci.org

Bahá'í Council for Wales

Reporting from Wales

Summer in the Principality

Youth events featured prominently this summer with a fortnight of activities in the Northwest and a long weekend in the Southeast.

Camp Dance 2000

Fifteen youth attended two camps at the Steiner School in picturesque Tremadog, in August, involving themselves in local Manifesto 2000 activities and learning some of the Diversity Dance Theatre workshop routines, led by two youth members from France, Coralie Libersac and Johann Miel.

Camp Dance 2000 was initiated by the Council in collaboration with the European Bahá'í Youth Council and members of the local Gwynedd community, two of whom were appointed to organise the event. Also present were French Year of Service Volunteer, Carlos Ovelheiro and his brother Isidro, who taught the youth how to play the didgeredoo, resulting in an opportunity to play in public at Criccieth Peace Afternoon. Several workshops were advertised in four locations for local youngsters to join with the Bahá'ís in learning some of the steps. The emphasis of the week was placed not on learning to perfection for a performance level but creating opportunities for interaction between Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, where both are in a learning situation. Despite its being a big departure from the way Diversity Dance Theatre normally operates, it was very successful and local Bahá'ís are aiming to continue offering dance workshops, where interest was shown, providing a social and service project, where spiritual influences of the Faith can permeate.

Administrator Chris Rees, and Dance Director Penny Kemp, worked extremely hard to get this project off the ground for which the Council is extremely grateful, along with other staff members and cooks, without whom it could not have taken place. Thank you one and all.

Unity weekend

Sandwiched between the two camps was a Unity weekend with an open invitation to all the Bahá'ís in the north to descend on the camp for some spiritual and social sustenance. Family members and close friends who were not Bahá'ís were a focus of the weekend where they could have the opportunity to join in without feeling forced to do anything they did not feel comfortable with. A Canadian family Cathie Jackson and Steve Ellis (whose son Will Jackson had been part of Camp Dance) joined in and helped to manage the weekend so that all the local Bahá'ís were free to participate fully. The family is on an extended travel-teaching trip, bound for Botswana following their visit to Wales, and it was a pleasure to have them involved. The local community had previously discussed the need to have more social opportunities to get to know each other and this was a very creative outcome. A variety show and workshops, all made up on the spot using the talents and abilities of those present, were both lively and informative. Adults, children and youth participated together and were amazed to see the benefits of everyone sharing poetry or meditation together. A dance exchange involved the youth teaching the adults one of the routines whilst they had the chance to learn to waltz (an essential requirement, no doubt, on some year of service projects!)

Camp Unity

Camp Unity has been devised to be a small 'family feel' camp, with youth across a wide age range, where everyone can get to know each other and work well together (including tidying up and cooking in teams). It has a varied programme of study, prayer and workshops in an informal setting so that everyone experiences the fun of working and playing together. Growth of a Unity Camp would not be measured successfully by an increase in numbers of participants, but in a growth of camps dotted around the country. Several youth expressed concerns that at large gatherings they can sometimes feel left out or problems go unnoticed, confirming the conviction of Unity Camp founder, Chris Rees, that small can be as good, if not better, than big.

Everyone became close friends and all situations were dealt with in a family way. The camp is indebted to Jeremy Herbert who took time out of his busy schedule following the Cheddar Cave production to lead creative workshops.

The Council discovered that 75% of participants in the production at Cheddar - performers, technicians or other - were from or had Welsh connections. Not all were Bahá'ís but for a small country it is marvellous to know there is such creativity.

Youth Can Move the World!

Thirty-six youth met at Biblins, just across the border in Gloucestershire, from various parts of the UK for a thunderous 5th year. These were mainly older youth, many who were at university or college, or about to begin. (as reported in last month's Bahá'í Journal UK, Youth Space).

Spring School prize

Congratulations to Jordan Smith, from Cornwall, the prizewinner in the Welsh Spring School logo competition. The prize was a Bahá'í book of his choice (up to £10).

Pioneers and Travel Teachers needed in Wales

Two districts in Wales have still to see Bahá'ís settle in - Wrexham in the North east and Merthyr Tydfil in the South. Could you see yourself moving into one of these areas either permanently as a pioneer or for a short period as a travel teacher? By opening these two districts every district in Wales would be open to the Faith hence this is one of the Council's goals.

A bit about Wrexham...

History: Evidence of prehistoric human activity was revealed with the discovery of skeletal remains in a Bronze Age burial, known as "Brymbo Man". Whilst Wrexham's name is Anglo-Saxon in origin, there is no mention of it in the Domesday Book, however, during the Medieval period Wrexham developed into an important market centre for the area.

Today: Wrexham has an impressive reputation as one of the major centres of industrial growth in the UK, with a large number of high-flying international companies and the largest industrial park in Wales. There is still an attractive market town atmosphere and Chester and Liverpool are not far away. It is also within easy reach of some of Wales' most attractive features including Snowdonia, the borderlands and the coast. There are many schools in the Wrexham area and Yale College, NEWI (Wrexham's University of Wales Associate College) and North Wales School of Art and Design.

It is not essential to be Welsh speaking in this area but a desire to learn basic Welsh could be advantageous with many employers providing opportunities. Welsh would be taught mostly as a second language in schools.

There are just a few dedicated Bahá'ís outside the Wrexham area who would love to work with an individual or family. This goal could be achieved by a student who feels the college or university here could offer bright prospects for the future.

Move to Merthyr Tydfil

Merthyr has been described as 'one of the most illustrious and evocative placenames in the world', at one time being one of the main centres of the Industrial Revolution. The fortunes of the area are once again 'on the up', having weathered the storm of recession and the decline of heavy industry. Although not in an area of Wales considered to be on the tourist's map of beauty spots, nevertheless it has attractions of its own, particularly centred around its industrial past, (Ynysfach Iron Heritage Centre/Cyfartha Castle). Merthyr is also within easy reach of many natural attractions, such as Brecon Beacons National Park. Cardiff City is close by. There are 7 secondary schools in the area and colleges of Further and Higher Education.

Inability to speak Welsh is not a bar to working or studying in the area, but classes are available for those who are interested. Valleys life may not suit all, but anyone who could rise to the challenge would find it has its own rewards. A family presence would be a great foundation out of which a Bahá'í community would some day flourish. There are other Bahá'ís around the Merthyr area.

Please call the Secretary of the Bahá'í Council for Wales if you would like to know more or could offer some service.

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