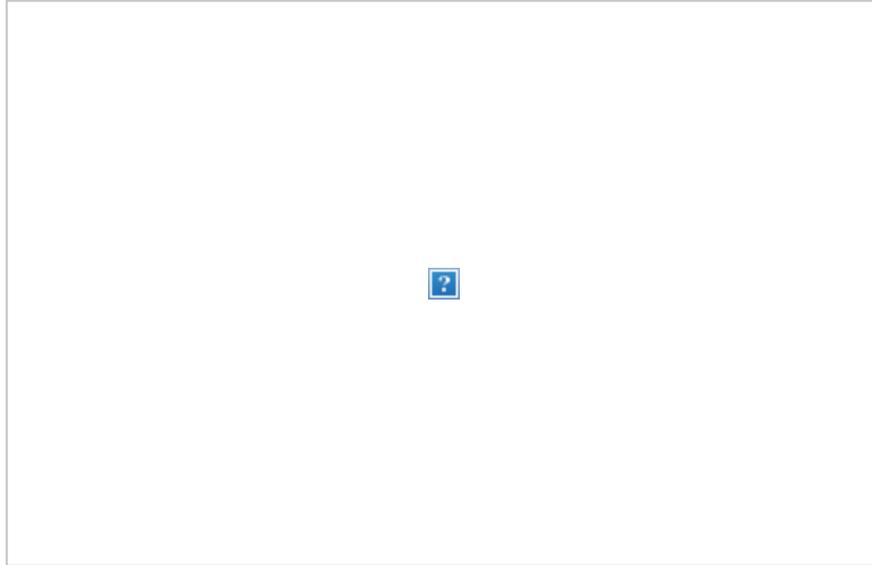
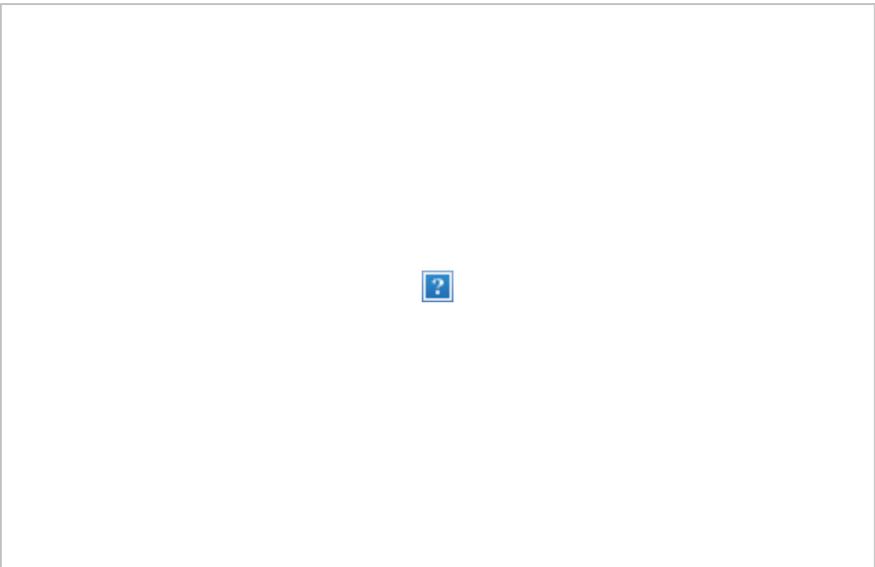
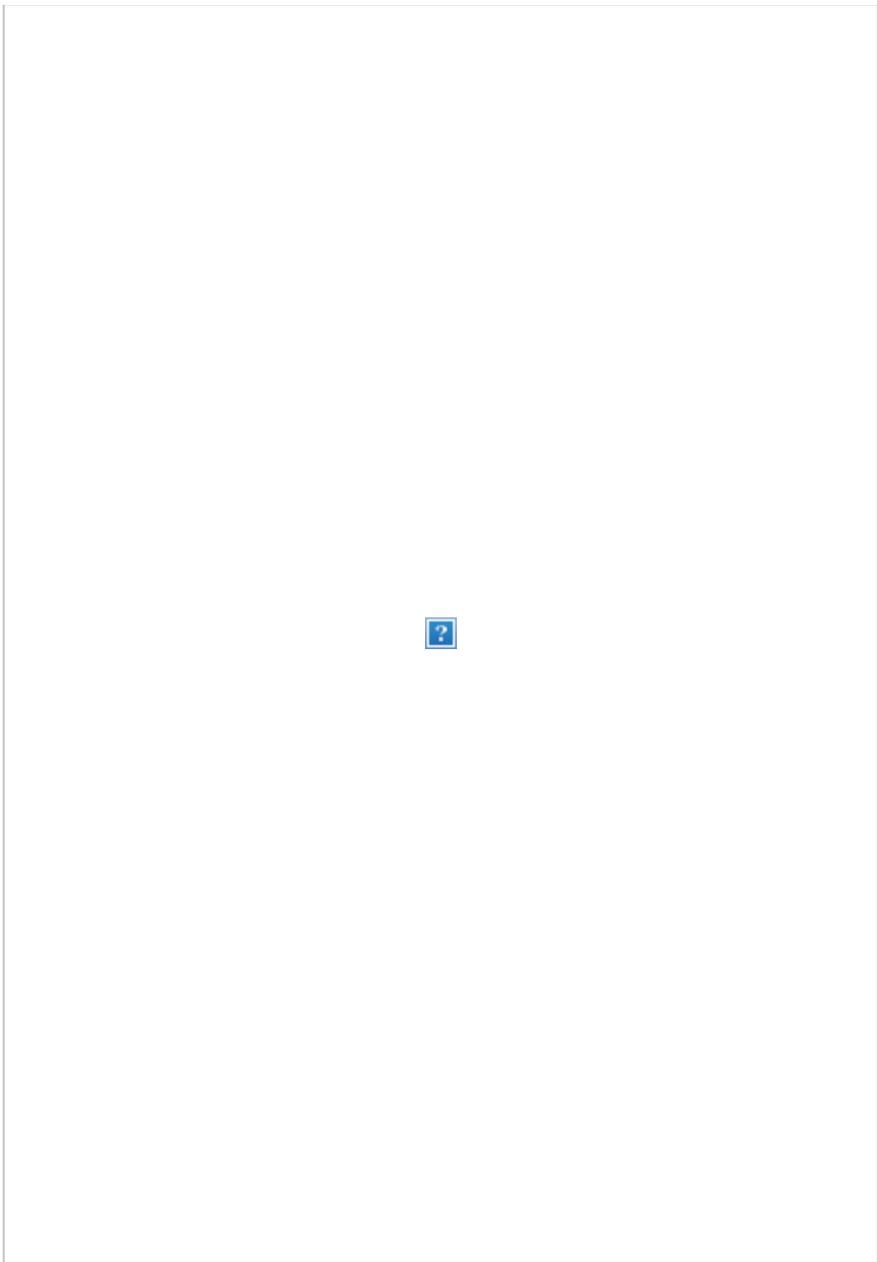


UK COMMUNITY NEWS

Thomas Breakwell School (South East) celebrates 10 years







"Our children need to be nurtured spiritually and to be integrated into the life of the Cause. They should not be left to drift in a world so laden with moral dangers. In the current state of society, children face a cruel fate... The social dislocation of children in our time is a sure mark of a society in decline; this condition is not, however, confined to any race, class, nation or economic condition - it cuts across them all.

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future".

(Ridván message 157 BE)

External Affairs in Stockport - joining organisations with common causes

The Spiritual Assembly of Stockport continues its involvement with the work of the local branch of the United Nations Association. Three members of the Assembly serve on the 7-member executive committee. For the last two years the main work of the UNA has been involvement with local branches of Amnesty International, launching the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a touring exhibition. This was first displayed at Stockport College Fresher's Fair and has since been taken to schools and libraries and the Town Hall to be seen by around 12,000 people.

An art advisor for Stockport schools produced stunning material for use in classrooms and developed a colourful cartoon style booklet describing the thirty articles of the declaration in order to help the children understand some of the difficult concepts. This booklet is to be produced in A5 size and distributed by the local Amnesty International branch for use in schools throughout the area and perhaps in other parts of the country.

The International Year for the Culture of Peace is the focus of Manifesto 2000 action for this year and is a reaffirmation of a commitment to non-violent personal attitudes and practice, and to the continuing creation of alternatives to conflict. Literature on the subject and pledge forms are now being distributed to schools and libraries together with eye-catching posters supplied by the UNA. An invitation has also been extended to all churches and voluntary service organisations, through the Bishop of Stockport and the chairman of the Joint Council for Voluntary Service, to bring about a collaborative community endeavour.

Interfaith in action in Canterbury

Local Bahá'ís were involved at the "Whole World Fair" held in Canterbury on 1st July. Among the stalls which included Traidcraft, UNA, UNICEF and Christian Aid was the newly launched Canterbury Branch of BASED-UK, seen here being manned by Marion Weinberg.



Newly launched Canterbury Branch of BASED-UK, seen in action here with the exhibition being manned by Marion Weinberg

A new local initiative was introduced - CANDIFA - Canterbury and District Inter-Faith Action, the aims of which are to encourage and strengthen relationships between the various religions in Canterbury and to foster respect, courtesy and understanding through mutually arranged activities.

Evidence of this growing climate of interfaith was seen a week later when the Bahá'ís and Quakers held a joint meeting on Sunday, 9th July. Starting with a shared breakfast at the Friends' Meeting House, the Bahá'ís then presented a short devotional programme of prayers and music. This was followed by the normal Sunday morning Quaker meeting, then finally coffee together and time to socialise.

"Persian Queen" in Guernsey

Guernsey Bahá'ís caused a stir when, by way of a finale to a three-day "Pots and Pens" exhibition of the work of artist Malcolm Lee and potter Peter Lee in May, they arranged a Persian supper. The food was prepared by Parvin Lee and the evening event, held in a Parish Hall was in aid of the Bereavement Centre.

During the evening Malcolm Lee helped raise funds by drawing caricatures of some of the guests. After supper he spoke about his work as a teacher of the Faith. Later Peter gave a demonstration of throwing a pot on the wheel. The guests showed great interest and were happy to buy some of the pots and cartoons.

The evening earned a three-page write up in the local paper with photos, the largest one being of Parvin with the caption "Persian Queen". Over £200 was raised.

A Success Story - 10 Years on Thomas Breakwell School (South East) Horsham

The Thomas Breakwell Bahá'í School (SE) Horsham, West Sussex recently celebrated its tenth Anniversary. Over 200 people joined us to celebrate this important and historical event in the life of our school. The day was dedicated to Thomas Breakwell, the first Englishman to become a Bahá'í, in 1901, whose brief sacrificial life and devotion as described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was "like a lamp amid the angels of high Heaven".

This celebration focused on the achievements, past history and future aims of our school. There was an elaborate exhibition about the work of the children in the last decade. A commemorative tea towel was designed by the students with self-portraits. There are over 45 registered students who attend the school with ages

spanning from 1 - 17 years. Eight teachers and a management committee plus many other helpers contribute to the smooth running of the school.

Shahla Kay, the Director, welcomed everyone and gave a short resume of the history of the school and the achievements during the last 10 years.

She explained the importance and the obligation of the Bahá'í education of children that is enjoined upon both parents and the institutions of the Faith, referring to the Ridván message 157 BE from the Universal House of Justice.

Relatives and friends from Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire and London gathered in the main hall which was decorated with beautiful bunches of colourful flowers.

Presentations were made by the students from each class, ending with a moving adaptation by the youth and junior youth of an article written by Rob Weinburg about Thomas Breakwell. This focused on his spiritual maturity at a young age and his absolute obedience and dedication to the Faith.

Musical performances were given by our talented students, and Auxiliary Board member for Propagation, Farnaz Heidari, addressed the meeting with kind and encouraging remarks. Presents were given to all the students and everyone enjoyed the 10th anniversary cake.

It was wonderful to see many of the friends whose love, sacrificial support and service in the past have helped the school to become firmly established. The Thomas Breakwell School plays an important role in our daily lives as parents, teachers, organisers, children and youth. For those attending the school every week, Sundays have become the most important day and the highlight of the week.

School's Director on BBC Radio Southern Counties

On the same day, Shahla Kay was interviewed on BBC Radio Southern Counties for over six minutes about the "unusual Sunday School", as referred to by Michael Meech, the presenter of the Sunday morning programme. Shahla talked about the structure of the school and the importance of the moral education for children. The presenter found the practise of having parents and adults participating in a study class very "sensible and an excellent idea". He made her promise to come back at a later date.

Why should we support Thomas Breakwell schools?

It is reassuring to know that these schools will, in the future, become institutions of studies and learning for everyone. The Sunday Schools are at present the only means of systematic Bahá'í education for children. The Universal House of Justice has referred to the children as "the promise and guarantee of the future ... and the trust of the community" (Ridván message 157 BE). We shall bring upon ourselves pains, problems, troubles and heartache in the future if we do not provide our children with adequate Bahá'í education.

This should be carried out as a systematic process and in co-operation with the parents, who have the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children. The Bahá'í children have the capacity, as the Universal House of Justice reminds us, to develop and "shine as the emblems of a better future" in their schools, towns villages and cities. Some sacrifice now will bring such bounty in the future.

Please contact Shahla Kay for information about Thomas Breakwell Bahá'í School (SE) Horsham, Tel: 01737 765325 e-mail: <mailto:falconkay@tinyworld.co.uk>



"Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion...". How not to do it - cartoon by Francesca Bantock.

Say "Cheese" for Save The Children

"The Forgotten Children Campaign" organised by Save the Children

In April a message went out from the Office of External Affairs via the e-mail NEWS Service offering friends the opportunity to help with the project - Save the Children's "Forgotten Children Campaign" - to draw attention to the plight of the 20 million children around the world made homeless because of war. The results being that these children are now denied their basic human rights of education, play, health, and security.

To highlight the issue Save the Children organised a "portrait pledge" activity, to collect snap-shots of ordinary people and celebrities. The photographs were made up into a giant photo wall - creating a powerful visual image to lobby the UK Government and the United Nations.

Clair Pope describes how the Isle of Wight Bahá'í community got involved -

Carmel Momen at the Office of External Affairs put the Isle of Wight community in touch with the Save the Children campaign manager, who suggested that we contact local schools on their behalf alerting them to this campaign and asking them to take part in the photographic portrait pledge. All schools were agreeable.

Beryl Denny, speaking for Save the Children, visited the island four times to complete the project. The Bahá'í

community also took part in the portrait pledge. Here is part of a letter from Save the Children -

"I have just posted 109 portrait pledges to head office, and that is due to the IOW Bahá'í community. Thank you so much for seeing that the work of Save the Children is so close to your own Bahá'í principles and taking positive action, true to character! Meeting you and the community was a very good outcome of this exercise. It has been an enriching experience for me. Thank you for the Bahá'í literature you gave me, I shall study it with great interest. Thanks again for your wonderful help and support. Love to you, Beryl Denny.

This was a very worthwhile project to take part in and we will continue to build a working relationship with the Save the Children organisation. We see clearly that when we, the Bahá'ís join forces with like minded people and organisations the results are illuminating for both parties.

Bushfire Projects - events coming up ...

Purpose - To nurture the spiritual development of young people and to assist in their integration into the life of the community

Bushfire Projects is pleased to announce to the community our future residential events which are open to Bahá'í youth and their friends. All of the events are held in a 50-bed adventure centre in Gloucestershire and run to the highest standards.

20th-23rd October 2000 "The Hidden Gift" Exploring the central role of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation in today's world. For 13 - 18+ year olds. 3 nights. Cost: £35

28th December - 2nd January 2001 "Refreshing the Promise" Exploring the Covenants of the Messengers and how they have developed. For 14 - 18+ year olds 5 nights. Cost: £55

22nd - 25th February 2001 "SDR2" (Sex n' Drugs n' Rock & Roll) Exploring the impact of modern society on young people's morals and values, and the Bahá'í perspective. For 13 - 18+ year olds 3 nights. Cost: £35

Summer 2001 (July/August TBC) "Lights of Guidance - Learning to Teach" - Understanding the spiritual significance of teaching, and acquiring the practical skills. Working with an ongoing community teaching project. For 14 - 18+ year olds.

2 weeks. Cost: TBC

If you are interested in more information please ensure that your name and details are on our mailing list. Booking forms and conditions will be sent to you.

Bookings: Registrar (after 7pm) - Tel: 01453 766356 e-mail: <mailto:BushfireUK@aol.com> (All of the above events are organised by Bushfire Projects)

Presenting the Faith in Schools

Medway Bahá'ís share positive experiences in their unit

Medway did it this way - 2 people, Liliane Cohen and Mary Firman presented the Faith to 160 sixth form students at Northfleet Girl's School. They each gave a short account of how and why they became Bahá'ís. They then showed the video "The Bahá'í Faith through the eyes of young people" which includes the story of Mona. The pupils were very polite and attentive and produced written questions at the end of the session, which the friends endeavoured to answer.

To test the depth of the students' understanding the teachers returned the girls to their classrooms where they were given an hour and a half to produce fliers, posters or poems on what they had learned. Then everyone went back to the hall to display the artwork and read the poetry. High quality work was produced and the girls were congratulated by the visiting Bahá'ís.

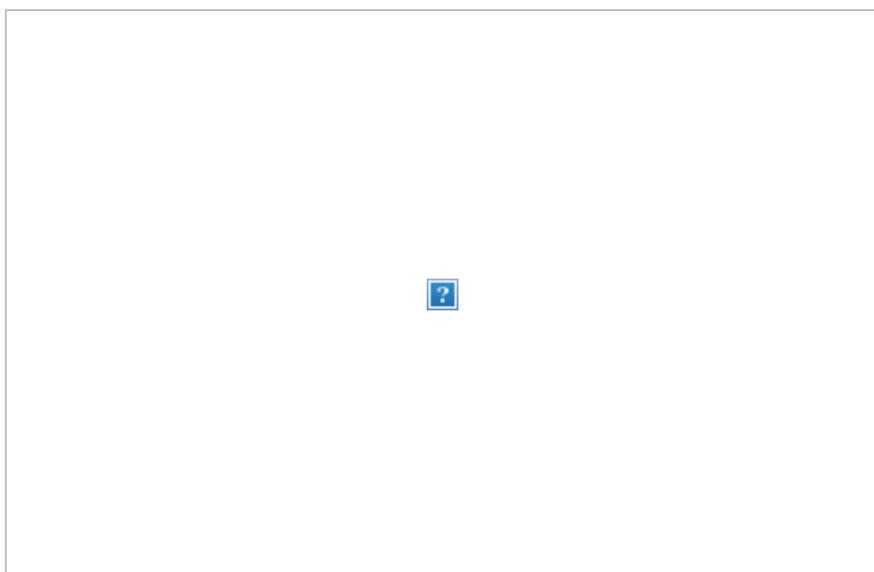
Suggestion: More video options of interest to youth would help presentations.

Reception in Omagh following "Century of light" event

Following the "Century of Light" event, held in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast, in November 1999, (reported in Bahá'í Journal UK, February 2000 issue) the three organisations from Omagh - the Red Cross and the Knights of Malta, together with St John Ambulance - which were given an award for courage, were invited to a reception by the Chairman of Omagh District Council, Councillor Alan Rainey. The Omagh Bahá'í Community which is involved in St John was asked to send five representatives.

The Bahá'í Community in Omagh has developed a close relationship with Councillor Rainey, during his year of office and he confirmed this, congratulating the Northern Ireland Bahá'ís on the "Century of Light" event, with the awards to local voluntary caring services saying: "During my year of office I have developed a good relationship with the local Bahá'í Community and have got to know some of them very well."

Both local papers covered the reception, one of them with eight column inches and a group photo.



Reception held in May for St John Ambulance, Knights of Malta and Red Cross, winners of the award for courage at the "Centenary of Light" celebration in Belfast. Pictured with Chairman of Omagh District Council, Councillor Alan Rainey.

Wokingham Carnival

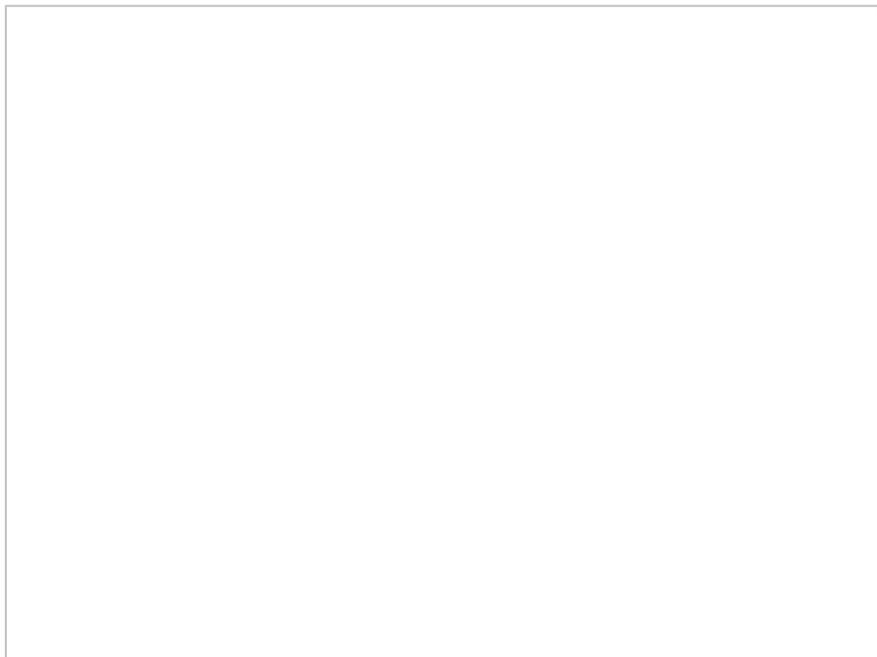
For many years now Wokingham Bahá'ís have participated in the town's annual Carnival. Following on from last year's success the community put up an exhibition on the Faith and had an adjacent market stall decked out with literature. Entering into the spirit of the family occasion, the community used a series of nursery rhyme character photo-boards to take instant photographs of children (and sometimes adults!) who dared to poke their heads through the specially cut out holes in the boards. The photo-boards attracted a lot of people to the stall and many viewed the exhibition whilst photos of their children were taken.

The photos sold like hot-cakes and each one was mounted on to a pre-designed card containing a prayer for children by 'Abdu'l Bahá and a few words on the aims of the Bahá'ís the world over. By early afternoon the community had sold out of film with over fifty families taking away information on the Faith on the photo-cards.

The Town Mayor, Tony Barber, who had responded to the invitation to visit the Hackney exhibition at Clissold Park last year and has subsequently become an admirer of the Faith, visited the stall with his wife and had their photos taken too.

To our delight on several occasions the tanyoy system invited carnival goers to visit the Bahá'í stall and photo-boards. We were thus reminded of Bahá'u'lláh's assurance that we need to take only the first step and He will do the rest!

The participation in the Carnival was a great success for the community with participation from the children, youth and adults in putting up the exhibition, taking the photos and manning the stall. The day was blessed with good weather and many thousands of people came in contact with the Faith. So inspired by this success the community are already working on producing new photo-boards for next year's carnival.



Chantil Atarinejad, Antonio Atarinejad and Kooroosh Friend trying the photo-boards!

.... stop press request stop press request

Help is required at the Anne Frank Exhibition in Durham Cathedral, 3rd 26th November. The local Bahá'í community is setting up a tranquility zone and needs assistance in looking after it. Please call Margaret Gosden, Tel: 0191 386 1698.

Headstone success

The Spiritual Assembly of Birmingham was saddened by the death of Ann Chris Richards on 16th March. Chris had been a Bahá'í for 35 years and for many of those years worked actively for the community in Sutton Coldfield and later in Birmingham. She had always expressed the wish to be buried in the green and peaceful cemetery of her local parish church which she had passed daily. She had never held out very much hope of her wish being achieved since the parish church in question was staunch Church of England and as everyone knows Chris was Bahá'í.

When the time came to arrange this matter, her husband and a friend approached the vicar. They were told that people of any religious belief could be buried there with the proviso that only a Church of England service could be held in the Church grounds. The friends stated that they would only wish to say a Bahá'í prayer at the graveside and they briefly explained the Bahá'í beliefs and their acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ. After carefully reading the Bahá'í prayer for the dead, the vicar said he would find no objection to this.

The question of the headstone was more problematic. The Diocesan ruling was very strict and the wish for a nine pointed star and the name of Bahá'u'lláh on the stone posed a problem since only the symbol of the cross was allowed.

The vicar, however, was most helpful and suggested they should submit a design for the headstone to the Bishop's Faculty which would decide whether or not to allow it.

A moving service attended by many Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í friends was held at a local chapel and followed by the burial at the local Parish Church cemetery.

After an anxious wait of six weeks the family received the wonderful news that they could proceed with the headstone.

This may not be the first time that a Bahá'í has been buried in a cemetery of another religion in the UK, but we believe this is certainly the case in Birmingham.

Chris would be delighted to know that the headstone marking her place of rest carries the nine pointed star and the quotation - "The Earth is but one country and mankind its citizens" Bahá'u'lláh.

