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UK Community News

## UK Community News

### World Religion Day in Omagh

OMAGH Bahá'í Community held its 19th consecutive World Religion Day, this year. The event has been organised in the town every year since 1984.

There have been World Religion Day celebrations since 1950 when developed by the Bahá'ís of the US. Accordingly, the Community feels that it is important that the celebration be held regularly and consistently. The venue – which has been used for this purpose before – was Omagh Library, the Library Headquarters for the Western Education and Library Board. This year it was a special occasion as, a few days earlier, an exhibition “In Good Faith”, produced by the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum (which features 8 Faiths), had arrived at the library, for display until the end of the month of January. Accordingly, those attending World Religion Day were able to view the display before and after the programme.

Fortunately Omagh Bahá'í Community was once again able to obtain the services of Edwina and Arjang Agahí, who produced a PowerPoint audiovisual presentation, entitled “Diversity”, to supplement the readings on “Oneness” and the musical programme that had been devised. The meeting ended with “Prayers for Peace” from eight of the world's religions. Press/proclamation publicity was obtained, before and after the event.

In Northern Ireland, Omagh Bahá'í Community has been very successful in terms of the regularity and frequency with which it has obtained press publicity in the local papers. Over the years good relationships have been developed with the editors and editorial staff in the “Tyrone Constitution” (mainly serving the Protestant/Unionist community) and in the “Ulster Herald” (which mainly is read by the Catholic/Nationalist community). Of recent months, there has been some inconsistency in the publication of press releases (which coincided with the appointment of a new editor at the Ulster Herald). After discussion, it was resolved to approach the Editors and arrange a meeting with them.

At two most cordial meetings — which were held on the same afternoon, on the day of the newspapers' publication — Chairman of the Group, Rustam Jamshídi, Press Officer, Malcolm Lake and member, Nadereh Hedayati, met and spoke with the Editors. A presentation was made of the book, “Bahá'u'lláh” and the magazine, “The Bahá'ís”.

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### Godalming Bahá'ís World Religion Day

GODALMING BAHÁ'ÍS had a very successful World Religion Day project this year. Unable to book the library, where we had several exhibitions during the previous year, we

discovered that the museum had a three-week free slot and booked the whole three weeks at a discretionary rate. With enthusiastic input from friends of several Faiths we put together a very striking exhibition on World Faiths (single Faiths not being permitted in the museum) with a panel on seven of the major Faiths and an eighth on interfaith activities, along two brightly-lit walls of the centre chamber of the museum. The exhibition was dominated of course by a very large roster of the Terraces on Mount Carmel

Additionally we invited local Quaker, Unitarian and Christian Scientist friends who have supported a number of our activities to have a separate display close by. This came about as these three groups are excluded from Churches Together in Godalming and feel quite badly about this. They were thrilled to be invited by the Bahá'ís though a little anxious we would not let them share costs. In fact, although we had to pay for the museum whereas libraries are free, we generated extra publicity through the museum's own advertising, and coupled with our own ongoing efforts we were mentioned in at least a dozen newspapers, journals and council websites – as well as our own! We even created a little Interfaith Friendship website for the occasion.

We dedicated our monthly prayer meeting at the Pepperpot to World Religion Day, which was also advertised at the museum opposite, and had a good turnout of Quakers, Christian Scientists, Buddhist, Bahá'ís of several backgrounds – and the new lady curate. This was a very happy meeting and we hope more people will be drawn to our monthly meetings now they have had an opportunity to find out more.

On March 9 the same group of friends, along with other members of their communities/congregations joined us in breaking the Fast with a Bengali meal at the Unitarian Hall, raising more than £300 for Adopt-A-Minefield.

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## Virtues Party in Sutton

ONE OF OUR daring mums came up with a brilliant idea for a half-term party in Sutton. She invited her children's school friends to a Virtues Party. Ten children, seven of whom were not Bahá'ís, had a wonderful day at one of our hospitable community member's homes. Most of the children were accompanied by their mothers.

We had two age groups and divided the children into two groups and worked through two of the sections of the Family Virtues Book with each group. We then had a wonderful lunch and a run around the garden. Later we watched a play that the older group had devised based on the virtues they had discussed, and then had more cakes and drinks.

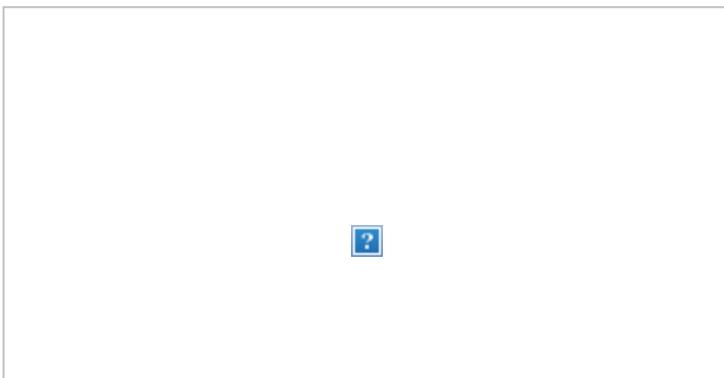
It was a very successful day. Some of our younger friends have already enquired about a follow-up session and some of the mums have asked to borrow books to broaden their horizons.

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## Book launch celebrates diversity

A MEMBER of the Brighton and Hove Bahá'í community, Mrs Farah Mohebati, was received recently at the House of Commons for the launch of Meridian Broadcasting's "Cultural Diversity Guide". The guide celebrates the rich cultures and faiths found in Britain, through the eyes of the inhabitants of Meridian TV's regional coverage, and includes contributions on Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Bahá'í and secular issues related to mixed race and ethnic issues.

Mrs Mohebati's contribution



*Participants at the book launch. Mrs Mohebati is centre front*

came in March 2000 with an invitation to join others involved in the project and at the launch of the book which took place on January 16, 2002.

The Cultural Diversity Guide is priced at £6.99 and can be obtained at bookshops or online at: <http://www.meridian.tv/cultural> [Page no longer available].

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## West Bridgford Assembly holds Fund-raiser

JUST BEFORE the start of Ayyám-i-Há the West Bridgford community held a fund-raising evening in support of the World Centre Endowment Fund. More than forty friends attended, not only from the Nottingham community but from as far afield as Derby and Chesterfield.

After the opening prayers, the youth of Nottingham presented a session of The Weakest Link (with “Mulla” Nima Honarmandan keeping things in order!).

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*Mehrdad Sabet and Peter Jenkins*

Along with other contributions there was a bring and buy table, and home-made refreshments were sold. Everyone enjoyed coming together and learning that more than £550 had been raised for the World Centre Fund.

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## Another Year of Co-operation in Bath

IT'S THAT TIME of year again, starting the preparations for the next Bath International Evening. Looking at the faces of the others on the working group seated around the table, I realised we have known each other for 11 years: we're growing old together!

Last October, at the 11th Bath International Evening, more than 150 people representing many of the diverse ethnic and cultural communities in Bath got together for an evening of food, music and fun. As in previous years, the evening was made possible through the sustained efforts of a small group of volunteers, including of course representatives from our local Bahá'í community, and also from the Barbados, Caribbean and Friends Association, Christian Aid, City of Bath YMCA and the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd, among others. Nothing would have been possible without the generous financial support of the CWS, who have sponsored the event each year, and also from others including the local YMCA, Christian Aid and the Charter Trustees of the City of Bath.

Bath International Evening was held in late October, to mark the end of One World Week, and the theme was “One People, One Planet” celebrating racial diversity and harmony. Our special VIP was the Director of the Bath and North East Somerset Racial Equality Council, and the Mayor of Bath and her consort also attended the evening.

Bahá'í musicians Geoff and Michaela Smith travelled from Cornwall to be the main entertainers, and a local percussion Samba Group led us in some lively musical rhythms. Cooks from 15 countries – Antigua, Barbados, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, England, Germany, India, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Middle East, Pakistan, Peru, and USA – provided tasty samples of their national foods. For the first time we had excellent publicity from the local paper: a double-page pre-publicity feature article, and also a reporter and photographer to record the event. Coming so soon after the tragic events on 11 September, the publicity emphasised how the event was bringing together peoples of different religions.

All involved in this project found it a very rewarding experience, invaluable for making

links with multi-cultural groups in the local community, and an excellent opportunity to demonstrate in a practical way principles of co-operation and fellowship – long may it continue!

Jane Aldred  
Bath Bahá'í Community

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## Walk for Peace in York

THE ARTICLE and photograph on the left were printed in the Evening Press, the local York paper on January 21, following a press release to publicise the “Walk for Peace” to celebrate World Religion day on January 19.

It is the first time that the local press have printed anything to do with the Faith. A police escort helped draw attention to the walk and many people took explanatory leaflets.

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## Barnet Memorial Meeting

THE SPIRITUAL Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Barnet organised a memorial meeting at the Guardian's

Resting Place on February 10. About forty believers joined in prayers after which Mrs Lois Hainsworth gave a short talk on the service rendered by her late husband, Philip, during his life.

Prayers were also said at Philip's graveside. It was a very moving and spiritual meeting.



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## Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Celebration in Chelmsford

CHELMSFORD community celebrated the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh once again with thirty friends from surrounding areas. Fifty guests included the deputy Mayoress, Kathleen Foreman and her escort, Dr Peter Foreman and other councillors. Mr Graham Walker from Coggeshall community was seated among them to answer their many questions. John Morphent from Hertfordshire addressed the assembly.



Entertainment included harp and flute music and Indian dancing. A hot buffet was also served and flowers and books were presented to the Mayoress and councillors. The community received many cards and letters in appreciation of this informative event and have had requests for more information.

