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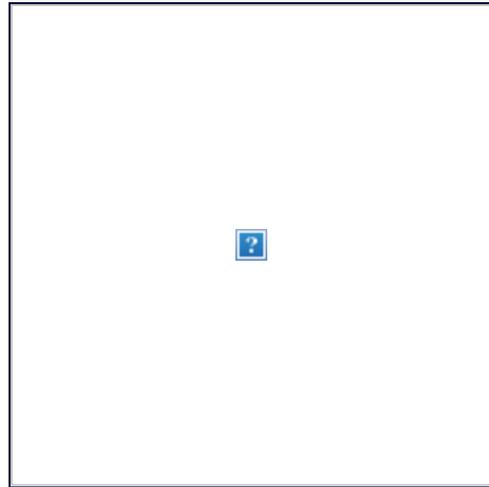
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UK Community News

Northamptonshire Commemorates the Anniversary of Táhirih

THE ASSOCIATION of Bahá'í Women in Northamptonshire organised a special event in February to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the passing of Táhirih. The event was magnificent with an audience of more than eighty people. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Kettering supported the event, which had wide scale publicity including an interview on Radio Northampton and a report with a photograph in the Kettering Evening Telegraph.

Dr Wendi Momen gave an informative and comprehensive talk about the life and significance of Táhirih. This was followed by the dramatic presentation by Sarah Clive, first presented in Scarborough. As in Scarborough, Donya Maguire assisted Sarah brilliantly. This moving performance had a profound effect on the audience and beautifully complemented Wendi's talk.



Sarah Clive and Donya Maguire, whose dramatic portrayal of Táhirih captivated the audience

The dramatic presentation was followed by a recital of Táhirih's poetry sung in Persian by Mina Beint accompanied by Richard Leigh and Nick Planas. They were then joined by Emma Lewenden and performed a selection of songs based on the poems.

Finally, the Northamptonshire Bahá'í Choir sang a selection of songs to round off a very moving and extremely entertaining event. The many non-Bahá'ís present made complimentary comments about the very high standard of every element of the presentation and how much they had come to know about a woman of such talent, courage and historical importance.

Mina Beint

Northern England Women's Enhancement Weekend

BAHÁ'Í WOMEN and their friends from Lancashire, Middlesborough, London and Yorkshire met together at the end of March in York for an uplifting programme for the mind, spirit and body organised by local Associations of Bahá'í Women.

The participants had a taster session of Neuro-Linguistic-Programming when they learnt about positive goal setting and how to enhance their rapport skills. Practitioners of Shiatsu, Chinese Massage and Reflexology offered sessions for individuals. A Tranquillity Zone was much appreciated, particularly by friends new to the Faith, as was the Persian cookery demonstration and tasting. The weekend finished with insights into stress management and the practising of relaxation techniques.

The success of the weekend was enhanced by the men in the community helping with the transport, cooking and with running one of the sessions. This was truly an example of how the two wings of a bird work together in harmony.

Positive response to ‘Message to the World’s Religious Leaders’ in Newbury

THE BAHÁ’Í COMMUNITY of Newbury had a very positive response from the local Quakers (Religious Society of Friends) to the message from the Universal House of Justice to religious leaders. They invited the Bahá’í community to give a talk to what would be described as an “inter faith” meeting. Anthony Fleming agreed to give a short talk on “The Bahá’í Faith and Religious Tolerance”.

The Quakers made all the arrangements such as providing a meeting hall, placing adverts in the local press and distributing flyers to the local churches.

On the night of the meeting, February 9, to our amazement between 20 - 25 non-Bahá’ís arrived and all on time! They came from various religious groups. Some were Quakers, some from local churches such as the Unitarians and one or two had no particular affiliation but shared a general interest in all religions. The main talk lasted for about an hour followed by two minutes of silence and then many, many varied and interesting questions.

Those attending the meeting were so enthusiastic that after an hour and 40 minutes we had to suggest a break for refreshments.

Healthy Mind and Body Weekend

Liverpool Bahá’í Centre, January 10 - 12

OUR WEEKEND BEGAN with an introduction to the Alexander Technique, which meant that within 15 minutes of meeting we were all lying on the floor with paperback books beneath our heads! Despite being a slightly surreal start, this session provided an insight into what lay ahead – it was time to forget inhibitions and learn to let go.

After a comfortable night in the centre, Saturday began with a session encouraging us to tap in to our creativity. Brave members of the group shared art and poetry that they had created, and told us the story of what had inspired them.

Next, we had a guest speaker, Brian Gill, who talked to us about the power of meditation. He explained some basic meditation skills, and then led us in two guided meditations, which I think everyone found truly amazing.

Lunch was followed by a session on creating Tranquillity Zones, led by Bahá’ís from Chester. One of these friends, Tina, then led a session on aromatherapy and massage. We were taught about some of the more common oils and their benefits, and were then provided with beautifully scented oils and shown how to use this to give hand massages. The next 15 minutes were spent massaging the hands of our partners, which was a very enjoyable experience!

Next, we split into two groups, to learn about yoga or multifaith health readings. I can’t speak for the other group, but we thoroughly enjoyed our introduction to yoga, particularly the relaxation session at the end! Throughout the afternoon, one of our group generously gave everyone individual 20 minute introduction sessions in reflexology, which was a real treat.

By this time, we were all relaxed, happy and sweet smelling – a perfect time to head off into Liverpool for an evening meal! After we returned, our evening session was led by another guest speaker, Jon Symes. The theme of the evening was “Spiritual Alignment”, and was adapted from Jon’s work in corporate training. I found it to be a highly valuable and thought provoking session. Finally, we were treated to the musical skills of many of the group and we spent time singing together (and learning to play the Irish whistle!) before heading to bed.

Sunday morning was spent in a happiness workshop, led by Louise Doherty, who shared with us the importance of laughter and play in an increasingly serious world. We then shared a final meal together before the weekend was sadly over and we said our goodbyes.

All in all, I found the weekend to be highly relaxing and rewarding. I look forward to Bahá’í

All in all, I found the weekend to be highly relaxing and rewarding. I took two non-Baha'i friends with me, who both thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and are already asking me when the next event will be! My thanks to everyone at the Liverpool centre for making our stay so comfortable, and for organising such a fantastic weekend.

Rachel Fyles

First 'Local TV' programme on the Faith in Northern Ireland

CHANNEL 9 TELEVISION, the Londonderry-based local TV station that serves the northwest of Ireland (both sides of the border) recorded a 25-minute programme on the Bahá'í Faith on March 20.

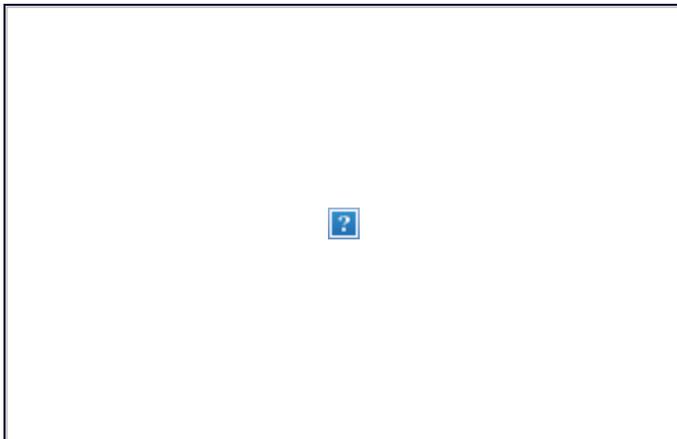
It featured three Derry Bahá'ís – Anne Munro, Laurence McMinn, and Iain Palin – in discussion with Jim Thompson, presenter of the “Community Matters” series, and was broadcast three times in three days. Mr Thompson introduced the programme as a “special New Year's Eve edition” and explained to the audience about Naw-Rúz before going on to start asking questions about the Faith.

He had researched the subject beforehand and was clearly interested in the Bahá'í teachings, and confessed himself particularly impressed with the Universal House of Justice's Message to Religious Leaders, which he had obtained from the Web.

He was a sympathetic and positive interviewer who encouraged the Bahá'ís to explain their beliefs and the activities of their community, and gave them the chance to explain why they think the Faith is so important to the lives of individuals and societies.

The call of Táhirih reaches Sheffield

ON SATURDAY, January 25, 2003 in a local ecumenical community centre, the Bahá'ís of Sheffield and the surrounding communities celebrated the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of Táhirih. A programme of her life and poetry, which also outlined world events which have shaped the advancement of women since her death, was delivered eloquently by Bahá'í youth from the cluster.



Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaei chatting with members of Sheffield Women's Forum

Invited to the event were members of the different women's organisations in Sheffield and members of Sheffield Interfaith. They were fascinated to meet the guest speaker, Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaei, who spoke about Táhirih's life and the challenge and role model she gave to the cause of women's rights.

Zarin was also interviewed by Sara Major as the main guest on the Sunday Breakfast Show at BBC Radio Sheffield the following day. She was relaxed and chatty on the programme and as a consequence was able to interweave a lot of important points about the Bahá'í Faith into her responses.

She talked about the aims of the Association of Bahá'í Women to create a secure environment where women might discover their true potential, about its aims to promote respect, dignity and the use of consultation as a resolution of conflict and also about encouraging men to be involved in the process of the advancement of women.

Asked whether things had improved for women over the last few years, Zarin stressed that, although there has been a great deal of legislation at international level, which countries including Britain have subscribed to, the implementation of that legislation was falling far short. She said that the status of many women worldwide was still appalling; the treatment of widows, the mutilation and trafficking of women, the rape of women by the enemy in

war torn countries, to name but a few abuses. However, she went on to say that circumstances change when ordinary people push for it and that we all share the responsibility to both lobby our MPs and change attitudes around us towards the fair treatment of women. We all have our part to play.

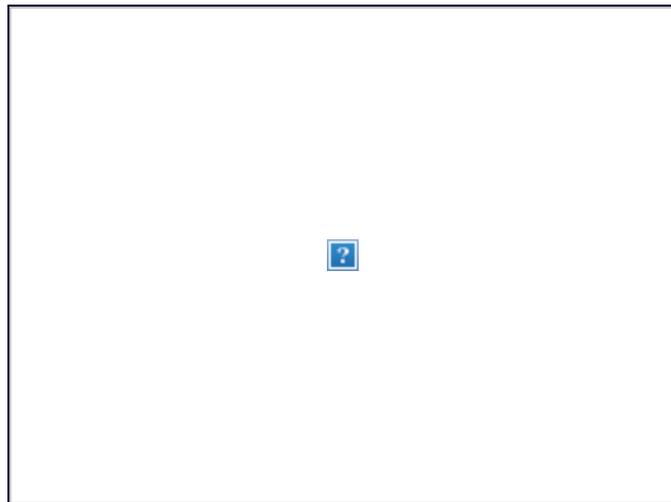
Zarin was asked about her day job, running her company “Serene Communications”. She explained that she goes into a company to help with issues involving gender, race and discrimination. She gives training and consultation to the company, stressing that the most important resource is its people. Sara suggested she subtitled her company “Counselling For Companies”.

Asked about how she managed all her interests, Zarin confessed that, like many women, she has had to become adept at juggling the day between career, faith and parenting, not leaving much time for herself, but that she enjoyed her work so much that as long as the children felt their concerns were catered for that was the main thing. She said that parenting is so vital. Lots of things in the Bahá’í writings are about the importance of family life. It’s no use having big ideals about what should be happening in the world at large if you are not bringing up a generation to know and love God and to try to live lives that are worthwhile and honourable. Sheffield Community hope to see more of Zarin in the future and meanwhile wish her every success with her visit to New York working with the NGO’s Commission on the status of women at the United Nations.

Scottish Youth Arts Weekend in Fort William

ON MARCH 28, sixteen Scottish youth, including a large contingent from the Isle of Skye, travelled to Fort William at the foot of Ben Nevis for an Arts Weekend led, planned and organised by 17 year-old Erin Keenan, a member of the Scottish Youth Committee.

After a Friday night devotional and icebreaker, the sessions began on Saturday morning with a practical demonstration of clay-modelling presented by Roya Varjavadi.



Scottish youth wait for a flying saucer to land on Adam Varjavandi's head at the Fort William Arts Weekend

Auxiliary Board member Parvin Morrissey next led a discussion and deepening on the importance given to the arts in the Five Year Plan. A trek up the mountain reinvigorated all the participants after which Matt Morrissey arranged a dramatised presentation of the core activities of the Plan. Erin then led a singing session, in French, before everyone settled down for an evening of storytelling.

Erin’s mum, Wendy, provided all the meals, and everyone had a wonderful time and is looking forward to the next event.

Director Required Ferraby Bahá’í School Loughton, Essex

WE URGENTLY need an energetic, enthusiastic and dedicated Director to lead our Bahá’í school, for a period of three years, from September 2003. The Director’s responsibilities include setting the ethos of the school, ensuring its smooth running, and liaising with parents, teachers etc. The school meets fortnightly, on a Sunday, (10 am and 12.15 pm) at Roding Valley High School, Loughton. It is easily accessible from the North Circular, M11 and M25 and is close to a Central Line Tube station. The Ferraby School is an expanding school, with supportive parents, dedicated teachers and Educational Consultant, and a very competent Management Committee. It is at a very exciting phase in its development as we have a growing number of non-Bahá’í children who regularly attend. If you wish to serve the Faith in a challenging, but rewarding role within the field of Bahá’í Education, and assist in the fulfilment of one of the goals of the Five Year Plan,

we would love to hear from you.

For further enquiries please contact the Trustee Spiritual Assembly via:
secretariat@bahai.org.uk

Ealing Commemoration

A COMMEMORATION of the life and martyrdom of Táhirih, held in November 2002, was arranged by our local Ruhi Group (book 1) of the Enfield Bahá'í community, as part of their service project for the community. The Ruhi group consisted of eight members, varying in age from 10 to over 70 years old. We commemorated Táhirih's courage and fearless stand for equality between men and women. The programme included prayers said by some of the children, readings from one of Táhirih's poems and prayers, followed by live piano music. It was a joyous evening that brought our whole community together including our non-Bahá'í friends and family. The evening was a memorable one for all of us to cherish a thought for this great lady, Táhirih.



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