

NATIONAL UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

NEWSLETTER



Issue 414

July 2014



Firm Foundations or Shifting Sands ?
A Guide to *The Seat of Authority* by James Martineau
Where Now is the Glory—remembering 1914
Life at Hartrigg Oaks—living in community

*In the flow of religious thought and practice,
Unitarians represent openness and inquiry in the spiritual quest*

Reg. Charity No. 1040294

Many newspapers at this time of year contain suggestions for 'holiday reading' ; this edition carries two 'weighty' articles by Richard Gaines and Jim Stearn ; the latter is the culmination of Jim's four issue study of the life and works of James Martineau . The great 19th century thinker is little more than a name to many present day Unitarians and I am grateful to Jim for providing a gateway into his life and work.

Martineau always preferred to be called a 'Free Christian' and so this provides a link to Richard Gaines' article about the place of Christianity in our movement now. There is no doubt that there is a clear division visible between those churches where Unitarian Christian worship is the focus of the services and those where Christian elements and references are largely absent. Richard has written a clear and balanced account of how this situation has developed that I would commend to Unitarians from all theological positions.

If you have seen the video recording of our AGM, you will have heard me repeat that NUF needs members to participate in the running of the Fellowship. We are urgently in need of a capable person to take on the role of Treasurer. The post mainly involves receiving/recording subscriptions and paying regular printing bills and other incidental expenses . The post does require use of e-mail and some computer literacy . Please contact me if you think you could discharge this responsibility and indicate any previous experience of this type of work you may have.

Many thanks to Naomi Linnell for her contribution marking the centenary of the First World War and to Liz Foxbrook for the border illustration.

To all taking holidays, whether at home or in distant lands, may I wish you untroubled journeys, a relaxing vacation and a safe return .

From the minister**Rev. Tony McNeile**

There was a discussion about worship some time ago. I remember asking, 'What or who do we worship in our Unitarian Chapels?' The question was ignored. Not surprising really because Unitarians in today's world feel they are not bending the knee to any one or any thing. But then we gather for worship Sunday by Sunday and on special occasions and do all the things that happen in 'normal' churches : sing, pray, listen and engage with a theme.

I recently suggested that worship is the celebration of the spirit within ourselves and a celebration of the spirit within our worshipping community. Smart as that seemed to me, it still didn't feel quite the right answer.

Then I was sent a book called 'Gleanings'. It is a collection of writings by a Unitarian, the late Rev Nicholas Teape. In an article he had written for 'Faith and Freedom' he too looked at Unitarian worship. His main concern was that the Unitarians had taken all the mystery, the psychological and subjective elements from their worship and left it only with a rational and objective scaffolding - that didn't engage with people's deep emotions and concerns.

Theology is not religion but an academic understanding of religion, he seemed to be saying. Religion is a response to the mysteries and the unknowns in life - and to all the tragedies and fears, the triumphs and the hopes of human experience. It covers the whole spectrum. Worship is the means to express those emotions and come to terms with them - and they are expressed in many ways: singing and prayer, through symbols and rituals and processions that reflect that mysterious unknown force that seems engaged with our everyday lives and actions. Give it a name for good and a name for bad.

When you rationalise it all, it turns up as nonsense of course. But so what ? Why not have our little shrines, tie our prayer flags to the tree, march in the procession, wear a robe and a garland sometimes? Wor-

ship through them but beware, warns Nicholas. Don't let your personal religion become an institution that controls your life.

Worship Page

How can we help anyone who is unhappy, or unwell, or facing a difficult decision? We can give them a hug, send them flowers, write a note, make a call. Sometimes we feel we cannot even do that but we still feel their pain. Let us not be afraid to light a candle for them. It can be in a church, in the home or simply to imagine one in our hearts.

Let us feel that we are able to send spiritual healing that can reach them and give them comfort and confidence and strength. Let us pray for them.

The power of thought can help in ways we do not understand. The power of Love can be felt in the heart. The angel might have visited and we have not seen - but then they are never seen.

Let us resolve never to feel helpless. Our help and love and support can travel through many channels.

President's Ponderings

Joan Wilkinson

I was delighted to hear that the project for Derby had been the first to be supported by the 20x20 Fund.

Christina Smith has recently joined us for the Charnwood Fellowship Monthly Meetings so we heard first hand about the plans for Derby, our nearest chapel. What struck me most was the emphasis on providing a liberal space for youngsters, and by liberal space there was included the vital role of the Internet and the role social media played in the lives of young people.

Whether we oldies think that youngsters spend too long on their mobile phones, tablets or computers is irrelevant to how society will be shaped and how it progresses over the next fifty years. The NUF was at the forefront of developing Internet space for our members but we have now been overtaken by Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and we even have our own TV space. Unitarians are now active in all these virtual spaces, information is shared, we can learn about what is happening in congregations and societies across the UK. We welcome our friends in America and other countries and ideas are spread globally through the Internet whether we agree with the speed of this change or not. Social and religious groups will be formed who never meet weekly in congregations.

What seems to me to be important is that Unitarians are in this social space, providing that liberal space, where ideas are shared and of which we are part in shaping.

It may be that these Internet social spaces begin to meet in groups for events, which could be anywhere. Communities are formed that have that wish to do something together that have been shaped by the ideas developed in the liberal space of the Internet. We make music together, we can see facial and body expression, we can touch, we can care for physically, we can marry and so much more in real space.

What will become of local congregations that serve the community in which they are based? Unless congregations and Internet social spaces work together the future is perhaps bleak. But work together who knows what could happen. We will always live in real and virtual space, lets hope we get the balance right.

Thank you to all who have sent me good wishes over the past weeks. My new hip is safely in place and I now move beautifully and without pain. What a wonder modern medicine is.

Cover photograph of NUF Stall at GA meetings in April 2014

Border illustrations on pages 6/7 by Liz Foxbrook ,poem by Naomi Linnell.



Where now is the glory?

Kent 1914 - 2014

There is a green place high on the cliff above
the menacing Goodwins and the sheltering Downs,
a log cabined park, clipped and trim,
but which has still the wild touch
as a pale green wild liquorice spreads around
the gardener's stately hollyhock,
while pungent wild garlic and narrow leaves
of meadow sage line the green banks
of a stream, softly singing as it meanders
through a quiet wood.

There is a copse near its edge,
enclosing a ragged circle of bright space
where the morning sun gilds a clump
of late primroses and bathes the flowers
of the tall cow parsley with a dappled radiance.
In the centre of this oasis of light grows
a spear thistle, three feet high, elegant
in its new budding touched with Tyrian purple
and long leaves tipped with spines,
a fearsome green emperor prepared for war.

Along these same quiet coastal paths, in these same woods
a hundred years ago through the hot summer of 1914
came men to survey, to plan, to dig, to build.

Where now the wild liquorice grows,
are mounds and hollows, slabs of dressed stone.

Was there here a shelter, a trench,
an emplacement for a gun?

Did the men of the gallant Cyclist Battalion
with rifles and ammunition slung across their backs
patrol these sweet green places?

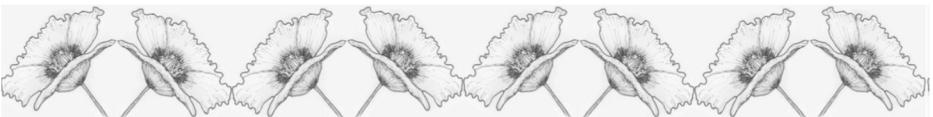
Stand today beside the handsome green speared warrior,
turn to the North and in your imagination
listen to the stuttering rattle of a rotary engine,
a limping Sopwith Camel coming into land.
Turn to the South and feel through every part of you
the unceasing shudder of the guns'
merciless bombardment of the green fields
of France, where the bloodstained earth turns red,
and the land itself cries out 'Here is no glory,
these are the Plains of Death.'

From the corners of the world they came
and from this village too, among them
boys too young and men too old to contend
with the pain, the loss, the mud and the over arching fear.
In the trenches there was courage and a bleak humour,
compassion and care for the wounded and the weak,
but in No Man's Land men abandoned, crucified
on the wire, screamed throughout the night,
and in the grey morning dead eyes
silently yearned for the green fields of Kent.

Little was gained from four bitter years of battle,
seven million civilians and ten million fighting men died,
twenty million wounded took home little but their wounds.
Widows made destitute pawned their wedding rings
while crippled soldiers begged in our city streets,
and the sad hungry orphans of Germany
wept for fathers never returned.
What is there now to celebrate when both victim
and victor were the casualties of this war,
except perhaps its eventual ending?

Very little to glorify, but much to remember,
to respect, to regret, and to learn.

Naomi Linnell



I recently wrote an article in the Inquirer about valuing our Christian roots which caused something of a bulge in my email bag, and I was asked to consider doing something similar for the NUF Newsletter so here it is.

At GA this April I much enjoyed, as I think all did, the keynote speech given by Danny Rich, the Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism. But there was a very clear message in what he told us that although liberal Judaism has espoused many of the liberal attitudes and causes that Unitarians have, they have retained a firm foundation in the Jewish religion and traditions. Bill Darlison commented on this afterwards and made the wry comment that Unitarianism has now become distinguished by its width rather than its depth.

I share Bill's concern. I think that it is rather important that we Unitarians take care to maintain that depth, and further recognise that its source is our Christian roots. Looking at Unitarianism today I am reminded of a passage I read recently in a paper by David Bumbaugh, an American Unitarian Universalist. I will quote him at length because in my view he puts very clearly a weakness which is developing in our movement, one which is evident on this side of the Atlantic as well as on his.

"Missing is any coherent theological foundation. Over and over, we hear each other and officials of the [Unitarian Universalist] Association proclaim the conviction that we have a moral obligation to grow, to spread our word because we possess a vital message, one that is of central importance to the world and to the crises in which the world is entangled. When, however, we are challenged to say what that message is, what our faith consists of, what defines us as a religious people, often we are driven to an embarrassed silence, or we smile smugly and confess that no one can speak for all Unitarian Universalists, or we stutter and stammer and mutter some half-digested truisms about the worth of every person or the importance of embracing each person's freedom to follow his or her own spiritual path. Those are not wrong affirma-

tions but they provide an incredibly weak foundation for a religious movement and a wholly inadequate program for saving the world. They offer an unexamined piety rather than a solid faith. The unfinished task Universalists brought to consolidation—the effort to re-define the faith tradition in response to contemporary challenges—has been swept away by the fear that if we define ourselves too clearly, someone may be offended. Nor are we the only example of Liberal Religion trying to survive by fudging uncomfortable self-definitions.”¹

A generation ago we British Unitarians had no doubt that our faith was essentially a Christian one. We shared a common foundation with all other Christian bodies. Even our particular theology arose from a common concern among all Protestant denominations to ensure that all doctrine was based firmly on Scripture. When we rejected the Doctrine of the Trinity we did so on the grounds that it was unscriptural, in much the same way as other Protestant denominations rejected Transubstantiation or the practice of Infant Baptism. But our sharing of the common Christian heritage gave us that depth of tradition which provided a sound foundation on which to build our faith and theology both as a denomination and as individuals.

The progressive weakening of our Unitarian Christian witness is a phenomenon, which has accelerated markedly over the past ten years or so. Three factors have, I think, contributed to the recent decline of a specifically Christian Unitarianism – the deliberate exclusion of Unitarians from the Christian fold when the British Council of Churches became Christians Together in Britain and Ireland, an ever-growing transatlantic humanist influence, and finally a concentration on encouraging diversity as a ‘value’ with the consequence that not only do we welcome anybody, but we now also accept uncritically into our mindset their particular slant on ‘spirituality’, however flawed it may be. Sadly diversity without sound foundations is a recipe for division, and we have too much of that.

But there has been a longer term weakness as well, which has been

there since the re-founding of British Unitarianism under Priestly and Lindsay. It's that emphasis on rationalism. Rationalism in itself is frankly not a particularly good way of doing religion, fundamental elements of which are by definition beyond the rational. Rationalism often fails to realise the importance of myth and story as the best and often the only way of expressing spiritual realities. The collapse of Unitarianism into little more than a socially inspired humanism is not just a modern phenomenon – it happened before in the 19th century when a progression from Unitarianism to outright atheism in certain chapels spawned the Ethical Societies, which held non-theistic services not unlike the Sunday Assembly that we've heard much of recently. Incidentally the way that I often hear Unitarianism presented today sounds alarmingly similar to the way that the Sunday Assemblies advertise themselves, with their assertion that they have no doctrine and no set texts and make use of wisdom from all sources, have no deity and don't do supernatural but won't tell you you're wrong if you do and are radically inclusive, welcoming everyone, regardless of their beliefs, as a place of love that is open and accepting². If that sounds to you like a modern Unitarian spiel, we need to ask how we are different.

But why should we value our Christian roots? As I pointed out in my Inquirer article, for liberal mainstream Christians, the Christian tradition of their denominational heritage is an irreplaceable resource, embracing as it does not only the Bible and the Creeds but also 20 centuries of spiritual thought and experience. It's certainly not a required creed to which they adhere unquestioningly, but an anvil on which they beat out their personal faith. It's the foundation on which they build, and it is valued as such. I might comment that good mainstream spiritual direction has always encouraged the development of a strong personal faith through a process of doubt and questioning,

and that the building of faith in this way is certainly not something that only Unitarians encourage

Now I'm not suggesting here that we put the clock back, even though I meet those who clearly would like to do so. A simple return to the Christian Unitarianism of yesterday is realistically no longer an option for our movement as a whole. However there is a need to build a sound shared platform for Unitarianism today, a need for that 'coherent theological foundation' to which David Bumbaugh refers in the quotation above. And through Christian heritage, given its centrality in our history. Christianity is immensely deeper than its doctrinal and creedal externals sometimes suggest, and it still forms the basis from which the social thinking of our now largely secular culture ultimately derives. Its spirituality too continues to shape the pattern of much of our own Unitarian worship, even when no longer nominally Christian.

Our aim must be to re-establish within our movement a deep foundation which will lay out a clear shared faith and discipline, provide a sound platform upon which individuals may build their personal faith, be a yardstick with which to measure new ideas, and, importantly for our plans for growth, make a clear statement of what we believe for those who might wish to join us rather than the confusing muddle which is all too often our face to the world at present. This is an essential task which we need to address urgently. The rebuilt foundation we ultimately evolve may well not be specifically Christian in the traditional sense, although I would hope that the Christian influence is clear within it, but the vital thing is that we have such a foundation and can express it clearly.

References:

¹ David E. Bumbaugh The Marketing of Liberal Religion The Journal of Liberal Religion 9, no. 1 (Summer 2009). The whole article makes interesting reading and may be downloaded from <http://www.meadville.edu/uploads/files/144.pdf>.

² Refer to <http://sundayassembly.com/about/>

Jim Stearn finishes his study of James Martineau with a 'road map' to guide the interested reader through Martineau's magnum opus.

A Guide to *The Seat of Authority* by James Martineau (1890)

Preface: Defends intuitional assurance in ethics when source is divine

Book I: Authority Implied In *Religion: religion is cultural medium of transmission to human generations of God's will for action. This purpose exists to be willed.

I God in Nature: 'Genesis'. The scale, age, and complexity of the universe exhibits grandeur and beauty, losing neither compared with traditional geocentricity, The universe is rule bound, with morally meaningless cause and effect acting on inanimate matter. Evolving life changes how the world changes, ascent far from primæval slime to "fullness of trust and love" through nature, a workshop of the spirit building complex ecosystems without any grasp of end purpose or result.

II God in Humanity: C19 archaeology and anthropology, evidence earliest humans had religion and "law". M. asserts both grounded in direct experience of Divine more than sense of wonder. Higher religion evolves, law becoming conscience, both blending with the Holy Spirit as "very shrine of worship". Good motivation replaces necessity and nemesis. Acquisition of intelligence, free will and considered end purposes not "fall" but ascent of man.

III Utilitarian Substitute for Authority: unfitness for humanity of ideology of selfish competition and "survival of the fittest",. Hedonistic ethics justifying actions by desired ends alienate intentions and will from divinely inspired conscience, introducing imperative to follow baser urge and suppress the nobler.

IV God in History: religious thought too centred on Biblical account of life of Jesus. M wider historical view, religion carries God's intentions in human affairs, M enumerates where single human agents changed course of history, so opportunities for divine agency occur. Religious heritage as a compound entity with a fruit-bearing life of its own, a precious inheritance we must seek to refine.

Book II: Authority Artificially Misplaced

I The Catholics and the Church: in Catholic tradition the true Church displays four divine 'notes': *Unity*: too many historical variations, and total uniformity might only imply common error; *Sanctity*: too many have gained office through bribes, condoned theft and fraud, murdered, and tortured and burnt men and women for their honest faith; *Catholicity*: Pope Nicholas I relaxed the use of the Trinitarian formula in baptism to help convert the Bulgarians, and that Councils have been called implies that 'Catholicity had already been lost'; *Apostolicity*: means 'conformity with the mission and institution of the apostles'. But M contrasts their poverty with Vatican's wealth, simplicity of early Christian scripture with complexity of papal bulls, and lost intentions of prophetic mission of Peter and Paul, with the 're-enthronement' of a world-wide sacerdotal system, essentially like what early Christians including the apostles had opposed. Catholicism cannot be the Seat of Authority.

II: The Protestants and the Scriptures: densely argued from colossal Bible study and German scholarship: M. refutes "dictation literalism"
§ 1. *The Synoptical Gospels*: not eye-witness reportage, they emerged and evolved.. § 2. *The Fourth Gospel* John its writer was not 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' and wrote neither the Johannine epistles nor the Apocalypse. § 3. *Acts of the Apostles*: M considers the Acts in relation to Luke and the Apocalypse. M concludes that Biblical dictation literalism cannot provide the Seat of Authority.

Book III: Divine Authority Intermixed With Human Things: how the Bible evolved. including retrospective rewriting of lost controversies to accommodate the geopolitics of early Christianity changing from a strain of Judaism into a universal religion. , The West wanted a risen God to worship whilst the East demanded spirit or wisdom.

I. The Human and the Divine in History Neither the hierarchy nor the canon can claim total authority, but they retain sacred function and divine inspiration. As cornered fundamentalists do, M. lowers the threshold of literal truth seeking spiritual truth and mythical wisdom. Issues include: ecclesiology- church or congregation? sacramentology-how many and which ones?; soteriology- how is salvation gained, and who can or cannot gain it? and the doctrines of personal or vicarious

God, either junior to or co-eternal with God the Father? These questions were bound up with geographical territoriality and power structures, traditions and alternative documentary sources, personal ambitions and animosities. M asks: can the eventual arbitrary and politically enforced relative unity imposed by the Nicene and Athanasian creeds provide certainty? His answer has to be “No!”

II. What are 'Natural' and 'Revealed Religion'? M states that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus revised and replaced the Ten Commandments, “..because he has learnt a directer way to the truth they hold and to truth beyond it: ...and his Spirit, finding the latch lifted in many a mind, steals in, and speaks the secret of his presence.” M inverts the idea of “natural religion”, as reverence for the world order leading to the formalised religions, saying truly revealed religion carries the certainty and authority of its unmistakeable origin. Immediate intuition is Divine, and reasoned conviction merely human: for M conscience must dictate the moral law.

Book IV: Severance Of Undivine Elements From Christendom: clearly much nonsense, unwisdom and wickedness may be deludedly or cynically presented as Divine revelation or inspiration.

I. Revealed Religion and Apocalyptic Religion “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream.” The prophetic voice and apocalyptic doctrines command the attention and respect of hearers, and so false ideas accrete onto truths. So a thick crust of mythology has accumulated around Jesus .

II. Theories of the Person of Jesus § 1. *As Messiah*; § 2. *As Risen from the Dead*; § 3. *As the Spiritual Adam* ; § 4. *As the Word: A. The Alexandrine Logos; or B The Word made Flesh* Very long highly contentious chapter. M maintains great reverence and a special elevated status for Jesus, his religion, his apocalyptic teachings, and even for the manufactured religion about him, but concludes that Jesus was a wholly mortal human being. Making him any more than this denies us the possibility of sharing in the same “beauty of holiness.” Neither Jesus nor anyone else has any “hindering curse” to be bought off before entering on the new life of self-consecration.

III. Theories of the Work of Jesus . § 1. *The Sense of Sin in Christen-*

dom “the way to make men religious is to frighten them.” C19 Christianity (esp. Wesley and Whitefield) stressed original sin and threat of eternal hell fire and damnation. M refutes idea of human “fall” from happy innocence of animals: free will and conscience not an infirmity, but an insight and a power

§ 2. *The Apostolic Doctrine of Redemption*; the beauty of holiness and its accessibility to us, the antithesis in John’s Gospel between light and darkness, and Jesus as saviour of the World by supreme example. .

§ 3. *The Work of the Incarnate Logos*: on John’s account, Jesus’s death raised him to the infinite and universal, the once and forever incarnate Divine creative *logos* briefly assuming human personality to recover this alienated world from the usurping ill,. The redeeming efficacy of this visit is simply as the Light of the World, the source of truth, the spring of healing, life and love. The heart of M’s idealistic ethics lies here .

IV Theories of Union with God. M finds churches deny congregations their birthright of union with the Godhead and offering contrived and modified substitutes

§1. *Present Media of Grace* sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper historically perverted from original forms and significance. Baptism unnecessary for the salvation of infants, rejects sacrificial Eucharistic dogma and symbolic ritual forms of communion, and asserts simple agape as good.

§ 2. *Future Crown of Life* Christianity’s great promise of human immortality used as hedonistic motivation or compensation for tribulations. M deprecates attribution of everything good and beautiful to another life, to the detriment of enjoying this one to the full. M’s hope of life united with God is spiritual.

Book V. The Divine In The Human M asserts the innate innocent and loving nature of the highest and best in us, which alone can inspire truly good conduct,

I. The Veil taken away The original ‘light of the world’ has been dimmed and distorted by refraction through various media, and M seeks to recreate how it once “shone purely and clearly to living vi-

sion” to become The Seat of Authority for our consciences. Many human generations have dressed Jesus up in a theory of himself: “Christianity has been taken to mean, not the religion of Jesus, but some doctrine about Christ.” “Yet there are discernible a few ineffaceable lineaments, which could belong only to a figure unique in grace and majesty.” He praises and endorses the methods and criteria of critical bible scholarship to redress this. M uses three critical rules: anachronistic language or events render the report incredible; miraculous events must be doubted where naturalistic explanations suffice; and “ Acts and words ascribed to Jesus which plainly transcend the moral level of the narrators authenticate themselves as his: while such as are out of character with his spirit, but congruous with theirs, must be referred to inaccurate tradition.” M separates the ‘humanity’ and the ‘higher nature’ of Christ: the former is his personality, his life, work, thought, affections, the conflicts of his will, as he moved before peoples’ eyes and ears....” The latter means his supposed eternal attributes lying completely out of our cognitive faculties. M refutes the ‘postponed Messiahship’, unknown to Judaism and “devised expressly to extort proof from the crucifixion” that Jesus was the Christ that should come in power. The gospels make John the Baptist a forerunner, but his followers treated his alleged self-disparagement "He must increase, but I must decrease," as a Christian invention. By accepting John's baptism, Jesus became his disciple and later his continuator, preaching the same gospel: "the kingdom is at hand."

II. The Christian Religion personally realized: an exquisitely refined essay on Jesus the man examining how the characteristics of his spirit made him the ‘Prince of Saints’, perfecting the conditions of the pure religious life’, revealing “the highest possibilities of the human soul and their dependence on habitual communication between man and God”

The full text of The Seat of Authority (700 pages !) may be found at :-
<https://archive.org/details/seatofauthorit00mart>

Life at Hartrigg Oaks

There was once a rather ardent young man who wanted to become a monk so he visited his local monastery. After being shown round, he eagerly asked one of the monks,

“Do you practise many mortifications here?”

“Only one, but it is a real toughie.”

“What is it?” asked the young man, to which the reply came back,

“Living in community.”

I heard this story just before coming to Hartrigg Oaks, which is a retirement community, so after nearly 4 months of residency I feel sufficiently ‘mortified’ to write my early impressions. But first of all some background:

Hartrigg Oaks is located on the edge of the Edwardian garden village of New Earswick, about 2 1/2 miles north of York city. New Earswick was created by Joseph Rowntree, the successful York-based Quaker businessman and philanthropist (but better known for Fruit Gums and Kit Kats) in 1902. Its aim was to provide good quality homes in a healthy and attractive environment. It remains today a distinct community, with over 1000 homes and a range of amenities including a parade of shops, library, swimming pool, Folk Hall and school. There is no pub because Rowntree promoted temperance.

Hartrigg Oaks itself was developed fifteen years ago under the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust as a retirement village with a difference. Based on a Continuing Care model – aimed at maintaining independence throughout later life – it provides a homes for people aged 60 plus. There are 152 bungalows spread over a 21 acre site, which has lots of open space and well landscaped gardens for us to enjoy. And,

if one wishes, there are over fifty different regular social activity and interest groups, most of which are organised and run voluntarily by residents. From table tennis to art, play reading to carpet bowls, philosophy to singing, there is something for everyone.

The social hub is The Oaks Centre, where there is a restaurant, a coffee shop, a fully equipped and staffed gym with spa pool, library, arts and craft room, DIY workshop, IT facilities and various leisure, games and meeting rooms. But also there is The Oaks itself which accommodates 40 residents who need higher levels of care than can be provided in their own home. It is registered to provide residential, nursing and dementia care.

But this is early days for Adrienne and me who arrived only last November, and we like to think we still have our wits about us and can enjoy life to the full. So what are our impressions so far?

I can honestly say that it has given us a new lease on life, and this is because of the friendly interesting people we have got to know since coming here. A lot of them are Quakers, many of whom come from this area, so they have a head start on us in terms of already knowing each other, but everything and everyone is new to us so it adds to the excitement. We have joined in as many Dutch Dinners, coach outings and coffee mornings as possible simply to get to know who is who, and we have made more friends in four months than we ever made in our Surrey neighbourhood over eight years!

Against all my original intentions, I have thrown myself into community life quite fully, and now find myself on the Residents' Committee, the Art Committee and the Music Committee. I also run a Singing for Fun Group. Adrienne, very wisely, is biding her time, getting to know people more personally than me, and doing some volunteering in a local mother and toddler group called "Earwigs". We are both involved in NEST (New Earswick Sharing Together) which is a local community initiative where, for example, we share apples, make chutney

and give it away to each other. And then we have a life outside Hartrigg Oaks in which we have joined the York U3A, the York Poetry Society and, of course, York Unitarians at St Saviourgate.

So Hartrigg Oaks is our new home, quite different from any we have had before, where we receive support, friendship, care if we need it and a whole range of stimulating interest groups should we so wish. Although we don't think about it too much, it will be our final home. It doesn't worry us: we have made this choice ourselves in preference to the possibility of its being made for us many years down the line. It has meant coming to terms with our mortality, but to me personally that is no big deal. For me, Hartrigg Oaks is not a place where I have come to die; it is a place where I intend to live happily for as long as possible.

Nick Morrice and Adrienne Wilson are members of the NUF

In Memory of Rev Pat Womersley

Joan Wilkinson

I was sorry to hear of the loss of one of our members, Rev Pat Womersley, who had been a good friend to the NUF.

When I lived in North Devon, I helped to organise a couple of regional NUF meetings that met at the beautiful little chapel of Cullompton, where Pat was the minister. She welcomed us all so warmly and I soon got to know her better. She was kind and thoughtful and took on far too much than she should have for the sake of her own health. But always she thought of others. Every so often she would telephone to see how I was and to tell me how things were at Cullompton.

To hear this unassuming erudite minister deliver a service was not to be missed. She was steeped in literature, which she shared with us.

She will be sorely missed in the South West but I shall miss her as a friend.

Comments and responses to articles are always welcome as are submissions for publication which will be given sympathetic consideration. Please send to the editor by 19th August 2014— Microsoft Word format preferred.

Points of Contact

President : Joan Wilkinson,10 Shirley Close, Castle Donington, Derby,
DE74 2XB

Tel. 01332 814055 joanwilk@nufonline.org.uk

Secretary : Ken Smith,12 Gravel Road, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants
GU52 6BB

Tel. 01252 628320 kennethsmith939@gmail.com

Treasurer : Elizabeth Barlow ,67 Wychall Park, Seaton Devon,EX12 2EL

Tel. 01297 625955 treasurer@nufonline.org.uk

Membership Sec : Howard Wilkins,46 Brookside, Burbage, Hinckley, Leics,
LE10 2TL

Tel. 01455 635043 membership@nufonline.org.uk

Minister : Rev.Tony McNeile,102 Turton Road, Bradshaw, Bolton
BL2 3DY

Webmaster : John Wilkinson,10 Shirley Close, Castle Donington, Derby
DE74 2XB

Newsletter Editor : Ken Smith (as above)

Viewpoint Editor : Rev. Tony McNeile (as above)

Forum Manager : Ken Smith (as above)

Books of Fellowship : Mrs. Pat Caddick,10 Park Lane, Castle Donington,
Derby ,DE74 2JF

Distributor : Derek Harvey, Flat 2 ,34 Broomgrove Road,Sheffield,SL10 2LR



*Affiliated to the General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
Linking others valuing Freedom, Reason and Tolerance in religion.*