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UK Community News

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Soul Quest – 'Mysterious Journeys' at Burnlaw

OVER THE last year the Burnlaw Centre has been running a series of residential weekends for eight to twelve year olds. The aim of these weekends is to provide opportunities to allow children to connect more consciously to both the natural world and its origin, the Word of God. It has proved to be a great hit with children living in and around Burnlaw and has also attracted children from further afield. The last Soul Quest



Young (and not so young) participants at Soul Quest

weekend was entitled "Mysterious Journeys". Twenty-two children went on an expedition to search for the source of the West Allen River, a river flowing near the Centre. This experience was then used to allow the children to more fully understand spiritual concepts and metaphors found in the Holy Writings to do with source, journey, water, hardship and the like. There were other activities including papermaking, lots of outdoor games, drumming, prayers and meditations. This mixture of the practical and the spiritual seems to sit well with the children. On the Sunday their programme joined the Centre's monthly potluck unity feast. Mums and dads came to both pick up their children and join the programme of music and readings selected from the world's wisdom traditions. The children in part put the unity feast programme together.

There are some exciting aspects of this project. For "Mysterious Journeys" only five of the participants come from Bahá'í backgrounds. Local children and their parents are becoming part of the life of the Bahá'í community. It is providing service opportunities for older youth who come and help run the weekend. Some of the children who are out-growing Soul Quest are enthusiastically signing for the Infuse "youth empowerment" weekends, events which also take place at Burnlaw.

More importantly, so far, both children and parents are delighted with the atmosphere and content of the weekends. There is already a waiting list for the next Soul Quest, "Sacred Creation". The Centre is looking at ways and means to expand the number of weekend events it presently runs. Young (and not so young) participants at Soul Quest

Northamptonshire Association of Bahá'í Women

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Association of Bahá'í Women meets regularly and at its meetings members each take their turn to give a presentation. Its main aim is to empower the Bahá'í women and their associates and inspire confidence and develop potential.

The meetings have been attended by several of the friends of Bahá'ís who are very attracted to the Bahá'í writings about women in the devotional



part of the meeting. The youngest regular attendee is Emily Leith, not yet one year old. She makes a wonderful contribution to the spirit of the meeting.



Some of the members of the Northamptonshire Association of Bahá'í Women, plus its youngest member, Emily Leith

Following the invitations sent out for the very successful Táhirih commemoration the Association, which is based on the cluster, has been contacted by several organisations asking for speakers. A presentation has already been given to Toc H in Higham Ferrers and two more are planned for Brixworth Women's Institute and Northampton Soroptomists.

Toc H started as a charity about the time of the First World War, and in our area they sponsored most of the development of the country park. Some of the women in the Toc H had been to the World Centre and had seen the gardens. They were very interested to know more about the Bahá'í Faith.

The Association is a great opportunity to invite women to meet Bahá'ís and learn of the Bahá'í teachings.

Mina Beint

Dunfermline World Citizenship Project 2003

DUNFERMLINE Bahá'í Community consisting of four adults, two youth, and one junior youth sponsored the World Citizenship Project (WCP) for the 5th consecutive year. For the last two years the project has been funded by FRAE Fife, an organisation promoting Fairness and Race Awareness and Equality, and is a partnership between services and ethnic minorities in Fife. This year the project has had a further boost by the support and endorsement of the Fife Education Department. Whereas in the previous years, the project was introduced to a number of local schools in Dunfermline, this year it was offered to all S1 and S2 and P6 and P7s and Special Needs Schools in Fife. Ten schools took up the project, more than tripling the number of schools participating.



Prize-winners with MSP, Mr Scott Barrie

The topic selected for this year was, "What Does World Citizenship Mean to You?" Children were asked to write an essay, poem or draw a poster to illustrate their understanding of the topic. Background aid material was also produced and distributed to the schools by the community to help the teachers. A panel from the Bahá'í community and Fife Education Department judged the entries. The standard of the entries was of a very high calibre and a number of them were thoroughly researched.

The prize giving ceremony took place on Friday June 6, in the presence of over 80 parents and family members, teachers and representatives of FRAE Fife and Education Department who were impressed with the dignity of the whole event. The local Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), Mr Scott Barrie, who has been a firm supporter of the project for the last three years presented the prizes to the winners. He emphasised that although a very small percentage of the youth in the country are bent on violence and damage, the vast majority are upright conscientious citizens and that their achievement should be celebrated. As a culmination to the evening's events, the prizewinners recited, read and talked about their inspirations for their entries.

Mr Barrie said that he would be mentioning the Dunfermline World Citizenship Project at the Scottish Parliament to raise its profile.

The Community was indebted to Maureen Hunter who entertained the company by playing harp and the support of Dundee and West Lothian Bahá'ís who attended the prize-giving

Sarah Ann Ridgway Bench Re-dedication Ceremony

THE RE-DEDICATION took place on May 11, 2003, the 90th anniversary of the passing of the first believer in the North West of England, at Agecroft Cemetery, Salford. Present at the ceremony were Bahá'ís from the Salford, Manchester and Skipton Communities.

The re-dedication fortuitously coincided with the publication of the biography of this remarkable believer who hailed from a humble working class 19th century background, yet had the



Friends gathered for the re-dedication ceremony included Madeline Hellaby, whose book on Sarah Ann Ridgway is reviewed in this issue of the Journal

remarkable vision to recognise Bahá'u'lláh and to put His teachings into practise in her everyday life. This biography, written by Madeline Hellaby (seated in the photograph), has unearthed previously unknown facts about Sarah Ann (1849-1913) such as her birthplace, her profession as a silkweaver, and her experiences in the United States of America where she declared as a Bahá'í.

The re-dedication was organised by the Bahá'ís of Salford after the original bench, situated at Salford University, was vandalised.

Walk of Faith in Nuneaton

THE ANNUAL WALK OF FAITH took place on Saturday June 7, 2003 in Nuneaton. The Mayor Cllr Ian Lloyd took part as the interfaith group gathered around a Peace Tree planted by the Bahá'í community in the George Eliot Memorial Gardens. The walkers then visited the local Mosque, the Sikh Gurdwara, the Hindu centre and finally a local

Christian Church. That evening a contact of the Bahá'ís declared his faith in Bahá'u'lláh, having been on the walk. The walk finally decided for him that the Bahá'í ideals were for him, and oddly it was a conversation with a Sikh gentleman on the subject of God that ultimately tipped the balance.

Later that evening the Mayor was again involved in presenting the prizes for a poetry competition. The theme for the competition was "Peace" and the winner, Dr Pat Bidmead, a local Anglican, received her prize and certificate from him.



The costs of the competition were met by a grant from RESPECT an organisation connected with the initiative set up by Prince Charles last year to encourage interfaith dialogue.

Participants in the Nuneaton Walk of Faith

Centenary of the Passing of Thomas Breakwell

IN ORDER to mark the centenary of the passing of Thomas Breakwell, the first British Bahá'í, a group of 25 friends from five different countries travelled to his resting place in Paris. Thomas Breakwell visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká in 1901 and was much-loved by the Master. He passed away in Paris on June 13, 1902 at the age of 30.



The group placed flowers on his grave at the de Pantin cemetery and recited the tablet that 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed in his honour which begins "O Breakwell, O My dear one!" These words are inscribed on his gravestone.

The group also had the opportunity to visit the apartment in which the Master resided during His visit to Paris and to meet with two members of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, Dr Nosrat Tirandez and Mrs Firoozeh Moghbel in the Bahá'í Centre in Paris.

Royalty to bestow awards on Bahá'í Pioneers

TWO BAHÁ'Í PIONEERS received awards from Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in July 2003. Bruce Saunders, an Australian living in the Solomon Islands, and David Lambert, an Englishman now living in Mongolia, received an OBE and MBE respectively. An OBE is an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and an MBE is a Member of the Order of the British Empire.



David Lambert and his wife, Lois

Bruce Saunders, 61, is receiving his award for service to the community and business in the Solomons. Mr Saunders is currently chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Solomon Islands. For 10 years, he served as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Australasia.

Mr Lambert, 62, is being honoured for his services to the development of English language studies in Mongolia. He is chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mongolia. He and his wife, Lois, are the longest serving volunteers in the British Volunteer Service Overseas organisation.

Mr Lambert went with Lois in 1992 to Mongolia where he devised a course to train teachers of English how to use modern participatory methods in their work. The Mongolian government has since adopted the course for use nationwide. Mr Lambert has also personally taught English to many prominent Mongolians. He is currently Director of Studies at the English for Special Purposes Foundation, which was set up by the United Nations Development Programme and now run as a Mongolian non-governmental organization. He is a member of the first Arts Council of Mongolia, which supports, funds and promotes the arts and culture of Mongolia.

Mr Lambert developed at Ulaanbaatar's University of Humanities an English language library that is the most extensive in the country. He arranged for British publishers to donate many books and for the United Kingdom government to transport them to



Mongolia.

Mr Lambert, originally from Kent, had trained English and drama teachers at the University of Leeds. Before that he headed the English department in a secondary school in England. It was after teaching English at the University of Nankai in Tianjin in China that Mr and Mrs Lambert went to Mongolia.



Bruce Saunders



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