

# **HEATH LIVES**

Number 19

**August/September 2025**



## **EDITORIAL**

In this issue, we are beginning a series of articles about other faiths —what their followers believe, what it means to them. We feel that it is important for us to learn more about one another and to come to a better understanding of those things which we have in common rather than always thinking about the things that divide us. We hope that you agree and that you will find these articles interesting and we are grateful to those people who have been willing to share this with us.

Just a reminder that our monthly coffee ,mornings (third Tuesday of each month) are open to anyone so do join us!

On my walks this Spring and Summer, I have become very fond of the 'snake' on our front cover. Do you know where to find him?

JOIN US FOR  
OUR

## **HARVEST LUNCH**

On  
Sunday  
5th October  
In the Church Hall  
(Manor Drive  
entrance)

No booking  
required—just  
come along  
£10 per person



## **CHURCH CONTACT DETAILS**

**Services are held on Sundays at 10.30 a.m.** We are always pleased to welcome visitors.

Church Secretary: Mrs Jane Simmons: [heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com](mailto:heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com)

Website: [heathchurchhalifax.org.uk](http://heathchurchhalifax.org.uk)

Facebook: Heath URC in Halifax

## **WEEDS ARE JUST FLOWERS IN THE WRONG PLACE**

At the time of writing, rain has at last drenched the earth after a record Spring drought and plant life breathes again. That includes the plants living in the wrong place. Not that they know it: they just do their own thing. We call them weeds of course.

You may recall that I wrote about seeds in the Spring edition of Heath Lives, drawing on material in Neil Thorogood's Book of Covid lockdown watercolours and later reflections - "Talking Pictures". Another of his themes was "Garden Therapy", in which he admits to not really being a gardener, though like many discovered gardening for the first time as absorbing and recuperative. He describes his tussle with ground elder, an indestructibly persistent plant, behaving very badly, like our couch grass (pronounce it as you like: cooch or cowch). Leave a tiny rootlet in the ground and it will reproduce and thrive.

A.A. Milne, however, said "Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them". Our efforts to eradicate and banish weeds, Neil goes on to write, "perhaps say much about our desire to shape a garden that is productive in the ways we desire, rather than let nature run its course and the weeds to grow. We constantly take control of nature for our own purposes, intervening and reworking it to reflect our want or need".

His plea for understanding and tolerance echoes around the gardening world today. The environmental crises afflicting our planet have inspired reactions by nations and individuals. One such reaction is to ask ourselves: "What can I do to make a difference?" As we in Britain have a love of our homes and gardens, the media, and not just gardening programmes, appeal to us as individuals to make a difference through the way we manage our outdoor spaces. 'Biodiversity' is the watchword now and is gaining real momentum. We need to love our weeds! Not just weeds but fungi too, and pollinators, all kinds of creatures and plants traditionally spurned as unwelcome or unimportant, rogue inhabitants of our space, but we owe these living things our very existence. Our space is also their space, and they were there first.

Neil goes on: "Interestingly, much of recent gardening advice includes leaving some areas wild, letting nature do its thing, leaving the weeds alone. Doing so can cultivate spaces where the natural cycles can continue, insects and other things can flourish and biodiversity grow and deepen." Yes but, I hear you say, we do need to tame nature. True. But not all of it. We do need to leave plenty of it alone. Take for example, the re-wilding of the Knapp estate in Surrey, producing wonderful results for endangered species and the quality

of their soil. Some farmers and landowners have had their subsidy withdrawn but still invest their money in rewilding for the sake of soil quality, sustainability and healthier food.

We believe God created the universe and declared his creations good. He wants us to enjoy our inheritance, consume and thrive, but also to be faithful stewards, with a care to leave the earth as productive for future generations as for ours. With this in mind, I leave more of my garden to its own devices and already see change happening out there. God really does look after the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Jesus freely used the natural world in his parables, and parables point to our best behaviour towards one another.

Reflecting on how weeds used to affect me I wonder how, in other areas of our lives, the nuisance factor can disturb our peace and well-being. Is it over-exposure in the news to world events over which we have no control? Or is it invasive adverts in amongst favourite programmes? How about over-processed foods? I fume at pop-up “cookies” on the internet. You get the drift and might like to pause and name yours, then pray about them!

For years, we have at Heath learned about treading lightly on the earth, cutting consumption and our share of carbon dioxide production. Remember the EarthShot Prize, which rewards imaginative entrepreneurs who were already making small inroads into reversing environmental damage. For example: in the face of “slash and burn” practices in the Amazon rainforest, 70 tribes formed the Amazon Indigenous Rainforest Alliance to live out the mantra: “Nature has its right to survive”; a young farmer set up AgriSolar, growing a wide range of food UNDERNEATH his thousands of solar panels.

Re-evaluating the role and merits of weeds in the garden can translate into tackling what harms our lives in other ways. More recently we see the wellness movement helping deal with stress and mental illness by helping people weed out its causes and make lasting changes to ingrained habits. People can be helped to adjust their work/life balance and as Christians we can point people to how Jesus can turn things around.

Jesus, in his parables, loved using examples from nature to speak to us, as if to unlock in us by faith something of creation’s power, to work unseen and turn our lives around. He said: “The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, HE DOES NOT KNOW HOW. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest time has come” (Mark 4:26-29)

*continued opposite*

## **TALL NETTLES**

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done  
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough  
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:  
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:  
As well as any bloom upon a flower  
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost  
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

*Edward Thomas*



A prayer: Thank you, Lord, for all the grandeur and beauty, the greening and glory of a world alive. Forgive us when we get distracted by the couch grass in our lives, invading our common sense, our energy and our souls. Thank you for all we do not yet understand, and how your creation can teach us wisdom, for good stewardship of our gardens and of our lives. Amen.

*John Seagar*

## **THE BAHAI FAITH**

A few years ago, across the whole world, followers of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet Founder of the Baha'i Faith, otherwise known as Baha'is, celebrated the bicentennial of Baha'u'llah, marking two hundred years since this most recent Manifestation of God was born. A 'Manifestation of God' is the Bahai term for the God-inspired, founding figures of each of the world's religions such as Jesus, Moses, Mohammad, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster. Baha'u'llah states that They and He have revealed the will of God for the human race for specific periods of time in a progressive series to meet the needs of the human race for spiritual renewal and guidance and to carry human society forward to greater and greater stages of social interaction and unity and to an ever expanding understanding of their purpose of life on Earth.

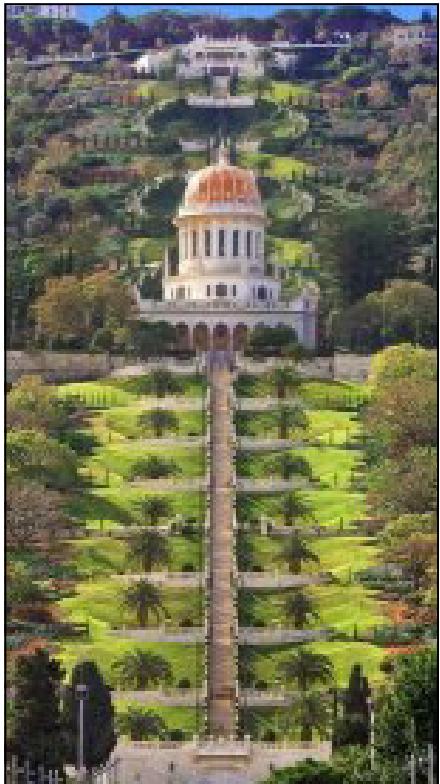
Baha'u'llah was born in Persia (Iran) in the city of Teheran on 12 November 1817 and, in 1863 at the age of 45, while in exile in Baghdad, He publicly announced Himself as the most recent Manifestation of God and the Promised One of all previous religions. He was subject to torture, persecution and further places of exile and imprisonment for the rest of His life, all the time revealing His message from God to the human race through hundreds of letters and texts, equivalent to 100 volumes. He died in 1892 and is buried near the city of Akka in northern Israel.

In His will and testament He left his son, Abdu'l Baha, in charge of the Baha'i Faith, who in turn left the Faith in the hands of his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi. After Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957, leadership of the Baha'i Faith, as previously set out in the will and testament of Baha'u'llah Himself, devolved on the elected body of the Universal House of Justice at the World Centre of the Bahai Faith, situated, as He Himself had also envisaged, on the slopes of Mount Carmel in Haifa in modern day Israel, where it continues to administer the affairs of the Faith today.

The Baha'i Faith is a world-wide religion whose purpose is to unite all races and peoples in one universal Cause and one common Faith. The traditions of almost every people and faith include the promise of a future when peace and harmony will be established on Earth and all humankind will live in prosperity.

*"God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace*

*and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established. (Baha'u'llah)*



*Shrine of the Bab, Mount Carmel*

One of the many teachings of Baha'u'llah is the independent investigation of reality. If people are allowed to investigate the truth, they will come to see and embrace the oneness and wholeness of the human race. If we investigate reality rather than blindly imitating the beliefs of the past, we will arise to abolish every form of prejudice whether of race, class, colour, creed, nation or gender. Baha'u'llah also made a distinction between true religion and superstition. Baha'u'llah taught that true religion must be in harmony with science and reason. Furthermore, religion must be the cause of fellowship and love. If it becomes the cause of discord and hatred then, He says, it is better to be without it! He also declared the equality of men and women, and described humanity as being like a bird - one wing is female and the other wing is male. Both wings need to be equally developed for the bird of humanity to fly.

Other teachings of Baha'u'llah stress the importance of universal education, the benefits of adopting a universal language, the necessity of incorporating a spiritual basis in seeking out solutions to economic problems, and the need for justice in the governance of all human affairs. Humanity was created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilisation but must be freed from the captivity of a gross materialism. This is because true civilisation needs a balance of the spiritual and the material and this balance is a prerequisite of human happiness.

There are many more aspects of and pointers to the emergence and development of a world society and civilization dealt with in Baha'u'llah's writings but these are best explored at leisure at another time. For further information you are invited to go to [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org) , the international website for the Baha'i Faith.

*Anthony McCarthy*

## ***NEW FRIENDS AT THE OLD LIBRARY***

One of the funniest sketches on TV was Julia Walters, as a doddering waitress, spilling the soup as she left the kitchen and arriving at the table with empty bowls. It has become known, with fondness, as 'the two soups sketch.' I fear the waitress portrayed will have been modelled on me, when I am carrying trays: shaky and slow! But when organisations are reliant on volunteers in current times, lots of 70+ year olds come forward, but we have experience and enthusiasm, too. And the benefits - for the individual volunteers and the organisation - flow both ways.

I am one of the volunteer team at the new Old Library in Skircoat, and the good news is, it has surpassed all expectations, in its first year of operation. It has been a privilege to see people happy to come in and, eventually leaving, with even broader smiles. Children come in very excited and though they have already come to know their section well, the happy anticipation doesn't seem to fade. Many local adults couldn't wait to regain access to their local library - and others may come in for a look, less familiar with the idea of a cafe in the library - or more familiar with the library when they themselves were youngsters.

At the start, it was a challenge to manage the volunteers, and to instil some coherence to the service, whilst we each bring something different to the team. So being a volunteer gives me the opportunity to meet and work with others who are similarly motivated, but come at it from a different perspective and background. This co-operation helps us to become less insular and narrow in approach and has been a particular advantage of our duty-roster arrangements. So the younger ones update us older members, whilst we can all learn additional library techniques and managing customer-care services. Other hidden talents which have been put to good use include: home baking, story telling, craft working, gardening, computing skills and graphic design.

Whilst I am an avid reader, I have enjoyed the library for the people we meet, both as co-workers and as customers. Occasionally, would-be volunteers have said they love books and it is satisfying to swap recommendations of books and authors. But rather, it has been the sense of meeting a need in the community, and being able to take satisfaction from the enjoyment of people using the resources across the range of services, that keeps me turning up for work. Also, to feel this is one more building saved which would have otherwise been rendered defunct by modern cutbacks. The authorities found a way to afford and

build a library in 1926, so we will celebrate its 100th anniversary next year.

One of my favourite stories comes from even before the library opened for business (in April 2024). My neighbour called into an open day and met an old school friend whom she hadn't seen for the 70 years in-between. It was wonderful that they realised that they knew each other though, admittedly, they had to have a discussion to work out how! Library visitors who have swapped Christmas cards for years, but hadn't seen each other for over ten years have met up, by chance, over afternoon tea. Grandparents with child-minding responsibilities are glad to come somewhere warm for adult conversation with someone new, whilst the children are happy to browse the books.

The Library offers a free book-borrowing service and an in-house computer for personal research, at no charge, though we do charge for use of the printer/photocopier. We have a local events notice board and provide space for advisory leaflets, local and hobby newsletters, and national magazines. As time goes on, we are hoping to improve facilities to become a more widely-used and recognised meeting place and have already held several sell-out lectures for adults. Lots of craft sessions for children have been over-subscribed. I am not sure whether the parents or the children get the most out of the fun story-time sessions which often include sing-alongs too.



Above: The “Gardening Gang Convenor”, Michael, at our most recent work session. He also volunteers in the library and café and runs “story time” sessions for younger children, which are an enjoyable break for the parents and other library visitors too.

One volunteer suggested that if we brighten someone's day for just the hour or so they may be in the library, it is worth doing. We aren't changing people's lives - but if it helps them get through the day, then some good has been achieved. She also made the point that volunteering in the library could be a good training ground for younger people who are seeking work, given the many different aspects of the role. I have felt the benefit of being more active - especially having experienced the Covid lock-downs - and volunteering provides new challenges, new skills, new networks and friendships.

You will be impressed by the posh coffee machine and home baking. I was enough of a traditionalist to be surprised by the idea of a cafe in the library - weren't you expected to be quiet in libraries? - but we needed a source of revenue, to help pay the bills. And it has worked well: if you haven't yet tried us, please call in. No one is obliged to buy refreshments - feel able to use the library as a friendly, safe place to sit and pass some time - catching up on new authors, looking up references on local history, choosing books or using the computer for research. You will always be welcome and you will be keeping me in work.

The library is closed on Mondays and Fridays but may be available to hire for private group events. Contact by e-mail: theoldlibrary21@gmail.com  
Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 8.00 pm.

The library is a registered charity. To support the library financially, you may feel able to become a Friend of the Library offering a regular amount, or a one-off donation. Please call into the library to enquire. When you see our location and you decide you want to volunteer: please ask for an application form.

*Author known to Editor*

### **A PRAYER**

Lord of my life, walk with me.  
Physician of my soul, heal me.  
God of my heart, hold me.  
Amen.

## **29th SEPTEMBER: ENTER MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS**

What is an angel? Easy, people think: a shining figure with glorious wings, who appears from time to time to do some mighty work for God or bring a very special message from him.

Well, that's right in one sense (apart from the wings, which owe more to stained-glass windows than the Bible). But the fact that not all 'angels' in the Bible are 'glorious' or 'shining' should make us hesitate to categorise them in this spectacular way. After all, the three apparently ordinary men who visited Abraham and Sarah to tell them that she would have a son even though she was long past child-bearing age had none of those outward embellishments. Nevertheless, Abraham recognised them as divine messengers.

The Bible is full of angels, from the early chapters of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, and often they had a key role in critical events. It seems, from just two instances, that Michael was their leader, and 'archangel'. In many stained-glass windows, he's seen with a sword, because in a vision in Revelation he led the angelic host who fought and defeated Satan and his army.

In the Gospels, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Temple, to tell him that his elderly wife was to have a son, the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist. An angel, Gabriel, appeared to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. An angel appeared 'in a dream' to Joseph, the village carpenter in Nazareth, to tell him to go ahead and marry his fiancee, Mary, and later – also in a dream – warned him not to go back to Nazareth. A 'young man', whom we take to have been an angel, was sitting in the empty tomb on Easter morning, waiting to tell the startled women that Jesus wasn't there – He had risen. (Mark 16:5)

Without going into every biblical reference to angels, those should be sufficient to show that the word covers an enormous diversity of experience. So the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of those who practise hospitality as sometimes 'entertaining angels unawares.' Sometimes people recognised angels for who they were, and sometimes they didn't. Angels, quite simply, are God's agents or emissaries, messengers and ministers of His will. Sometimes they are human; sometimes they seem to be spiritual beings.

Perhaps we could even say that anyone, in any situation, who is at that moment God's 'messenger' to us, or serves us graciously, is an 'angel'. So, when we say, 'Oh, be an angel and pop up to the chemist for my prescription', we may be nearer the heart of the matter than we think!

*Canon David Winter*

## **THE HALIFAX WOMEN'S LUNCHEON CLUB CENTENARY**

May 15<sup>th</sup> 2025 saw the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1925 founding of the Halifax Women's Luncheon Club.

To mark the occasion, a Centenary Celebration Luncheon was held at our usual venue, the Southwood Club, on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, Wednesday being our traditional day to meet.

The weather was beautiful, sunny but not too hot, and the room at the Southwood Club was looking at its best. The tables were elegantly set, with an individual printed menu for each person and a floral centerpiece on each table, featuring pink carnations and roses, thanks to the skills of friends of the Halifax Flower Club. The decorations were given to our HWLC President and Officials at the end of the afternoon.

There were 88 present including members' invited guests, long-standing friends of the Club Miss Pat and Miss Elaine Sykes-Austin from Leeds, and the Guest Speaker. Everyone had risen to the occasion by dressing up, and it was quite a fashion parade! Complimentary Buck's Fizz was provided, and there was much pleasant chatter before the famous bell called everyone to take their seats at table.

The Chairman, Mrs Thelma Greenwood, welcomed the Ladies and our Guest Speaker.

Mrs Jackie Walker, Honorary Speaker Secretary, said Grace.

The special menu was Parma Ham and Melon, Salmon Fillet with Lemon Sauce, new potatoes and vegetables, and Vanilla Panna Cotta with Fruit Compote, followed by coffee and tea.

There was a beautiful Centenary Cake, traditional rich fruit with marzipan and pale peach icing, decorated with orange and peach-coloured ornamental flowers. It was made by Mrs Natalie Greenwood, the daughter-in-law of Chairman Thelma Greenwood.

After the meal the Loyal Toast was proposed by Honorary Treasurer Mrs

Rosemary Pickles – all stood for “The King”. The cake was cut, and a toast to “Halifax Women’s Luncheon Club” proposed by Mrs Sue Hanson, long-serving Secretary to many Mayors of Calderdale, and the Chairman responded with thanks on behalf of the Club.

Our Guest Speaker was Dickie Arbiter, LVO, a British journalist, television and radio commentator on the British Royal Family and international public speaker. He was Press Spokesman for the late Queen Elizabeth II from 1988 to 2000, and appointed Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order in the 1996 Birthday Honours List. He was introduced by our President, Miss Dorothy Wood. As might have been expected, he gave a most interesting speech, with insights into Royal Family life and personalities. Not everyone has dried the dishes when the Queen washed up at a picnic at Balmoral! He was very urbane, immaculate in a navy blue suit, wearing one of his signature colourful ties.

The formal proceedings were concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Vice Chairman Mrs Alison Kite, and mingling and chatting continued until around 4 p.m. when everyone dispersed.

Mrs Jean Thorp, Committee Member, took photographs throughout the proceedings, and we all look forward very much to seeing these once they are printed.

The occasion was a great success and much enjoyed, due entirely to the diligent planning and hard work of the Committee and Officials, to whom many thanks are due.

We look forward to the next 100 years of the Halifax Women’s Luncheon Club with hope and optimism.

*Valerie Fitton, Committee Member.*

*19 May 2025*

*(Ed: Due to the vagaries of deadlines and the fact that we only appear every second month, this is the earliest date on which we could include this article).*

# ***I COME TO A LAND DOWN UNDER***

## **World Cruise Part Three**

Crossing the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Australia can often be rough. Fortunately, on this occasion we felt only calm serenity and four days after we departed Auckland we reached the shores of what is, perhaps, my favourite city on earth, Sydney, for a two-day visit. After Sydney we had four more Australian ports on our itinerary.

To rise before dawn and sail through the entrance to Sydney Harbour is such a rewarding experience. As you round the bend of the shoreline you understand why it has rightly been called one of the modern Wonders of the World with its shining Opera House and majestic Harbour Bridge, known as "The Coathanger". We berthed in Circular Quay in the heart of the city, which was the landing place of the first Europeans led by Captain Arthur Phillip on January 26 1788, a date now celebrated annually as Australia Day. On this visit, I took a tour of the Opera House, having missed it previously. It is truly a magnificent building, designed by Danish architect Jorn Utzon. Construction started in 1959, with an estimated cost of A\$5 Million, and was completed in 1973, after many design changes, for a final cost of A\$102 Million, quite an increase. The white porcelain tiles on the "Sails" have an added silver border designed to reflect the sun so brilliantly. The acoustics in the main Concert Hall are incredible and the organ, the largest of its type in the world, has over 10,000 pipes and took nearly two years to tune. I was fortunate later to watch an evening performance of Verdi's "La Traviata" by Opera Australia, a sublime experience. Next morning I boarded one of the many historic green-and-white ferries, which criss-cross the harbour daily for the benefit of both commuters and tourists, for a 30-minute trip to Manly on the northern harbourside near the entrance. Manly has a small relaxed community feel and its attractive beach I found more appealing than its world-famous, bustling, cousin at Bondi which hits you right between the eyes due to its sheer size.

Having sailed out of Sydney Harbour on a warm, late summer's evening, Arcadia travelled up the coast of New South Wales and into Queensland to berth on the outskirts of Brisbane. I had booked an excursion to the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, located in the unusually named Fig Tree Pocket, about a 40-minute coach ride away. The Sanctuary cares for sick, injured and orphaned koalas, around 130 typically, as well as having a breeding programme. In

addition to its main inhabitants there are many other Australian animals including wombats, crocodiles and cassowaries. Some, such as kangaroos and wallabies, are housed in large fields and, lying sleepily in the sun, are relaxed enough for you to pet them gently. Their skin is as soft as silk. There were many foreign visitors there, clearly enjoying being up close and personal with wildlife not seen in their own country. It was also becoming apparent to me that the temperature was turning hotter and more humid than it had been in Sydney. As I was to find out, it would become more so as we travelled on.

Airlie Beach, self-described as “The Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and the Whitsunday Islands”, is a delightful and affluent seaside town. As there are no facilities for berthing cruise ships it had been arranged for local tenders to take passengers ashore. The gusty winds at this point had made the sea rather choppy but the boats were large and it was not too uncomfortable a 20-minute journey. Unfortunately, due to the winds, those who had booked snorkelling trips were disappointed to find them cancelled. I decided against paddling in the clear blue waters lapping against the white, soft, sand, as the hotter weather in Northern Queensland also brings with it “stinger season”, when jellyfish such as the box, whose venom can kill an adult in less than five minutes, and an equally dangerous tiny one known as Irukandji often lurk in coastal waters. As a result places such as Airlie have built inland lagoons where swimming may be enjoyed without fear of lurking nasties.

Onto Cairns where the temperature reached 38\* accompanied by a high level of humidity. A visit to somewhere cooler was called for. A local enterprise has bought a number of WW2 “ducks” (amphibious vehicles) and, using them, take tourists for journeys through the local rainforest where there is at least some shade. Our young guide gleefully described, and found, examples of poisonous spiders, plants and assorted other horrors along the way. A warning not to put one’s hands in the lagoons due to the possible presence of crocodiles was strictly observed! Afterwards we watched a display of Aboriginal tribal dancing as well as exciting spear and boomerang throwing.

Our final Australian city, Darwin, was even hotter and more humid than the others. Foolishly, perhaps, I had booked a two- hour Heritage Walk but thanks to a fan and bottles of cold water provided by our local guide it was bearable. I love this city and its people but I couldn’t say why exactly. The people are, as they say, “different,” right up in the Top End, perhaps because of their isolation from the rest of the country. Darwin was almost totally rebuilt after its

devastation by Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974 so there are hardly any buildings dating from before then. However, what remains of the former colonial offices, a church and the first colonial trading post were brought vividly to life by our guide.

So our visit to this great friendly continent was sadly over but now it was time to head for Asia!



Sydney Opera House Interior

*Stephen Wassell  
To be continued*

## **AGEING WELL SESSION**

Badminton, table tennis and pickleball 10 a.m. to 12 noon  
Most Tuesdays

More sports to be added soon.

Tai Chi 12 noon to 1 p.m.

Inspire Centre, Calderdale College.

Book on the app or via a receptionist at Sowerby Bridge pool or  
Brighouse pool.

## **YORKSHIRE SYNOD BIG DAY OUT 2025**

The Yorkshire Synod Big Day Out this year took place at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park on 17<sup>th</sup> May. There were 150 tickets sold, with under 18s not needing a ticket. Janet and I arrived about 10.15, and the event was due to start at 10.30. On arrival we bumped in to many friends whom we hadn't seen for some time, as we always do at these events, and spent some time catching up with them. As the first Forest Church group started to make their way around the site (the first session was full soon after the earliest arrival time of 10am), and the family craft got underway, Janet and I made our way to the main field, where Dan Morell and Simon Copley were leading the sing-along. This took the shape of an A-Z of hymns; the first session covered the letters A to M. The singing was good though the numbers were few, as, with so many activities going on at the same time, people were spread over a large area. A guided prayer walk was also available for people to go on whenever they liked, and the group had full access to the park. The normal entry price to the park is £11, so the ticket price to us of £5.50 gave great value.

At 12.00 the main entertainment came on stage. This was 'The Parable Keeper' performed by 4Front Theatre, a Christian Theatre Company. This was very entertaining and thought-provoking, presenting well-known parables in a very different way. This performance was an hour long, though the time went by so quickly that it seemed much shorter.

At 1pm, the sing-along started again, but Janet and I decided to take the prayer walk, which referred to sculptures and gave thoughts to invoke prayer relating to each. We then returned for the end of the singing, in time to join the worship session which was led by Sarah Fitton, the minister of the Huddersfield Pastorate. This was a great interactive worship session based on body, mind and soul. When this finished, Janet and I went for a wider exploration of the park, before heading home.



If you have never been to a Big Day Out, I thoroughly recommend joining them in the future. Whilst they always provide plenty of entertainment for children and young people, there is also plenty to keep people of all ages entertained, and plenty to help you improve your spiritual life too!

*Alan Kendall*

## THE ROWAN TREE

At the bottom of our garden stands a rowan tree, tall and well-formed, beautiful at all times of the year but especially in the Spring. When we first moved into the house there were no trees there; the lady who previously lived there having an aversion to them. Oddly enough, we were told later that when she had been sitting in the back garden enjoying a peach, she took the stone and buried it in the garden soil at her side. Years later, when the stone had taken root, incredibly, it produced a peach tree. Ten or twelve years later, we were astounded at the number of ripe peaches which it produced.

To return to the rowan. When we first saw it, there were no signs of growth, in fact it looked just like a stake which had been put there to support the rose. Before long, however, tiny shoots began to appear, followed by leaves, and it was clear that it was now a sapling. Over a period of time, it developed in stature and in health, producing luxuriant foliage, followed later by blossom and then covered with the bright red berries of its kind. Now after more than sixty years it is a glorious sight, slightly past its best due to its age, but still a fine tree. Seen through the study window on the first floor, it has often pleased me to see its spreading branches etched across a cerulean sky; a comforting prospect which, in addition to beauty, gives an illusion of permanence.

As it has grown in size and in strength we now see that various species of wild life have begun to appear in it: magpies, doves, pigeons, blackbirds all take their opportunity to perch there and survey the territory. Sometimes a squirrel will scurry high up it, usually when there are cats about. Even cats occasionally attempt to climb it, usually chasing a squirrel, but they do not progress far.

So much for our rowan. A tree, originally unloved and unwanted, which has grown and prospered and is now in its prime giving great pleasure to us. I wonder what the earlier owner of the house would have thought if she were to see it now? What would she say about the peach tree which defied her and grew in the back garden, but is no longer there? Two trees which have survived against all odds, against the wishes of the lady who unwittingly planted them. Nature has its own plans and forges ahead regardless of feeble humans' wishes.

*Derek Bridge.*

## **FOR PROTECTION AND GOOD LUCK**

The Rowan tree, which is also known as quickbeam, wicken or witchwood, has a significant place in the myths and folklore of many countries, being associated with protection, luck and good fortune. It is seen as sacred in the Celtic tradition, warding off evil spirits. More widely, it is seen as a protection against witches and enchantments and is often found near ancient burial sites or stone circles as well as being planted by homes and livestock to protect against both witches and other negative influences and to bring good energy. The wood was used for many things such as stirring milk and making dowsing rods.

The tree's physical characteristics encourage this reputation. Each berry has a tiny five-pointed star or pentagram opposite its stalk, the pentagram being an ancient symbol of protection. Also, it was believed that the colour red protected against evil and magic, so the profusion of bright berries in autumn reinforced this idea. An old rhyme says "Rowan tree and red thread / make the witches tine (meaning 'to lose') their speed".

The feather-like leaves and red berries are explained in Greek mythology by the story of Hebe, the goddess of youth, who had a magical chalice from which she gave out ambrosia, the nectar of the gods. The chalice was stolen by demons and an eagle was sent to get it back. In the fight that followed, a rowan tree sprung up on every spot where a feather or a drop of the eagle's blood landed on the ground.

In Norse mythology, Thor clung to the branch of a rowan tree to save himself from a fast-flowing river in the Underworld.

In Neo-Druidism, the rowan is considered to be a portal tree, an opening between this world and another world, both an entry point and an exit, a threshold 'offering you the chance of going somewhere and leaving somewhere'.

This is only a small part of its associations, which include being a symbol of rebirth where its branches were sometimes used in funeral pyres to symbolise death and the cycle of life. It is so much more than 'just a tree'. No wonder Derek and Betty have led such a happy life in their home of over 60 years in the shadow of their rowan.

## **AMERICAN HOLIDAY—1893 *continued***

Charles reported that he then moved on to Philadelphia, which he said was a splendid city. He continued: "There is a lot of marble about the houses. On Wednesday we went to Fairmount Park, into Memorial Hall and Horticultural Hall. Then we took a steamer on the river and went to Mrs. Holder's and spent the evening there. Thursday we saw shops and went to Wanamakers, a big store where you can get anything. We Saw some very fine buildings—Post Office and City Hall. Friday we went to Tathams.

Saturday we set off for Niagara Falls at 12 o'clock and rode through the famous Leigh Valley (*Note: I am assuming this was on a train*) and we arrived at the Falls at 12.15 midnight. Had to get lodgings for the night and on Sunday we took a carriage and saw American Falls rapids, Bath Island, Goat Island, Luna Island, Cave of Winds, Horseshoe Falls, 3 Sisters Islands, Hermits Cave, Prospect Park, Suspension Bridge, Whirlpool Rapids, Webb swim whirlpool. (*Captain Webb was determined to swim through the whirlpool but unfortunately was sucked under and died*). We then visited Queen Vic Park and then had dinner."

"We took the train to Chicago and after 21 hours we arrived and found Sarah Anne's. Tuesday we went to the World's Fair, also Wednesday. We went on the moving sidewalk which runs out into the lake for half a mile. For 5c you can stay on as long as you please.

Thursday we went into the city, saw shops and various high buildings. We went to the top of the Masonic Temple which is 21 storeys high and we had a splendid view of the city which would have been better but for smoke and fog. Saw the Board of Trade and saw them all in the pit trading but trade had been dull. It was not as busy as usual. Saw City Hall, Chamber Amnesty, Palmer House, G.N. Hotel, Monadnock, also the Fair, one of the largest retail stores in the city where you can buy anything you wish."

(*Notes: The brownie, which most of us have made, was invented at Palmer House hotel and is still made there now.*

*The Great Northern Hotel was opened in 1892 and housed a theatre.*

*The Monadnock Building was opened in 1893 and was, at the time, the largest office building in the world. Its staircase was made of cast aluminium, the first time it had been used in building construction.*

*The Fair was a discount department store.)*

"After lunch we took the car to Lincoln Park and saw zoo, flower beds, fernery, water lilies and Grant's Monument. The city is very fine. Tram cars run in every direction and are very well patronised, it being difficult sometimes to get on at all.

On Friday we went to the fair and went on the Ferris Wheel, saw photos of Mr. Williams and at night went to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Got home at 11.15 p.m. Saturday we saw Chicago and, with Mr. Turner, went to see *The Old Homestead* (*a play*) in the afternoon. Went to the fair at night to see the fireworks.



Sunday we got up at 7 o'clock and went to the Haymarket Theatre to hear Mr. Moody. A splendid congregation of about 6,000 people and over 200 on the stage. We had a few hymns, then a prayer, then a selection by the choir and then Mr. Moody gave an address on Assurance which was very fine. It was given to the Christian people present and then followed another man who spoke to the Unchristian persons and he spoke very well indeed. After leaving the theatre we went along the streets and I am sorry to say that nearly all the shops were open and you can get anything you like. We took a car to Washington Park and saw the flowerbeds representing stair-carpets, steps with carpets laid and gates at the top. Butterflies, the globe, vases, calendar, shield, sun dial and stars and stripes. Monday we went to the stockyards.

*(The Stock Yards complex was vast, covering 450 acres with thousands of livestock pens and numerous meat-packing plants. It became a must-see for tourists and a significant part of the World Fair.)*

*To be completed next month.*

*Elizabeth Riley*

## **FIRST THEY CAME**

First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist

Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist

Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me

***By Pastor Martin Niemoller***



## **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

Please ensure that all contributions for the October/November issue of Heath Lives are received by the editor before

**9 a.m. on Monday 8th September 2025**

We welcome all contributions but publication is not guaranteed.

Send to: [garnetnr@outlook.com](mailto:garnetnr@outlook.com)

or hand to Gemma or to Anne Boyd

Please note that inclusion of an article does not necessarily mean that the Editors agree with the sentiments expressed.

## **ACTIVITIES IN HEATH CHURCH**

On the third **Tuesday** of each month at 10.30 a.m., a **Coffee Morning** is held in the Lounge (using the Manor Drive entrance). Everyone welcome.

On the second **Thursday** of each month at 7.30 in the evening, we hold meetings of the **Thursday Club** in the lounge . We welcome new members.

### **Jason Whitaker Boxing Fitness.**

Boxing padwork sessions available for all fitness levels and abilities including group classes, 1-to-1s and 2-to-1s.

FB: Jasonwhitakerboxingfitness

Tel:07929372498

### **Kim's Dance and Movement**

**Tuesdays 10am** - Adult Beginners' Tap Class. Suitable for complete beginners or those with a little bit of tap experience in the past and needing a basic recap.

**Tuesdays 11am** - Adult Intermediate Tap Class. Anyone from 18-80 with previous knowledge or experience in tap dancing. Fun class.

**Thursdays 11am** - Move & Groove Dance fitness. Over 18's Aerobic-style fitness class. A nice feel-good class with a mixture of songs/routines including salsa and Cha-cha. All abilities as you can take it at your own pace.

Contact Kim on 07747 867706 or Facebook @kimsmoveandgroove

### **\*Move to Improve\* standing and seated exercise classes with Heidi.**

Help Improve your balance and posture, and strengthen muscle & bone plus improve your overall fitness.

Wednesday 2pm Back to Basics Gentle keep fit.

Friday Gentle keep fit 10am & 11.10am.

Please contact Heidi 07791869594

Email [heidimolle@googlemail.com](mailto:heidimolle@googlemail.com)



## Regular bookings at Heath United Reformed Church Autumn 2024

All activities and hire times are subject to change.

TT = Term time

S = Seasonal

V = Variable

O = Occasional

Day	User	Time	Location
Monday	Coccinelle French Class	11.30-3 TT ellie.fitzgerald1@outlook.com	Lounge
	Janet's Eazi Dance	2-3 janetfletcher5@yahoo.com	Hall
	Steph's Community Choir	2-3 no need to book	Upstairs
	Beavers	6-7 Beavers @49thhalifax.org.uk	Lounge & Hall
	Cubs	6.30-8 Cubs@19thhalifax.org.uk	Hall
	Halifax Symphony Orchestra	7-9.30 S roybiggs@halifaxorchestra.org	Upstairs
Tuesday	Kim's dance class	10-12 07747 867706	Hall
	Community Coffee Club	10.30-12 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday) heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com	Lounge
	Yvonne's Tai Chi	1.30-3.30	Hall
	Halifax Philatelic society	1-3pm (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	Lounge
	Kim's music lessons	4.15-8.15 pm TT	Upstairs
	Scout District Meetings	7.30 – 9.30 V	Lounge
Wednesday	Northern Lights House Group	10.30-12.30 fortnightly 07929 372498	Lounge
	Heidi's cardiac rehab	2-3 07791 869594	Hall
Thursday	Heath Study Group	10.30-12 S heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com	Lounge
	Kim's dance class	11-12 07747 867706	Hall
	Halifax Young Singers	6-9 TT halifaxyoungsingers2@gmail.com	Upstairs
	Laura Morrell Singing	8-9 TT 07425 893945 (in hall on 2nd Thursdays)	Lounge
	Thursday Club	7.30-9 (2nd Thurs) heathchurchhalifax@gmail.com	Lounge/visit
Friday	Heidi's cardiac rehab	10-12 07791869594	Hall
	Kim's music lessons	10-11 TT O & 4.15-6.15 pm TT	Upstairs
	Janet's Eazi Tap	6-7	Hall
	Scouts & Explorers	7.30-9 Scouts@19thhalifax.org.uk	Hall & Lounge
Saturday	Artful Stars - children's art	9-11.30 TT 07791 954274 julie@artfulstars.co.uk	Lounge
	Kim's music lessons	9-11 TT	Upstairs
	Calderdale Chess League	2-7 O 07504 598590	Hall
Sunday	Heath's Worship	10-12 Service 10:30-11:30 0779188161	Upstairs
	Northern Lights	2.30-6 07970 256243 (Independent church, not linked to Heath)	Hall/Lounge
Variable	Jason's 1:1 Boxing skills	V 07929 372498	Meeting Rm 2

For further details, please see page 23