



Well-Dressing by Margery MacKay



and anniversary based. In the 1930's about fourteen villages participated; today there are almost one hundred villages that keep the Derbyshire tradition, including Great Hucklow since about 1999.

I have a soft spot for the Bradwell well-dressings, the first I ever saw. Bradwell is an old lead mining village about three miles from Great Hucklow. I remember seeing the one in the photo on the far left, and also seeing three other Bradwell well-dressings being made, including a children's one, in various garages; a generational community building effort by the villagers who are very friendly.

In Bradwell the well-dressings are made by placing wet clay in a large frame, laying a paper pattern of the drawing on it and cutting out individual sections to work on. The lines of the section are often filled with sweet cicely seeds. Next flower petals, often hydrangea, and greenery of all kinds are pressed onto the clay. Nowadays other natural things such as sheep wool may be used. The well-dressings are made in less than a week and placed where there are or use to be wells for about another week or so. There is a blessing ceremony and sometimes a carnival or fête.

Remembering both my July holiday week at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire and the most enjoyable Water Communion Service, led by Ida Silkenat on 3 September, I thought I would tell you a little about well-dressing. This custom is virtually only seen in Derbyshire although I have heard of some flower festivals in Liguria and elsewhere.

In his booklet 'Well-Dressing in Derbyshire' Roy Christian states that the idea almost certainly came from Pagan thanksgiving offerings for water, possibly of Celtic origin, with some Roman influences. Wells and springs are very important in the Derbyshire Peak District, especially the 'White Peak' where the rocks are limestone and porous and rainwater seeps though the rocks to leave the surface dry, hence some dry valleys. You will know of the springs at Buxton. You can get Buxton water at St Ann's Well, Buxton free; the same water you buy in the bottles. A bit far to travel, I know.

The re-introduction of well-dressings took on a Christian stance. The themes were mainly biblical (one is recorded at Tissington in 1758) with the well-dressings being blessed by Christian ministers. Today many of the themes are secular

Factual information gathered from 'Well Dressing in Derbyshire' Roy Christian ©Derbyshire Country Ltd. 1983



Photographs by Margery MacKay

**St Mark's Unitarian Church Edinburgh, also known as Unitarians in Edinburgh,
is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Scottish Charity Number SC014167**

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Search for 'Unitarians in Edinburgh' on

www.facebook.com



Lay Celebrant & Lay Preacher:
Joan Cook
(Available for rites of passage)

WHO'S WHO

Convener: Mary McKenna
Secretary: Margery MacKay
Treasurer: Ali McDonald
Pulpit Secretary: Lesley Hartley
Social Secretary: Lynsey Bailey

Management Committee: Ann Sinclair
Ministry Team: Lesley Hartley
Church Flowers: Mary McKenna
Venue Enquiries: venue@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk
Music: Ailsa Aikenhead

PASTORAL SUPPORT AND CONCERNS

If you know of anyone who has any pastoral concerns, and may like some support, please let us know. In the vestibule, there are paper slips on the table and a box on the ledge by the incoming mail, for such concerns. Alternatively please telephone or email us. Details are below.

Contact details: 0131 659 7600
minister@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk

Waymark

Editor Jane Aaronson
for Unitarians in Edinburgh
Email ja@ednet.co.uk

Waymark is published ten times a year for members and friends of St Mark's. If you wish to receive Waymark by post, a suggested donation of around £15.00 per year towards the cost of publication will always be welcome. For more information please speak to our Treasurer, Ali McDonald.

We welcome contributions, though space is limited, therefore contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor. Email to ja@ednet.co.uk by the 7th of the month. If you cannot send copy electronically, please note that Audrey Simon will type and email material to the editor. Please contact Audrey at St Mark's.

Attendances

July	23	43 (adults) + 2 (children) = 45
July	30	37 + 0 = 37
August	6	31 + 3 = 34
August	13	37 + 0 = 37
August	20	51 + 6 = 57
August	27	32 + 1 = 33
September	3	31 + 8 = 39
September	10	68 + 9 = 77
September	17	49 + 3 = 52

SUNDAY DUTIES AT ST MARK'S

SUNDAY STEWARDS

October 1 Lynsey Bailey 8 Margaret & Richard Ross
15 Ann Sinclair 22 Jill & Tom Stamper 29 John Reid &
Mary McKenna **November** 5 Kirsty Murray

PEACE CANDLE LIGHTING

October 1 Bláthnaid Quinn 8 ICUU 15 Alma Shearer
22 DM 29 James MacDonald Reid
November 5 Lesley Hartley

*International Council of Unitarians and Universalists

WELCOME

October 1 Kris, Calder & Ruth Bartram 8 Ann Sinclair &
Ross Harper 15 Kirsty Murray & Hilary Anderson
22 Ross Harper & Jane Aaronson 29 Amy MacDonald &
Jane Aaronson **November** 5 Lesley & Roger Hartley

COFFEE

October 1 Bláthnaid Quinn & Heather Coates
8 Julie Finneran & Louise Rhodes-Ritchie
15 Rose McDonagh & Lynsey Bailey 22 Lesley &
Roger Hartley 29 Billy Lee & Elizabeth Welsh
November 5 Jill Stamper & Liz Marshall

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

October 1 Amy & Ali McDonald 8 Rachael King &
Tom Stamper 15 Lynsey Bailey & Susanne Urquhart
22 Bláthnaid Quinn & Tom Stamper 29 Amy &
Ali McDonald **November** 5 Rachael King &
Bláthnaid Quinn

FLOWERS

October 1 Sharon Boateng 8 Hilary Anderson
15 Ronnie McNeil 22 Louise Rhodes Ritchie
29 Jane Aaronson **November** 5 Kirstie Reid

Roster of volunteers for St Catharine's Homeless Project



October

6 Elaine Edwards & David McGill
13 Richard Ross & Kris Calder
20 Mary McKenna & Kate Foggo
27 Brian Robertson & Margaret Mackenzie

November

3 Lesley & Roger Hartley

If you would like to be a part of this worthwhile initiative, please speak to Elaine Edwards or email elaine.m.edwards@virginmedia.com

Giving Thanks
by MARY MCKENNA
Convener of Council

As Edinburgh settles back into quieter mode, we can reflect on another successful year at artSpace@StMarks. We had fifty-six performers over the four weeks of the Fringe with over 3,000 audience members visiting our church. Our Fringe involves months of work behind the scenes, by Michael Mulligan negotiating with performers to programme these events. During the Fringe we hire Ross Smith to manage Venue 125 and to provide front of house services. Together their efforts generate over £3,000 income for our community, which is an important contribution towards the upkeep of our premises. We are, however, indebted to St Mark's volunteers who welcome everyone to our venue, serve at the Box Office and usher our audiences in and out of performances. They give us their valuable time and we estimate our eighteen volunteers gifted at least £1,000 of their time to St Mark's to support the Fringe this year.

We are thankful to all the volunteers for their valued support.

Families with young children are at the heart of sustaining this community and two years ago we invested in having a Co-ordinator to develop our Children's Programme. The parents, the programme leaders and the children fed into a review of this pilot, and it has been very successful in enhancing the quality of the children's experience and learning. Council has agreed we should continue the post of Children's Programme Coordinator. We will be recruiting a new Co-ordinator as Ida is undertaking further studies. (See page 6 for further details).

We are thankful that Ida has established the children's programme so soundly.

The search continues for our next minister, though following a review and our Special General Meeting, we have revised our needs to recruit a part-time minister as we wish to complement and develop the resources within our community. In the meantime, Lesley Hartley has arranged a full programme of services, many led by members and friends of St Mark's, some retired ministers; some members of our congregation and our lay celebrant. We are currently exploring the possibility of securing a more regular worship leader for 2018, while the search continues.

We can be thankful that we have so many good people willing to lead services.

Lastly, and most importantly, there are many people in St Mark's who quietly, religiously, give of their time: their skills; and their knowledge and support to our community. They demonstrate this by caring for our people and our building; by keeping us inspired and informed in services and writing; by cherishing our history; and planning for our future. They carry responsibilities on all our behalf and in all of these ways sustain our community.

Many thanks to everyone in our resourceful, beloved community.

Calm Water, Calm Minds
a reflection by AMY McDONALD


On Sunday 3 September five children took part in the St Marks' children's programme. The activities were prepared by Ida Silkenat and themed to link with the water communion service.

We started by reading a story about Buddha, which I believe was also shared in the main service. It talked about one of Buddha's disciples who was unable to collect water for Buddha to drink as the mud from the bottom of the lake had been churned up. After returning to the lake a number of times, the mud eventually settled back to the bottom and the disciple was able to collect some drinking water. Buddha told the disciple, 'Your mind is like the lake. Sometimes it gets churned up and disturbed, but if you let it be, it will settle back down and be calm and clear again.'


We talked with the children about how our thoughts can sometimes feel out of control, but that if we take time to be quiet and still it can help clear our minds and settle down our thoughts. All the children made a 'calm bottle' to help them with this, a bottle with water, glue and glitter. When shaken, all the glitter gets churned up but if you leave it a while the glitter settles back to the bottom of the bottle. Watching the glitter settle is wonderfully calming.

Small children can have pretty big feelings, and it must be overwhelming for them to try to wrap their heads around our complex world. It's great that awareness of mindfulness is building; it's a tool the children will need as they grow. I'll be the first to admit that being quiet and still doesn't come naturally to all of us though. There's also room for lots of noise and joyful chaos in life, as evidenced by the children's peals of laughter whilst stirring the glitter and glue and the energetic game of chase which followed the creation of the calm bottles!

It was great to share this activity with the children – they absolutely loved the mess of it all - and my own kids have been proudly showing us their 'stormy' and 'calm' bottles all week. What a wonderful way of helping the children gently reflect on mental wellbeing – giving them a tangible tool and a new vocabulary to help describe their thoughts and feelings.



**Chalice Singers
Rehearsals**



If you enjoy singing, do come and rehearse with us. You don't need to be able to read music

We will meet in the upper hall from 10.00-10.45
on the following Sundays

October
1
15
29

November
5

Reflections on Water

by *IDA SILKENAT*



While scientists are still working to figure out the precise mechanisms through which this spectacularly improbable thing called life came to be, there is a general consensus that the chemical processes which led to the formation genetic material, which became organised into cells and the earliest living organisms, took place in water. It is hypothesized that life on Earth existed only in water for millions of years before evolving to move onto land. This watery planet is the only one known to host life, and when scientists search for life elsewhere in the universe, they focus on areas where there is evidence of water in some form, either now or in the past. Ellen Stofan, former Chief Scientist at The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, has said, 'We think water is key to life as we know it.' I have read that water is both a polar molecule and a solvent. I don't claim to understand exactly what that means, but for reasons that surpass my admittedly limited understanding of science, these properties are apparently what make water critical to the chemical reactions that promote life. All this to say that water is, quite literally, the source of life.

We come from the water. Even now, as land dwellers, when new human life grows inside a womb, it develops in a sac filled with amniotic fluid, of which water is a primary component. We are made of water. When we are born, our bodies are around 75% water. The average human adult body is composed of 50-65% water. We are constantly reminded to drink more water, to stay hydrated, as water is vital to almost all of our bodily functions.

The first civilizations developed around water, in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in the Indus River valley in what is now Pakistan and northwest India, along the Nile in Egypt and the Yellow River in China. The development of agriculture was the key to humans' ability to shift from a nomadic way of life, to settle down in one place, and form societies. Understanding the water cycle was essential to farming. Harnessing water power and developing ways to transport it efficiently over long distances led to the spread of civilization. Water brought humans together into settled communities.

Given these rather academic scientific and historical

connections between humans and water, it is no wonder that water has become so significant to us symbolically, metaphorically and spiritually as well. We are intuitively drawn to water. In our offices, we slip away from our desks to 'gather round the water cooler.' When we have time to get away from the daily grind, we often head to beaches, rivers, lakes and ponds as places for recreation, relaxation, renewal, and connection to nature. Some people find that listening to recorded sounds of water helps them to fall asleep at night. We refer to the flow of our thoughts as a 'stream of consciousness.' We speak of the tides of life with its ebbs and flows. We are said to have a thirst for knowledge, understanding or meaning.

One of the most obvious uses of water in religious practice within our own society is the Christian spiritual cleansing of baptism. As Unitarians, we pay homage to our Christian roots when we use water in baby blessings. Ritual cleansing is also important to Muslims who wash certain parts of their body before praying or handling the Quran. In Buddhism, there is a story in which Buddha is thirsty and asks his disciple to go to a nearby lake to fetch him some water. When the disciple arrives at the lake, he finds a bullock cart driving through it and churning up the mud from the bottom of the lake. The disciple returns to Buddha and explains that now the water is unfit to drink. Sometime later, Buddha sends the disciple back to the lake to fetch some water, but the disciple finds the water still too dirty to drink. By the third time Buddha sends the disciple back to the lake, the sediment has settled and the water is clear. Buddha tells the disciple that our minds are like the lake. Sometimes they get agitated like the churned up muddy water, but if we allow them to settle, they will become calm and clear again. In Hinduism, every temple contains a large reservoir of water, a temple tank. Many religions hold certain bodies of water as sacred and attribute them with special cleansing or healing properties.

But just as water has the power to cleanse, heal, and restore, it also has magnificent destructive powers as well. Tsunamis,

(photograph is a view over Loch Faskally, Pitlochry)

floods, and hurricanes can wipe away entire towns. Recently we have witnessed the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey in Texas. South Asia is accustomed to the monsoon season, but this year it brought unusually high levels of rainfall resulting in flooding and many deaths. Three weeks ago, torrential rains in Sierra Leone triggered a massive mudslide, killing hundreds and leaving thousands homeless. Some of the flood deaths in Pakistan have been attributed to electrocution as floodwater in urban areas became electrified.

As I was preparing for this service last year, the news was filled with pictures and stories of refugees, including small children, drowning as they attempted to cross the water in unsafe vessels in search of a better life. The same rain we need to water our fields and fill our reservoirs can also destroy our homes and take our lives. And when water doesn't come, we suffer from droughts; too little water causes as much harm as too much. As much as we can find serenity in water, we can also be left feeling broken and powerless.

This duality is in keeping with the nature of life and spirituality and plays out clearly in the Book of Genesis. Water features prominently in the creation story which opens the Bible. God hovers over the waters; he creates a vault between the water to separate water from water; he gathers the waters under the sky in one place to create the land and the seas; he 'created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it;' and at every stage, he saw that it was good. But at some point, parts of his creation, namely humans, cease to be good, and only a

CHRISTINA HAMILTON contributed the Chalice lightings words. A number of people brought water from places significant to them, and, during the service, explained why these places were important and special for them. MARY MCKENNA's offering gives a flavour of what other people shared. The water was poured into a communal vase, and was used after the service, by the children, to water the indoor plants in the sanctuary.

CHRISTINA HAMILTON, Each day I contemplate how my Unitarian faith brings me closer to understanding the web of life, our being interconnected with each other, with animals, with nature and the elements.

I thought about one of those elements, water, a lot this week, and about this morning's service. I've always enjoyed it as one of my favourites in the UU calendar. We are so fortunate to be able to bring water from our summers away, lakes and rivers close to us, and from our own kitchens. It is a joy to present our water at St. Marks as snippets of memories we've made or the lives we lead.

In other respects, water, especially this week has been front and centre in our minds and in our hearts.

Today I light the Peace Candle for those in Texas, Mumbai, and other places in the world who have watched floods wash away their homes, belongings, businesses, and seen the water take lives of loved ones and strangers.

For the children who are scared and don't understand what's happening, and the elderly who have lost all they worked for to be faced with nothing. For the disabled and ill who feel trapped and afraid.

This devastation has reduced many thousands of us interconnected human beings to other kinds of floods: Floods of tears. Tears of sadness at the shock and horror, and glimmers of hope when we see tears of joy from families finding a loved one safe.

May the light of our Peace Candle reach around the world and into the hearts of all souls affected by floods and may our flame of peace and love help light the way for those around the world who are suffering.

few chapters later, God uses the same water which was good in the beginning to wipe out much of what he has made in a great flood.

The language of human difficulty is also filled with water metaphors. We may be inundated with work or tasks or difficult things to deal with. When we are frustrated or stuck, we may feel stagnant. Or perhaps we are feeling depleted or uncreative because our well has run dry. If we are lonely and isolated, we may feel like an island, surrounded by water, separate, cut off from others. When we feel grief, we may cry rivers of tears.

But even the destructive powers of water have left behind natural wonders and places of great beauty. Rivers and glaciers have carved out the land and made magnificent canyons, valleys, and rock formations. Similarly, painful experiences which wear away at us when we go through them, can leave in their wake beauty, peace, and deeper understanding. These are the canyons of our soul.

And finally, after the storm, there is the rainbow, nothing more than light shining through water droplets lingering in the air, but a source of beauty and awe, and a symbol of hope.

*Copyright Ida Silkenat
used by permission.*

Given in St Mark's on 3 September 2017.

Ida Silkenat is a member of St Mark's.

MARY MCKENNA, This water is from the River Forth, once our gateway to the world.

Today John and I have the privilege to walk across the latest bridge to span our river, the new and very beautiful Queensferry Crossing.

As Unitarians, we prefer to build bridges rather than to build walls.

We are interested in breaking down barriers, facilitating communication and seeing things from another's perspective.

We appreciate the beauty of nature, and using science and technology to enhance our world, rather than to threaten it.

The new Queensferry Crossing is a good example of this: it complements its neighbouring bridges from previous centuries and aspires to serve our communities in Edinburgh and Fife for many years to come.



Photo by Mary McKenna

Applications are invited

St Mark's Unitarian Church

Children's Programme Co-ordinator

5 hours a week
£12.00 per hour

After a successful pilot we wish to appoint a Children's Programme Co-ordinator, to continue the development of the spiritual programme for children and young people. This role will support the current programme leaders, parents, children and young people who participate in the programme, and promote St Mark's as a family-friendly community.

(This is a self-employed position and subject to a PVG check)

Please contact lesley.j.hartley@gmail.com for more information.

The Good Cause in St Mark's in October

ST CATHARINE'S HOMELESS PROJECT

The good cause in October continues to be The St Catharine's Convent Homeless Project.

The homeless project gives support to the homeless in Edinburgh, the number of whom is increasing all the time. As well as serving over 90,000 free meals a year, the project offers a huge range of services, from guidance with job applications; help for support groups for addicts; to counselling and help in seeking medical assistance.

The project is used by up to two hundred people a day. These range from long-term homeless people who are sleeping rough or staying in hostels around the city, to old age pensioners who bus in from their flats in the Edinburgh estates for a meal and some company.

On Friday evenings, two people from St Mark's help serving the meals.

If you would like to be a part of this worthwhile initiative, please speak to Elaine Edwards elaine.m.edwards@virginmedia.com

Poetry Reading for Pleasure

on

Sunday 8 October at 13.00

Come and share some favourite poems

Want to know more?

Please speak to Margery MacKay

Mindfulness @ Lunchtime

meets at St Mark's at 12.15 on Tuesdays

Interbeing Buddhist Meditation

meets at St Mark's every Thursday, usually at 19.15

For further information speak to Jon Bagust

www.facebook.com/mindfulnessatlunchtime

Halloween at St Mark's

on 27 October

Doors 18:30 open -TST onstage 19.00

Featuring an 'in-church' screening of

John Carpenter's 1987 Horror classic

'Prince Of Darkness'

With live music support from
TST: The Southern Tenant

Tickets and more information

<http://www.wegotickets.com/event/414847>

A future event for your diaries

ST MARK'S BOOKMARKS

will meet on 12 November
after the service
at 13.00

(bring your lunch)

*This group is open to all, and we shall be
meeting every 4-6 weeks*

The book we shall be discussing is;
'Mennonite in a Little Black Dress:
A Memoir of Going Home' by Rhoda Janzen

For more details, contact Joan Cook
joancook@hotmail.co.uk

Festival Fringe Memories

EVELYN TAYLOR and PETER BOLLAND respond to a request, in August/September Waymark, for memories of early Edinburgh Festival Fringe shows at St Mark's. ROBERT BLACKWOOD writes about the experience of putting on a show at venue 125.

EVELYN TAYLOR reports that she 'was so excited to read the history of St Marks as a Festival Fringe Venue'. 'My memories relate to a number of years in the mid "noughties" I think when a series of performances appeared that were written and directed by Wally Shaw. They were performed by members and friends of St Mark's, including me. I gained a lifelong admiration for the enlightened Scots philosopher, David Hume, and trod the boards for the first time since my schooldays in a number of small parts, getting acquainted with aspects of life of that great man, and of Adam Smith, his friend'.

'I also remember an extremely moving presentation of a "chamber opera" by Benjamin Britten (I think) -Abraham and Isaac- by a group from either Bath or Wells, one year, that Rev Andrew Hill believed to be one of the little gems that crop up unexpectedly in every Festival.'

PETER BOLLAND reports that his memory is 'that Rev Andrew Hill asked me firstly in summer 1993 (or '94) to 'physically' supervise the St. Mark's fringe shows (with David Hume programming). Being a former teacher in maths/physics (secondary/high school in Germany) and a skilled hobby-musician, I was a student on the teacher-training course for Rudolf-Steiner-teachers, at that time. I found that the responsibility as festival/caretaker was a rather welcome duty/responsibility for me during the summer holidays. I remember during the whole Edinburgh Festival Fringe (more or less on my own) I did what is now done by Ross, together with a reliable number of volunteers. Compared to now, there were fewer people attending, but I remember how long the Fringe lasted and when the first and the last show (at St Mark's on each day) was. I believe my influence at that time was indeed positive for St Mark's, for the performers, and as well for the attenders. And it provided me with an important 'Erfolgs-Erlebniss' (in English 'feeling of achievement'); but the meaning for me is a 'feeling of successfully achieving to do something really important for other people in our society and time'.

'I do still remember the year, when an Australian group, had a rather wild show – including the use of our organ (rather wildly) – ending round about midnight (even on Saturdays). And on Sundays we still had a Sunday service! On a few occasions Elsa came on Saturday at midnight, to assist me in preparing the building for Sunday'.

'I recall that my activities as responsible festival/caretaker continued well into the time when Edward Prince took over as the programmer'.

Rae Guthrie It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Rae Guthrie on 8 August.

Rae and her husband, David, were members of the St Marks congregation over a span of thirty years.

Their daughter, Heather, recalls that, following their move to Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire in 1993, David chaired the Lincolnshire Unitarian Development Group in Lincoln which brought the Lincoln and Boston Unitarian congregations together.

A funeral service was held on Thursday 31 August at GreenAcres, Colney, Norwich. We send our love and sincere sympathy to Heather and her sister, Fiona, and their families.

My Edinburgh Experience by **ROBERT BLACKWOOD** actor in, and writer/co-director of, *The Gin Chronicles* series

Performing as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was a great honour this year, though the city itself seemed quieter than usual.

When putting on a show, that doesn't have much national exposure, at a venue that is slightly off the beaten track, you need to have your wits about you, and be alert to opportunities to get audiences in, alongside your company's tried-and-tested methods.

Casting carefully and assembling a team ready to do all the things demanded of an Edinburgh show is vital, and then getting inspired, rather than distracted, by seeing old friends, new work and cheaper beer prices. This year, walking up Arthur's Seat provided me with an activity that freed my mind to think without getting caught up too much in minutiae.

When coming up every year, as we have done for three years, and will do for another three, I feel a responsibility to my company to grow in thoughtful ways and create a business model that can thrive in the most competitive theatrical environment on the planet. A lot of shows do so successfully: the goal is to be one of them.

As a comic actor, I derive so much joy from doing the thing I love. For example, we had a brand new foley artist this year, who hadn't done anything like that role before, and playing off her as she developed, was a wonderful pleasure. The other development was finding a company manager who really simplified and troubleshooted a lot of day-to-day stuff for me. She is worth her weight in gold. This makes me happy.

(See page 8 for David McGill's review of this year's production *The Gin Chronicles* series).

Teens and Tweens Group

We meet from 11.00 -12.00 noon
in the upper hall on 29 October

**In a departure from our usual third Sunday
time, we will meet
on the LAST Sunday in October.**

The Bereavement Support Group will meet on Saturday 7 October

at 11.00

The Bereavement Group offers support to anyone
suffering a loss through bereavement,
separation or estrangement

Please speak to Jane Aaronson ja@ednet.co.uk

Venue 125 - artSpace@StMarks - Edinburgh Festival Fringe Reviews

Ann Sinclair, Lesley and Roger Hartley and David McGill report on this year's events

'Yet another highly successful and enjoyable Festival Fringe period at venue 125' states Ross, our venue manager. He continues by remarking that this year the events lasted four days longer than last year. (See Ann Sinclair's report below for more figures). The footfall was up on last year; there were 25% more shows - four to five events each day - six at the weekend. Ross says that some artistes are interested in bringing new shows to our venue next year. Congratulations to The Edinburgh Renaissance Band who were honoured in the Three Weeks Editors' Awards. Ross concludes by thanking all the volunteers for their dedicated support. In particular, he thanks David McGill for sustaining him with delicious food contributions!

ANN SINCLAIR reports This year, our 35th year as a Festival Fringe venue, was probably our best ever. All of our shows were good. Ross, our venue manager, who oversees artSpace@StMarks during the Fringe, keeps a note of audience figures, and reckons our average audience was fifty-two [last year it was forty-two, in 2015 it was thirty-seven] and that our total audience exceeded 3000.

Eighteen volunteers from the congregation acted as ushers or looked after the box office over forty-two sessions each lasting around three to four hours. Their gifts of support and time ensured that our audiences and artistes received a warm welcome and helped to enhance our income. A lot of Waymarks were taken away by our visitors during August. Many artistes praised our venue, its acoustics and the support and friendliness they experienced and a number of them wish to come back next year.

Our thanks go to the artistes, our Fringe Manager Michael, Ross, our volunteers, those who look after our premises by caretaking and cleaning - and to all who helped to make our 2017 Fringe such a success.

Michael is already dealing with enquiries for 2018, and Ross will be coming back again next August. Please let me know as soon as you wish if you would like to help as a volunteer next year.

Review of Terra Nova Piano Duo

ROGER HARTLEY reports

Piano for four hands. Programme by two young French artists, winners of the 2016 International Piano Competition in Brest.

Elodie Griscelli and Pierre-Bastien Midali are the Duo.

St Marks sanctuary was silvery in the rainy evening gloaming, but the stage glowed golden.

Elodie and Pierre exploited the full range and power of our lovely piano. Their sound was bright and clean. The Hungarian Dances (Brahms) were romantic and at times liquid and icy, like a new film score for Dr Zhivago.

They played as one person. It must be so difficult to keep exactly in time. Their performance was very dynamic: jangling loud and whisper soft, flicker quick then languidly slow.

They communicated with looks, at times staring straight into each other's faces also with touch, their arms seeming to intertwine. The playing is intimate, as if they were lovers. They crossed over into each other's playing space occasionally sliding off the stool and swapping sides. Elodi playing the low end of the keyboard then Pierre. He looks at her hands, then her eyes, he nods.

The Slavonic Dances (Dvorak) sound wintry, with beer drinking and dancing, here a polka, there a skater. Apparently, these dances were inspired by Brahms Hungarian Dances.

Then we are listening to the Four Seasons in Buenos Aires (Piazzolla). A slow and measured start then a segment like a railway journey. He reaches into the piano and plays the strings like a harp. Complex and in places atonal with a definite South American flavour; tango and jazz. This gives the Duo an opportunity to demonstrate their superb musicianship.

The Gin Chronicles at Sea

DAVID MCGILL reports

It appears that Edinburgh has now become the 'Gin' capital of the world, and for that we can blame the Misfits of London (no, not Boris Johnson, David Davis and Liam Fox thank goodness) for introducing us to a third helping of 'The Gin Chronicles'. But just what would our dear old ruined mothers have thought of it? They would have loved it, because this is radio comedy at its best and there you are in the studio watching the adventure unfold.

This year the Misfits take us on a gin-filled trip to sea (the evening even begins with a free pre-show glass of Edinburgh Gin and tonic). This one-hour show of non-stop gin action is still flavoured with a dash of Paul Temple, a soupcon of the Goons and a generous helping of PG Wodehouse, but to the mixture has been added a nautical flavour. With another original script by Robert Blackwood this 'vintage radio-style comedy' has a running time of one hour, endless sound effects, and laughs a-plenty.

The year is again 1947 and our hero John Jobling and his housemaid Doris Golightly, exhausted from their previous adventure in Scotland, are on a relaxing cruise to New York, only to discover that a secret family recipe (for gin of course – what else?) has been smuggled on board and must be recovered at all costs, even it means donning diving suits and plunging to the depths of the Atlantic.

In true radio-play style the audience are invited to add to the sound effects with applause, cheers and gasps as the hapless Jobling encounters a vast range of characters, all played by a team of talented actors and accompanied by what must be the busiest sound effects man in radio broadcast history. Not content with just making lots of funny noises, the players perform the accompanying actions to hilarious effect.

This is surely the type of show that the Edinburgh Fringe was created for. It is original, quick-fire and very funny without a hint of smut (Radio 4 producers take note). You could take your grannie and your children to see this. The players, sorry, Misfits of London, are a very talented troupe and surely, we'll hear more about them in the future. This is the third episode of The Gin Chronicles. Will there be an episode four? I for one hope so.

The Gin Chronicles: A Scottish Adventure is an 'Interrupt the Routine' production and the 'Misfits of London' are: Robert Blackwood, Arnold Wilson, Evelina Johnson, Susanna Claire, Marjorie Watling, Hannah Parker, Sir Charles Warminster, Ben Owara, Sylvia Cadogan-West and Pamela Flanagan.

Venue 125 - artSpace@StMarks - Edinburgh Festival Fringe Reviews

LESLEY HARTLEY reports on two Festival Fringe events at St Mark's

Elgar Enigmas

As part of the front-of-house team for the Fringe, it was a privilege to hear many snippets of excellent performances, and also to receive some complimentary tickets!

A last-minute decision to go and see Elspeth Wyllie's piano performance was a decision well-made.

This was a delightful concert featuring a short suite of music by Nicholas Sackman and then a set of Variations on an original Theme by Elgar. I've seen Elspeth play before as she is a member of the Amalie Trio that has played in Edinburgh University lunchtime concerts.

'Charm' was the theme for this hour of music. The Sackman suite was cheeky, unpredictable and most apt for a Fringe performance. I hope I get the opportunity to hear it again at a future concert.

Elgar's Variations were wonderful. They were full of passion, mood, humour and an insight into Elgar's world. With references to themes from his other works, Elgar wrote these variations with cryptic clues about his 'friends within' – for instance – variation 11 "G.R.S" – the organist of Hereford cathedral – challenged Elgar to set the scene to music of his bulldog Dan slipping down a river bank, paddling upstream, clambering out and shaking himself dry. And he did!

Through her beautiful playing, Elspeth brought out individual elements of the music that were not necessarily to the fore in the original orchestral version. Her performance was beguiling. The audience (and the walls of St. Mark's) were royally treated.

Mary, Queen of Scots

And this was royal treatment of a historical theme. A most exhilarating and moving performance by Louise Macdonald and Ingrid Sawyers. One of several Fringe performances this year that had been supported by crowd funding, this was a bold project to marry Mary's own words with newly commissioned music and Schumann lieder to tell her story.

The songs were performed in German, French and English; use of the projector allowed the audience a translation. I had a particular favourite – Schumann's – 'Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes' (On the birth of her son) was simply beautiful. A gentle piece.

Eddie McGuire composed 'Three songs on the stanzas of Mary, Queen of Scots, written on the death of her husband, King Francis II'. He worked with Louise to use Mary's poems, written in French, to depict her solitude at this period as a young widow.

Probably the most dramatic and compelling of the pieces was that with music by Judith Bingham which illustrated the violence of the Rizzio murder; almost an operatic moment and certainly an operatic performance.

Having recently seen Mary's last letter at the National Library of Scotland, I felt a particular interest in the last group of songs as they portrayed the tension felt as Mary prepared for the day of her death, praying for God to rescue her. A musical score by Dee Isaacs showed the agony of the tension in the waiting.

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari LESLEY & ROGER HARTLEY report

Hot on the heels of last year's successful late-night showings of 'Nostrodamus', artSpace@StMarks was at it again with two performances of the black and white film 'The Cabinet of Dr Caligari' accompanied by live music from Gladstone's Bag.

This outstanding German expressionist film from 1920 - a film once seen never forgotten - has become a cult classic, partly because it was constrained by a small budget, so that they had to film in daylight and used scenery painted on paper. Even the shadows were painted in, which gave the film an unearthly quality that added to the sinister atmosphere. It tells the story of an insane hypnotist who uses a somnambulist to commit murders. Some critics hail it as the first true horror film. It introduced audiences to a story with a twist in its tail.

Although the film was not an instant success, it gained in popularity and was even shown in one Paris cinema for seven years!

Our large audiences were very appreciative and thoroughly enjoyed the mood-making of the instrumental sextet. Being a musician for a silent movie requires much stamina and dexterity. Laurence Dunn is to be congratulated for his expert leadership on the St Mark's stage.

The silent movie audiences will be looking forward to the Fringe 2018 offering.

Rev Marti Keller, *the affiliated minister with the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation and an independent consultant on congregational ministry, led worship on 16 July. Her theme was the poet, Emily Dickinson. We were fortunate that afterwards she also led our Poetry for Pleasure group on the same theme. A poem by Marti Keller will appear in a future issue of Waymark. CORINNA TYAGI, who attended from Glasgow Unitarians, reports.*

A visit to Edinburgh Unitarian Church, from Glasgow, was something to be excited about. A disabled Glaswegian's visit to the Unitarian Church to be witness to a service by American poet Marti Keller, then to discover that the service contained much about the subject of my favourite female poet Emily Dickinson, was such a reward.

Passing the familiar crags of the castle, my friend and I stepped up into the church catching our breath at the decorative Victorian design of the hushed interior. This was entirely unexpected to me as the Glasgow church resembles a layered series of utilitarian offices. It was with great respect that we moved into the spare wood pews and the poet in the pulpit nodded sweetly as she named the next hymn.

I sat back with great contentment to listen to the elegant lady talk on a subject with which I was well acquainted but as I gazed with awe at the glory and art of rococo portions on pillars, I concluded that perhaps Emily would rather have approved a meadowed flower field as a fitting scene for her ideas.

As the one o'clock gun sounded we rallied around a laden table for lunch and a poetry session where I was thrilled to be asked to read from one of many books on Emily's poems. Eating home-made cakes and drinking tea, my neighbour turned out to be a charming Japanese gentleman. He was, like me, keen on the form of Haiku poetry. We had a very enjoyable discussion on Haiku. He, like me, found it unbelievable that in the course of day to day life, we met very few people who knew about both Haiku and Emily Dickinson.

I would love further visits to the Edinburgh church if it were at all possible. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming.

OCTOBER IN ST MARK'S

Every Sunday 11.00 Church Service and Coffee
Every Tuesday 12.15 Mindfulness@Lunchtime

OCTOBER

Sunday	1	10.00–10.45	Chalice Singers Group Rehearsal (see page 3)
Saturday	7	11.00	Bereavement Group. email ja@ednet.co.uk (see page 7)
Sunday	8	13.00-14.00	Poetry Reading for Pleasure (see page 6)
Sunday	15	10.00–10.45	Chalice Singers Group Rehearsal (see page 3)
Friday	20	from 19.00	Bring & Share Supper (see below for more details)
Friday	27	19.00	Screening of John Carpenter's horror Classic, 'Prince of Darkness' (see page 6)
Saturday	28	11.00 – 12.00	Waymark mailing. Email ja@ednet.co.uk if you would like to help
Sunday	29	15.00 TBC	Meadows Chamber Orchestra Concert

NOVEMBER

Sunday	5	10.00–10.45	Chalice Singers Group Rehearsal (see page 3)
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SUNDAYS OCTOBER

Services are at 11 am in the church, with coffee and conversation in the upper hall afterwards. Children sit with their parents for the opening part of the service, and then follow their own programme.

The good cause in October will be St Catharine's Homeless Project.

Sunday October 1 Rev John Clifford

'If You Change Nothing, Nothing Will Change'

As the theme for his sermon, John Clifford will be using Luther's courageous posting of ninety-five theses for debate as background to the idea that 'If you change nothing, nothing will change'.

Rev John Clifford is a retired Unitarian minister, a member of St Mark's and a past Unitarian General Assembly President

Sunday October 8 Rev Dr Rob Whiteman

Autumn

Rob Whiteman will reflect on aspects of Autumn, including what it means for us as a season in the year, and what it means for us as we get older.

Rev Dr Rob Whiteman is the minister at Dundee Unitarians and a former member of St Mark's

Sunday October 15 Rev Peter Fairbrother

To the Power of One

'You have looked at so many doors with longing, wondering if your life lay on the other side. For today, choose the door that opens to the inside. Travel the most ancient way of all: the path that leads you to the centre of your life. No map but the one you make yourself.'

An invitation to journey within... and to journey without. A gentle service honouring the importance of 'self-worship'.

Rev Peter Fairbrother is an Interfaith minister

Sunday 22 October Rev Jennifer Docherty

The Hero's Journey

Can the idea of the "hero's journey" help in the everyday, even when the nature of our journey might be hidden from us? Can it help us obstacles more gracefully, and hold to our purpose in life?

Rev Jennifer Docherty is an Interfaith minister

Sunday 29 October Lesley Hartley

'Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?'

Lines from one of our hymns form questions for us all about what Unitarianism has been and is.

Lesley Hartley is a member of St Mark's and our pulpit secretary

Sunday 5 November Joan Cook

A Service for All Souls

An opportunity to remember those no longer with us, especially those we have lost in the past year. During the service, there will be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of those we have lost. If you have lost someone in the past year, and would like their name to be included, please let Joan Cook know. Email joancook@hotmail.co.uk

Joan Cook, our Lay Celebrant and Lay Preacher, is a member of St Mark's and President of the Scottish Unitarian Association



Autumn Potluck Supper
The nights may be drawing in, and the weather turning chilly, but you are warmly invited to our **Autumn Potluck Supper at St Mark's on Friday 20 October**. We'll be gathering in the hall from 19.00 onwards

Bring a dish to share: savoury or sweet, homemade or shop-bought - all will be gratefully received. Wine and soft drinks will be provided for a small donation. Whether you're a newcomer or long-time attender at St Mark's, we hope to see you there! More information from Lynsey Bailey bailelynsey@gmail.com