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UK Community News

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Visit to Lord Mayor of Belfast

THREE MEMBERS of Belfast Bahá'í Community recently visited the new Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Alex Maskey. Councillor Maskey is the first Sein Fein Lord Mayor to be elected. The group were very warmly welcomed and were able to inform the Mayor of some of the Bahá'í teachings, and explained that there is a very active and diverse community that is involved in many aspects of Belfast life. He asked various questions and seemed interested and appreciative of the teachings.

He was then presented “The Crown of Beauty”. This was his first contact with the Bahá'í Faith. When the area of education came up, the group was able to mention the George Townshend Bahá'í Sunday School. He said that he would welcome an invitation to attend it in the future as it was in his constituency.



Pippa Cookson, Susan Agahi and Tony Sherwani with the Lord mayor of Belfast, Councillor Alex Maskey

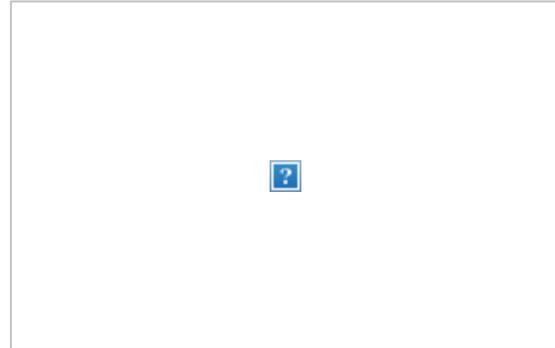
Blaina hosts jazz legend, Doc Holladay

FROM OCTOBER 9-12, the Abbas family in Blaina, hosted jazz legend “Doc” Holladay, the saxophonist who has played with the greatest jazz musicians, such as Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington.

He gave presentations at Ebbw Vale College, Coedcae Junior School and Brynmawr School, the Cardiff Breakwell School as well as a press interview and two evenings with Doc at Parrot Row.



New name for Thomas Breakwell School in Barnet



Children from The North London Thomas Breakwell School performing the life of Badi

ON SEPTEMBER 22, children's classes in Barnet took on a new form. The school, which has been running for four years, has now been turned into a community school. The new name is “The North London Thomas Breakwell School”.

The school currently has four classes for children, providing a wide range of teaching programmes including music, drama and art. There is also a study circle for parents and friends.

Last year the children participated in a school visit to the Guardian's Resting Place. Also, at the end of last term, the children performed a wonderful production on the life of Badi.

If you would like more information or a school brochure please contact the Director

—
Mrs Alae, via the Journal.

His music, his warm personality and love for the Faith and humanity impressed everyone he met and his energy helped to lift spirits to such a level that the family was sad to see him go, but thank him for all he has done.

Marvin “Doc” Holladay is the author of **Life, On the Fence** which chronicles his own life story and charts the evolution over fifty years of jazz music in the United States.



Jazz legend, “Doc” Holladay, at one of his presentations

Sacred Spaces – the first interfaith conference to be held in Bath

IN A TRULY collaborative effort, members of local faith communities worked together to organise the first Interfaith Conference to be held in the City of Bath, on September 28, 2002. Planning had begun in October 2001 on the initiative of Bath Interfaith Group, and with the support and encouragement of the United Religions Initiative. Following so soon after the dreadful happenings in September that year, we wanted this to become a demonstration of solidarity among peoples of differing faiths – including those most at odds with each other in some parts of the world. Many enriching experiences came through the planning meetings: when Christian, Muslim, Jew, Quaker, Buddhist, Bahá’í and “New Age” representatives worked together, meeting in each other’s homes, getting to know each other, and sharing the worries and successes as plans progressed.



Members of Bath Interfaith Group. Jane Aldred is second from the right

The theme of the conference, “Sacred Spaces”, was addressed by our keynote speaker, Martin Palmer, Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC), who spoke about his work with The Sacred Land Project, which seeks to conserve or create spaces that are cherished by their local communities, and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) whose programme of religiously-based environmental projects is world-wide. Later, Martin led participants on a walking tour of sacred sites in the city of Bath.

Farhat Hussein, Researcher in Islamic Architecture and History, spoke on Islamic architecture. We learned that mosque design results from harmony between art and architecture, incorporating certain key features: aligned with the direction of the Qiblah, enclosing a space devoted to prayer, an area for ablutions, another for social gatherings, and adorned with a minaret for calling the faithful to prayer. Although designs may differ around the world, they will all have these basic features, and will all be embellished with beautiful calligraphy, using quotations from the Qur’án, and geometrical mosaics rather than figurative decoration (which is proscribed by the Qur’án for sacred buildings). Throughout its history, Islam has respected the sacred places of other religions: even in countries of Muslim ascendancy, such as Syria, there has been no desecration of churches, temples or synagogues.

The morning ended with Peter Hulme’s description of a very modern sacred space enclosed by the Bahá’í House of Worship (Mashriqu’l-Adhkár) near Delhi – the so-called Lotus Temple. Mashriqu’l-Adhkár means “Dawning Place of the Praise of God”, and the concept embraces the idea of the House of Worship representing a spiritual “powerhouse” in which the scriptures of all religions are honoured, surrounded by dependencies (hospice, school, orphanage etc) open to all humanity. Peter explained how the lotus design was chosen as a symbol of Indian culture and spirituality, transcending barriers of culture, religion, caste and region. He described the unique problems of construction which had to be solved, because of this design and the physical environment in which it was being constructed. Incredibly, the House of Worship was built over nine years, using traditional construction methods and local skills: excavation of the rock was achieved without machinery; the “petals” of the canopy contain no straight lines and were moulded from wood, filled with concrete and later faced with white marble; the special implements used achieved

concrete and later faced with white marble, the age-old implements used achieved remarkable accuracy to modern standards.

This exposition of the physical concept of sacred spaces left us ready to explore other dimensions of the topic in the afternoon sessions. Delegates experienced the Buddhist concept of the “sacred space within” with a meditation guided by a Zen Buddhist Monk. Members of the local Bahá’í community demonstrated how an ordinary meeting room can be transformed to provide an atmosphere conducive to contemplation of the sacred. The workshops exploring art and spirituality led us on a voyage of self-discovery through expression in paint, or creation of our very own clay island-world. Meanwhile local peace group “PACEM” facilitated a discussion launching an ambitious project to found a quiet space dedicated to World Peace within the city.

The diversity of the day, in terms of the presentations and our experiences, touched us all and was enriched by the contributions from people of many different faiths. We shared commonality and learned from each other, without feeling threatened in our own beliefs.

The conference was attended by 60-80 people, in the presence of the Mayor of Bath, local MP Don Foster and other civic dignitaries.

Bath Interfaith Group offers sincere thanks for financial support from the United Religions Initiative, and the generous use of venues from the Charter Trustees of the City of Bath and Bath Society of Friends.

Jane Aldred

Nottingham Bahá’í School Quiz

Do you know...

...the name of the campaign against the Bábís in which their resistance was described by the beloved Guardian as: “... *invested with a sombre glory unsurpassed by any episode of a like nature in the records of the Heroic Age of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh*”?

...the subterfuge, recognised as: “...*wholly justifiable and indeed commendable by Shí’ah Islám that the Seven Martyrs of Tíhrán refused to use to save their lives*”?

...how many verses the Báb wrote in a few hours in Isfáhán in an exposition on the first letter of the súrih of Va’l-‘Asr?

The contestants in a quiz on the first five chapters of God Passes By held at Nottingham Bahá’í School on Sunday, November 10 certainly did.

When the youth attending the weekly sessions of the school said that they wished to learn the early history of the Faith, their tutor, Jo Pearce, agreed to lead them in an intensive study of Shoghi Effendi’s great work. Beginning in September, they had reached the end of part 1, The Ministry of the Báb, by half-term. Jo decided that a good way for the members of his class (Amy Miller, Darius Bradbury and Roshan Sabet) to test their knowledge would be to take part in a quiz against a team representing the adults of the Nottingham area. Abigail Cooles, Ismael Velasco and Sandra Jenkins bravely agreed to take up the challenge. Their team was referred to as “the Scholars”, though the members made no claims to scholarship in this field.

With a mixture of team, individual and “buzzer” questions, there was fierce competition, with the audience (more than a dozen of the regular participants in the adult sessions of the school) not slow to show which side they were backing. Under the firm (some might say rottweiler-like) control of the quizmaster, Peter Jenkins, there were two forty-minute sessions, a combined devotional for all age groups being held between them (the normal pattern of the school’s classes). At the halfway mark, the Students had a two-point lead over the Scholars, the equivalent of one more question correctly answered. Through the second half the lead kept swinging to and fro, but come the end the Scholars won by 74 points to 71, representing correct responses to 85% of the 92 questions asked. All present agreed that this was a tremendous achievement, especially by the youngsters, whose knowledge of the history of the Faith was based on little more than six weeks of study, compared with the years of acquired knowledge of the adults. The youth vowed revenge in the quiz on the next

part of the book.

The morning ended with the usual happy socialising over tea and toast.

All are welcome at the Nottingham Bahá'í School. If you would like details or a copy of the quiz questions, please email: p.jenkins6@ntlworld.com.

Answers to the three questions at the top: 1. Zanján (p. 46 of the 1965 US edition)
2. Taqíyyih, the lip-denial of one's faith in the hour of peril. (p. 47) 3. "...verses that equalled in number a third of the Qur'án" (p. 14)

Our World, Your Future – Bath International Evening

OVER THE years that Bath Bahá'í community has been involved in this event, we have come to see it as marking the beginning of winter: long, dark nights and unfriendly weather suddenly are upon us. This year was no exception, but the warm atmosphere of the 12th Bath International Evening more than made up for it! About 80 people representing many of the diverse ethnic and cultural communities in Bath, and also international students, came together for an evening of food, music and fun on Saturday, October 26, 2002.

We sampled food prepared by cooks (many wearing their national costumes) from 13 countries: Afghanistan, Barbados, Bulgaria, China, Germany, India, Iran, Jamaica, Pakistan, Scotland, St Kitts, Thailand, and Vietnam, plus the traditional punch from Antigua. The event was opened by the Deputy Mayor of Bath who stayed to enjoy the Latin music and Caribbean sounds.

This year the Working Group – representatives of the Barbados and Friends Association, Bath Bahá'í Community, Christian Aid and the University of Bath International Office – chose a "green" theme, and worked with the support of local environmental group Envolve. Once again we were grateful for the generous financial support of the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd; the income from ticket sales is never enough to cover the costs despite all the work being done by volunteers. But perhaps this is all part of the plan to ensure that we work together with as many different groups as possible.

Jane Aldred

