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Wetlands VI

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Some of the youth attending Wetlands VI

BETWEEN 29th DECEMBER, 2002 and 2nd January, 2003, some 300 youth from over 20 countries gathered at Carmarthen's Trinity College, Wales, for Wetlands VI, the biggest and most exciting Bahá'í youth conference held in the UK this year. The aim of the conference was to explore the role of youth in the Five Year Plan, particularly by focusing on two core activities – devotionals and study circles.

But this was no ordinary youth conference! With workshop titles like “Split the Atom”, “Chant Down Babylon”, and “Inner Temple Exercise” the atmosphere was buzzing and the creativity factor high. This was expressed in a variety of ways, including inspiring devotionals using song and chanting, fantastic artistic presentations, thought-provoking and heartfelt talks, and original, interactive and engaging workshops.

Both the talks and workshops were designed to further deepen our understanding of the Plan and to suggest creative and enjoyable ways of getting involved. European Bahá'í Youth Council member, Dion Azordegan set our sights high at the beginning of the conference by focusing on the bigger picture, looking at how our role in the Minor Plan of God has the potential to have far-reaching and cosmic effects and influence. This theme was continued through an ingenious use of string to illustrate how clusters work: individuals become small groups and then larger groups in a locality through the implementation of core activities (illustrated through a web of string gradually covering the whole audience). We also heard talks about some personal, inspiring and life-transforming events, particularly from Ollie Heath.

There was a good range and diversity of workshops on offer, and a large proportion of the programme was dedicated to them. A selection of two-part daily workshops was devised to explore



... of the past day workshops was devised to explore how to integrate such arts as drama and music into the core activities. Other workshops allowed exploration of such issues as "Search for EYBC member, Dion Azordegan Truth", "Intellectually Engaging with the Faith", "Meditation", "Entry by Troops", and "Century of Light". Participants were able to perform the results of the workshops in the main session devotionals and in the "Sacred Space" programme, enhancing the whole atmosphere and character of the conference.



EYBC member, Dion Azordegan

Artistic presentations included break dancing, five-voice beat boxing, classical violin, African songs, spiritual chants, jazz, and even an appearance by Rolf Harris himself (and his identical twin Rolf). And there were yet more diverse activities, such as Chinese relaxation movement, football, clay workshops and "The Game" (where participants encounter unfair rules that reward antisocial and dishonest behaviour, to parallel circumstances in the real world). The Beatroot Cafe was back, as was the Soul Cafe – great places to "chillout", get together with friends, or enjoy a moment's peace and quiet. Of course, the evening activities were spectacular, as usual, and included discos showcasing new DJ talent, a "tribal" ceilidh, karaoke, an Acoustic Jam, and a big bands night introducing Wetlands Funk, Drum and Bass, and Beat-boxing talent.

A mention definitely has to be made of the incredible decor that transformed the college into a beautiful place to be, including prayer flags, rugs, throws, art work, even a "Wetlands Graffiti Wall", all made possible through a lot of time, energy and love from those putting it all together.

A big thanks has to go out to all the organisers and facilitators who made the conference possible and to the participants who contributed to such an exciting, dramatic, heartfelt, spiritual and enlivening yet focused event!

Melissa Parsons

