

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the Unitarian Young People's League By Cliff Reed

Introduction

For fifty years of the twentieth century the Unitarian denomination in Great Britain had its own lively, independent and at times controversial youth movement – the Unitarian Young People's League (UYPL). To summarise its career you could say the following:

- It was founded and grew to its first high point in the 1930s;
- it survived the challenges of the War and then revived in the 1940s;
- it reached its zenith and then flourished in the 1950s and '60s;
- it slipped into a defiant decline in the 1970s;
- it struggled and finally died in the 1980s.

It should be said, though, that even in its final phase UYPL retained an enthusiastic and committed, if much diminished, membership that was still capable of imaginative and creative activities. With a membership of some 1250 young people in about sixty church-based branches at its height, UYPL was a significant presence within the wider movement at every level. Many who later became leaders in the denomination, both ministers and laypeople, either entered the Unitarian movement or stayed within it during their sometimes turbulent youth, as members of UYPL. And it was in UYPL that they – or, I should say, we – gained the knowledge and the skills that we were able to bring to the Unitarian movement as adults. It was also in UYPL that we became steeped in the liberal religious ethos, principles and spirituality that have sustained us ever since. And, let's face it, we also had a lot of fun!

It is now thirty-eight years since UYPL chose to close itself down with its head still held high, as it were, and many newer and younger Unitarians will never even have heard of it, never mind know anything about it. But it would be a shame if UYPL and all that it did and achieved were to be forgotten. I have actually written a long and pretty comprehensive history of UYPL but the chances of actually publishing it are slim. However, I would like to offer here a briefer, dare I say potted, history of the only avowedly Unitarian organisation in Britain that, for fifty years, was run not only *for* young people but *by* young people.

Parts 2 to 7 of this Chronicle cover respectively the 1930s, '40s, '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s.

1: Beginnings & Foundation

In the early 1930s a feeling grew within the churches of the General Assembly that they should have a national youth movement of their own, one catering unequivocally for the young people of Unitarian and Free Christian congregations. Such an organisation was seen as building a bridge between the Sunday School and the church and it is significant that on 1st July 1933 the Religious Education Department of the General Assembly produced what was called '*An Unofficial Memorandum regarding the proposal to form a League for the Young People connected with GA churches*'. This document was designed to "*stimulate interest and discussion*" and was the work of the Rev. John C. Ballantyne, President of the influential Sunday School Association. The level of support for the idea was reflected in Ballantyne's touching comment that, "*This enthusiasm is steadily reducing my age, and if it goes on I feel sure I shall soon be young enough to join the League.*"

The proposed organisation's name was under discussion. Should it include the words '*Unitarian and Free Christian*' or should such 'doctrinal' labels be avoided? What should the age-range be? As the *Memorandum* put it, "*Shall we say from 16 to 35? Or from 16 to 40? Or are we too old at 40?*" Among the anticipated activities of the League were "*Devotional Services*" and "*Group study of the history and traditions of the GA churches and the central principles of our free faith.*" Which, along with more in the same vein, sounds more worthy than exciting for a youth movement, but nevertheless it was to bear rich fruit.

The next stage introduces another important player in the League's beginnings – a young minister named Henry Harris Cheetham. On 16th March 1934, calling himself "*Acting Secretary*", he signed a letter headed, '*YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUE*' which was sent out from General Assembly Headquarters at Essex Hall to "*Ministers and Secretaries of Youth Organisations and Sunday Schools*". The letter told 'the story so far' and set out the plans for the League's coming inauguration, stating clearly that "*The League will have the blessing of the General Assembly*". Henry asked for the support "*of existing youth societies in the formation and working of the League*", urging them to send young people to the inaugural meetings. Significantly he made the point that these had been arranged for a Sunday "*to enable representatives from the provinces to attend without losing any time from work*". This tells us something about the League's demographic, as does the comment that many Sunday schools were sending "*delegates whose travelling expenses are being met by local efforts*". Accommodation for those needing it was being offered by "*London youth*". Henry Cheetham closed his letter with a rousing call: "*Let us unite to form a Youth Movement desirous of serving the General Assembly and the cause of Truth, Liberty and Religion. The birth of this new organisation is for the enriching of the life of our community.*"

Of these early days another of the League's founding figures, the Rev. Arthur Vallance, later recalled, "*The ringleaders were Henry Cheetham, then in his first ministry at Preston, and John Kielty, in his first ministry at Stockton-on-Tees. They wanted to have a national 'League of Young Unitarians', to link up all the young people of our churches, to make them conscious of belonging to our whole Unitarian movement*" (*The Young Unitarian*, January 1949). In a further reflection (TYU April 1967), Arthur wrote how, in the mid-1930s, "*we needed a young people's organisation*" but that the already existing Fellowship of Youth (FOY) didn't really fit the bill for two reasons. Firstly, "*it nearly fell over backwards trying not to be 'Unitarian'*", and secondly because it "*couldn't quite throw off the 'high-brow image of a student society.*"

Who else was involved at this stage? Besides Arthur Vallance himself there was Stewart Carter, minister at Bethnal Green in east London, both of them members of the General Assembly's Religious Education Department Committee. By April 1934, thanks to these pioneers, all was ready for the League to come into existence.

In anticipation of the League's inauguration, *The Inquirer* of 14th April 1934 stated that, "*This youth movement has as its objects the idea of strengthening the religious life and spirit of service in the young people of our General Assembly churches.*" The article went on to say that, "*The future of the Assembly depends entirely on the part*

played by young people who will later take on the position of responsibility.” For as long as the League existed, these high hopes were to prove by no means unfounded. *The Inquirer* also stressed that the League’s member-groups or branches would be based in congregations: *“Each group in each particular church will be inspired with the spirit of service and loyalty to the church to which it belongs.”* But if the local church-based branch was to be the League’s essential strength, it was also to unite and bring these branches together *“by means of association rallies, weekend conferences and so forth.”*

The League’s inaugural weekend *“saw young people from all over England and Wales meeting in London because they believed in an organisation for young people within our General Assembly churches”* (*The Inquirer*, 28th April 1934). This report said of the gathered young Unitarians that *“they were willing to give personal devotion and service to strengthen the life of the churches they love.”* It called the new League a *“religious fellowship of young idealists with a dream...dedicated to sharing the responsibilities of older church members and learning to be ready for leadership.”* But the League always had its lighter side and that inaugural weekend began on the evening of Saturday 21st April 1934 with a social evening of *“games”* and *“dancing”* at Essex Church, Kensington.

In a still celebratory, if more serious, mood a hundred-strong congregation of young Unitarians gathered for worship at the Islington Unitarian Church at 11-30 a.m. on Sunday, 22nd April 1934. This was the first League service and the preacher was Arthur Vallance. His sermon *“touched and stirred”* the youthful congregation, who joined in singing a hymn written for the occasion by Arthur himself. With its rousing words, beginning *“Lord of the wondrous earth”*, sung to the tune *‘Little Cornard’*, this was soon adopted as the League’s own hymn. It was to be sung with great enthusiasm at League services and gatherings for the next fifty years. It can be found at number 1 in *‘Hymns for Living’*.

There was, of course, important business to discuss, for which (after lunch) everyone moved to Essex Hall for the inaugural meeting proper. *The Inquirer* report tells us that the *“Constitution of the Young People’s League was put to the gathering and a resolution that the League be formed was carried with enthusiastic applause.”* YPL was now officially in existence. The Constitution stated that YPL was affiliated to the General Assembly and set out its Objects. These were *“to strengthen the religious life and the spirit of service in the young people of the churches of the GA”*; *“To strengthen the GA churches by fostering...a sense of responsibility for the work of those churches and a personal devotion to their cause”*; *“To promote...a live and active sense of comradeship in high endeavour among the members of the League*

Membership was to be open to *“all Youth Societies and their members, and to all individuals”* who accepted the Objects. There were three categories of membership – full members (aged 16 to 35), junior members (under 16) and associate members (aged over 35). Among the other matters set out in the Constitution was the division of the country into four somewhat arbitrary Regions – South East, South West (which included Wales), North East and North West – each of which was to be represented on YPL’s National Committee by a Regional Secretary and a designated committee member. Scotland, for some reason, did not feature, although it was later to do so. YPL never extended to Northern Ireland.

The final business of the inaugural meeting was the election of YPL's first National Committee. Its members – no less than six of them (all men) ministers - were:

President – Stewart Carter,

General Secretary – Henry Harris Cheetham,

Treasurer – Ernest Rowlands.

Regional Secretaries: Marion Perris (SE), Eric Shirvell Price (SW), Graham Short (NE), John Kielty (NW).

Regional members: Stella Eldridge (SE), P. J. Evans (SW), S. Lees (NE), Arthur Vallance (NW).

That Youth May Serve: A guide to initials

AUA	American Unitarian Association
AUY	American Unitarian Youth
<i>BUY</i>	<i>British Unitarian Youth</i>
FOY	Fellowship of Youth
GA	General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches
IARF	International Association for Religious Freedom
IRF	International Religious Fellowship
LDPA	London District Provincial Assembly
LRY	Liberal Religious Youth
LUSSS	London Unitarian Sunday School Society
NSPCI	Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland
REYD	Religious Education & Youth Department
SRL	Student Religious Liberals
TYP	The Two Year Plan
<i>TYU</i>	<i>The Young Unitarian</i>
UCM	Unitarian College, Manchester
UHFA	Unitarian Homes Furniture Appeal
UUA	Unitarian Universalist Association
UYD	Unitarian Youth Department
UYPL	Unitarian Young People's League
WRY	World Refugee Year
WMYU	Weekend Meeting for Young Unitarians
YPL	Young People's League

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 2: The 1930s Year One

Support for the new YPL (the 'U' was added later) came from the influential Sunday School Association at its Annual Meeting in April 1934. A motion, proposed by no less a figure than the redoubtable Dorothy Tarrant, formally welcomed the League's formation. YPL President Stewart Carter responded. At that meeting Arthur Vallance spoke on "*the process of forming the Young People's League*". At a public meeting held during the General Assembly's Annual Meetings that year, with the theme, '*Youth and Service*', another of YPL's first National Committee members, Eric Shirvell Price, made this (not untypically) high-flown declaration (quoted in *The Inquirer*): "*The time has come for the young, the sacred ones...to arise, and to demonstrate that the spirit of youth in the life of the Church is the hope of the world.*"

By October 1934 six YPL branches had been formed in the Manchester area and in South East Region a rally, attended by "*about seventy young people*", was held to nurture "*the active sense of comradeship*". The hosts were Brixton YPL and three other London branches were represented. There were even some YPLers from Mansfield and Nottingham. Young people from four other London area churches attended and the result was an "*uproarious evening*". The next morning being Sunday, a service was held at Kilburn when YPL President, Stewart Carter, emphasised in his sermon the "*serious responsibility to develop personal character*" that rested on each YPLer. Talks followed in the afternoon, one of them on '*Internationalism*' by "*Mr. A. E. Peaston*".

That first year saw YPL becoming involved in internationalism, something of great importance as Fascism and its attendant war clouds increasingly threatened the world's peace. In April (14th) *The Inquirer* was looking forward to the Congress of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom and added, "*what the post-war youth movements have tried to do in Europe in the churches of their respective countries, the YPL is to try and do among the churches of the General Assembly.*" In August the Leyden International Bureau, "*which links up the liberal youth groups of the world*", met in Copenhagen and elected YPLers Stewart Carter and Henry Cheetham as President and bulletin editor respectively. The Bureau later became the International Religious Fellowship (IRF) and the association with YPL was to be a long one.

Meanwhile, back in the UK, the message of YPL was being disseminated in the four Regions. An example, in February 1935, was the visit of twenty-two London YPLers to Maidstone. Regional Secretary Marion Perris and "*Mr. Fleming of Mansford Street spoke to...some 60 young people on the YPL*". A YPL service followed, led by "*Miss C. Payne of Woolwich*" with a sermon by Kilburn branch secretary "*Mr. J. Wilson*". What was to be YPL's long interest in drama was prefigured in April 1935 by Brixton branch with a performance of A.A. Milne's '*To Have the Honour*', of which *The Inquirer* said, "*This was a first performance from the YPL, each part...was cleverly interpreted and much credit is due...for providing the large audience with a delightful evening's entertainment.*"

In April (13th/14th) 1935 YPL held its first AGM as reported in *The Inquirer* (27th April). It was held at Longsight Free Church in Manchester and over two-hundred YPLers attended. It was reported that YPL now had twenty-five branches with a

“*subscribing*” membership of 619, the great majority of whom were “*ordinary members*” aged between 16 and 35. “*Enthusiastic YPL branches*” were said to have been formed “*throughout the country*” – something of an exaggeration! – and the League was reported to have applied for formal membership of the General Assembly (GA). YPL had agreed representation on some GA committees, including the Religious Education Department, the Social Services Union and the Great Hucklow Homes Committee. Great Hucklow was to become YPL’s ‘spiritual home’ for the next fifty years.

Reports from YPL’s four Regions gave a somewhat patchy picture of the first year’s progress. North-West had nine branches, 250 members and had held rallies, rambles, socials, speakers’ panels, visits and joint meetings. It was stressed that “*almost all branches*” began their activities with a “*Dedication Service*”, so making clear that “*the main purpose of the League was a religious one*”. North-East Region reported the formation of five branches with a total of 63 members. South-West Region had made a more modest start, with three branches formed, although the one in Bristol had members from three congregations. However, a “*District Rally*” in Birmingham attracted people from thirteen churches and hopes were high of more branches to follow.

After the North-West, the South-East was the strongest Region, with six branches in London and two in the East Midlands. Total membership was put at 225. Activities had included a Whit Monday ramble in Surrey, a social evening in September at Mansford Street in Bethnal Green where, in December, Arthur Vallance spoke to a Regional meeting “*on various activities in church life that YPL members could undertake*”. South-East Region was notable for having three women in leading positions, namely Marion Perris, Stella Eldridge and Hannah Perris.

The Annual Report presented at the AGM contains a list of those who had subscribed or donated money to the nascent League. Among them was the name of the Rev. Emma Rosalind Lee, who was later to distinguish herself in the work of bringing refugee children to the UK from Czechoslovakia on the eve of World War II. She was also to prove a good friend to YPL for many years, welcoming regular League camps to her land at Kinver Edge in Staffordshire – which she later gave to the National Trust. The last service she conducted before her death in 1959 was at Kinver for a congregation of UYPL campers.

In that first YPL Annual Report, Marion Perris wrote, “*In the branches...the work of YPL is going well, study circles, lectures, practical work for the church, and various kinds of social activities all having their place.*” And she also made this comment that captured the spirit of YPL: “*We hope to do much through this happy association of young people working out problems together and in their new found comradeship looking out for isolated groups that may be glad of their fellowship.*”

The AGM, which saw Arthur Vallance succeed Stewart Carter as YPL President, also demonstrated the League’s wider concerns. *The Inquirer* reported that “*the meeting showed its concern for peace by passing a resolution protesting against increased expenditure on armaments.*” It also welcomed two overseas visitors – a “*Miss Kierkegaard*” from Denmark and a “*Mr. Ferencz*” from Hungary. “*Miss*

Kierkegaard” was Gudrun Kiekegaard, then in her mid-twenties, the daughter of the Rev. Thorvald Kierkegaard, minister of the Unitarian church in Copenhagen.

Saturday’s AGM was followed on Sunday morning by the YPL’s Annual Service, when “*a large congregation*” gathered in Brookfield Church, Gorton. It was led by Stewart Carter. *The Inquirer* said of the AGM weekend that, “*All who were present...realised that the YPL is meeting a need which has long been felt*” and “*has created much enthusiasm among the young people of the churches.*”

Establishment

The first year was followed by five more of growth as YPL established itself as a recognised and largely respected component of the General Assembly and its congregations. Newly installed as YPL’s second National President, Arthur Vallance gave his assessment of the League in *The Inquirer* (8th June 1935). He set out clearly what YPL was about: “*The League works by establishing branches in... congregations, and encourages them to be loyal supporters of those congregations. It shows them the possibility of co-operating with ministers and church committees to make the services attractive to young people, of arranging special services themselves, of studying the Unitarian faith and history, of strengthening the congregation by useful pieces of service.*” He had this vision for YPL’s future: “*Worship, education, community life: in each of these YPL demands the loyalty of its members. A denomination that has young people eager to train themselves spiritually, mentally, and socially, looking forward to the time when they will be called upon to bear the more serious burdens of management and leadership in our churches will be a denomination that does not fear the future.*” Looking at YPL after its first year, Arthur reflected: “*YPL has brought...young people together for study of social needs and religious problems; has introduced to each other young people from widely separated districts; has taught them to enjoy joint holidays and rambles and sing-songs; and has lifted up their hearts in joint worship of the Eternal Spirit.*”

Arthur’s optimism seemed to bode well for YPL and the Unitarian movement it served, but there were some dark times ahead, as was suggested at a South-East Region rally attended by some seventy YPLers at Highgate, as reported in *The Inquirer* (19th September 1935). The subject under discussion posed a dilemma for idealistic young people. It was this: “*Should youth make vigorous protest against the evils of the modern world: for example, against the cruelties of Nazi Germany? Or is there a greater need for patience and understanding?*” We are told that both points of view were expressed and discussed.

By 1937 the YPL AGM was being held at Great Hucklow, its venue for most of the League’s existence. Held on 24th/25th April, some 200 YPLers attended. Barbara Hall replaced Henry Cheetham as General Secretary, Henry himself succeeding John Kielty as National President. As outgoing President, John preached at the service in the Old Chapel on Sunday morning. Guest speaker at the weekend was the Rev. Annie Margaret Barr, who talked about her work in the Khasi Hills of North-East India. The 1938 AGM was notable for the election of YPL’s first woman National President, Marion Rowlands.

The 1939 AGM reflected the sense of impending crisis when, in a debate about compulsory military service, Eric Shirvell Price – speaking for National Committee –

reaffirmed the right to conscientious objection and, as *The Inquirer* (13th May) reported, “reaffirmed the principle of civil and religious liberty.” Another sign of the times was a “vivid and moving” talk by the Rev. Emma Rosalind Lee “who gave an account of her recent efforts in Czecho-Slovakia on behalf of the refugees.” One proposal made at the meeting was to have a result that can still be seen in the Old Chapel at Great Hucklow. It was a proposal to have the names of YPL’s National Presidents inscribed “on a plaque or shield”.

One attender at the 1939 AGM was Dr. Stanley Kennett, who brought the greetings of the Fellowship of Youth (FOY). FOY was, in a sense, Unitarianism’s other youth organisation, although in another sense it wasn’t. FOY had been founded in Oxford in 1924 as a non-denominational movement for liberal religious young people. Its membership was largely Unitarian but it refused to identify itself as such and adopted what might be called a ‘semi-detached’ stance as far as the General Assembly was concerned. This was one reason why those wanting a more denominationally committed youth movement founded YPL ten years later. The other was, despite its social commitment, FOY’s academic and intellectual character, with a membership dominated by University students, who – in the 1920s and ‘30s – were largely drawn from the upper middle class. This meant that young working class Unitarians with, of necessity, more modest educational achievements, inclined towards YPL and felt out of place in FOY, however welcoming its members might want to be. There was some tension between YPL and FOY and in July of 1939 representatives of the two organisations met to try and sort out their relationship. A set of proposals was agreed “in the friendliest and most helpful spirit” but there was no time to do anything about them as war broke out very soon afterwards.

In 1939 YPL had about sixty branches and seemed set fair to continue its growth and progress, but the outbreak of war meant that difficult times were ahead.

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 3: The 1940s The War Years

The inevitable stresses and disruptions of war, not least the absence of so many members – especially young men – serving in the armed forces or engaged in war work, had a great impact on the life of the League. Indeed it was to cost some of them their lives. Nevertheless YPL not only kept going but, as far as it is possible to tell, managed to do so in a positive and hopeful spirit. As with the 1930s, the principal contemporary source of information is *The Inquirer*, but two leading YPLers of the time later wrote articles about those years which appeared in *The Young Unitarian* in the 1960s.

When some 150 YPLers gathered at Great Hucklow on 13th/14th April 1940 for their first wartime AGM a total of 26 branches were represented, “*from Kendal to Swansea, London to Merseyside*”. National President Eric Price was in the chair and reports came from the League’s national officers, including James Keir Murren (General Secretary) and Alan Hartley (Treasurer), and representatives of the Regions. These had been changed since the early years with the four originals (North-West, North-East, South-West and South-East) having been joined by Midland and Merseyside Regions. The League was said to be in a “*satisfactory state*” with 60 branches and a membership that “*had now passed its...1,000 mark*”. Among the officers elected was News Sheet Editor John A. Ratcliffe (in succession to H. Lloyd Wynne), but unfortunately I have located no copies of a news sheet from that period. Although conscientious and effective in conducting business, YPLers have always enjoyed themselves too, but in 1940 the war necessarily impinged. As *The Inquirer* (20th April 1940) reported, “*Business over, a dance followed until ARP restrictions demanded lights out. And so to bed – but to sleep, who knows? Such stories make better memories than news.*”

Sunday morning (after an early ramble) meant the service in the Old Chapel, led by YPL’s Camp Secretary, Elspeth Vallance, with new National President John MacLachlan preaching on the theme, ‘*On Active Service in the Invisible Kingdom*’. The thrust of the sermon was that “*social justice and...international understanding*” can only be achieved by “*harnessing the moral and spiritual forces of mankind.*” YPL, John said, had the chance to improve the human race by putting its “*brotherhood message*” into practice. Later, the weekend ended with a talk on “*social problems*” by *Inquirer* editor, the Rev. E. G. Lee.

The class contrast that separated YPL from FOY may have influenced the motivation for an article by YPL General Secretary Keir Murren in *The Inquirer* of 26th April 1941. He wrote that “*Numerically the greatest strength of our...youth movements is in industrial and working class areas.*” This meant that despite a rising standard of education, these young people lived in places where “*the existence of social and economic problems is most obvious*” and thus “*where the need for the application of religious principles seems most pressing.*”

Another YPL concern in 1941 was the plight of refugees for whom, *The Inquirer* reported, the League had established a special fund “*among its members not long after the outbreak of war.*” This fund was particularly for the child refugees who the Rev. Emma Rosalind Lee had been involved in rescuing from Czechoslovakia, and it was said to have “*increased steadily*”. So far, the report said, £105 had been handed

on to Rosalind Lee. The dedication of YPLers to supporting the fund was captured in the report: *“Letters have reached the treasurer from collectors staying in shelters in the centre of London, from collectors whose home towns...had experienced a bad ‘blitz’ and from collectors in small branches far away from other YPL branches.”*

Reporting on YPL’s 1941 AGM at Great Hucklow on 7th/8th June, Keir Murren commented on its attendance and enthusiasm. 160 YPLers (*“from Lancashire and Yorkshire...from London...the Midlands and Merseyside”*) attended, staying mostly at Great Hucklow – many in the old Children’s Homes on the edge of the village – with an overflow of 30 staying at FOY’s Barn at Flagg. *“Good work...in extremely difficult circumstances”* was reported to have been done during the year *“for branches, churches, schools and the Forces”* and *“nine new branches had affiliated”*. The promised Presidential Roll – made of wood and later dubbed the ‘coffin lid’ – had been made. Of the Regions, North-West was reported to be the strongest, with four new branches and *“successful rallies and conferences”*. South-East had experienced *“supreme difficulties”* but branches were *“still meeting”*. South-West reported *“good work last summer, meetings during winter, and help for the Forces”*. North-East’s *“widely scattered branches”* were said to be *“healthy”*, with four-member Malton getting special praise for its 4 shillings and fourpence contribution to the Refugee Fund. *“Preaching and Sunday School work”* had occupied Midlands Region. Merseyside had been *“badly hit by loss of members”* but also told of a play-rehearsal under a table at Wallasey during an air raid!

That 1941 AGM saw Joan M. Hartley of Gorton, Manchester, elected as National President and one of YPL’s several young ministers, Leonard Mason, spoke on *‘The New Drive for Youth’*. He also conducted worship on Sunday morning, when Joan Hartley preached on *‘Youth Facing the World’*. Keir Murren’s report summarised her message thus: *“If we could not build bridges yet, we could make tracks to those bridges, and we could continue to build castles in the air which would be the realities of tomorrow.”* And Joan had a special message for YPLers serving in the Forces which appeared in *The Inquirer* of 4th April 1942; *“...when you come back you’ll find things changed...You’ll be changed too, pilots and gunners, privates and captains, seamen and admirals, not to mention the ATS and Land Girls. You’ll have seen the world and have stories to tell...but when we come together again the old happy understanding of YPL will still be there.”*

The 1942 AGM, held 25th/26th April, although *“oversubscribed”* and full to capacity told a mixed story. On the one hand, said *The Inquirer* report (30th May), YPL was said to be *“so strong”* that it was seriously considering appointing a *“field-secretary”* and some new branches had been formed. On the other hand, said the report, *“Where YPL had been weak the war had made it a little weaker”* with *“a number of branches...forced to suspend activities.”* Financially, North-West Region’s help had been needed to make possible *“a healthy balance”* in national YPL funds. Sunday worship in the Old Chapel was led by Poppy Roby, Ruth Slater and Alan Hartley (*“on leave”* from the Forces) and new President Leonard Mason preached. His message, as reported in *The Inquirer*, was: *“It is the earnest person’s task to make clear his own ideal and to work towards it...while the fire of enthusiasm is in us, while we have our youth and vigour.”*

The Annual Meetings of the General Assembly in 1943 saw an innovation that was to become important for YPL, namely the Youth Meeting, held on 6th May. Not for the last time a joint effort with FOY, Stanley Kennett took the chair and the speakers were Vaughan Lewis, Joan Hartley, Alan Whitehead and Leonard Mason. When YPL held its AGM a few weeks later (19th/20th June) the reality of what was going on in the wider world was cruelly brought home with the announcement that five YPLers “*have lost their lives in this war*”. They were not to be the last. Attendance, at about 100, was down, with restrictions due to limited accommodation. The guest speaker was the Rev. Annie Margaret Barr and Keir Murren – then minister at Accrington – became National President.

The 1944 AGM, held in June, was only briefly reported in a much smaller *Inquirer* but the tone was positive and the meeting said to be well-attended. The younger, “*pre-service*” ages (i.e. under-18s) of those attending was notable. There were warning notes, though, with Regional work said to be “*difficult*”, although North-West Region “*continues to be a source of strength and inspiration to the rest of the country.*” The Presidency passed to Franklyn Johnson of Swinton, at 21 the youngest thus far to hold the office. All that *The Inquirer* report (23rd June) said of the 1945 AGM was that about 100 YPLers attended and that the reports were said to be “*filled with optimism...on the threshold of a better peace.*” The new President was Ron Fenner of Newington Green, London, who preached on Sunday morning, International Secretary Margaret Ashton conducting.

The first of the personal wartime recollections – published in *The Young Unitarian* in June 1967 - was by the Rev. E. Basil Short, YPL’s General Secretary from 1942-46 and National President in 1946/47. He made much of the female role, writing of “*the great contribution of the girls in keeping the organisation going when the boys were called up.*” Basil said that they maintained “*regular programmes in branches and regions*”, claiming that, although “*Activities were necessarily curtailed*”, “*most branches survived*”, albeit with reduced numbers. He told how YPL branches coped with “*holding meetings during air-raid alarms*” and repeated the story of the four YPLers – all girls, apparently – who “*held dramatic rehearsals under the vestry table.*” Basil recalled that the girls kept in touch with the boys on active service and that this helped with post-war recovery. “*In at least one case*”, wrote Basil, “*the church was later run by war-time girls and the returned boys.*” He concluded that the war “*had tested and proved our loyalty*” and that YPL was stronger as a result, encouraging it to gain greater recognition and representation within the denomination. “*Peace held great promise*”, Basil recalled, but added that it “*perhaps encouraged too much hope.*” He doesn’t expand on this but with regards to YPL he wrote ruefully that although there was much planning and enthusiasm for post-war expansion “*The response fell short of our hopes.*”

The second personal account of YPL in wartime came from the Rev. James Keir Murren (*The Young Unitarian*, July/August 1967), who was General Secretary from 1939 to 1942 and 1943/44 National President. He identified the “*clearest*” problem faced by YPL during the war as “*the rapid drop in age range.*” By the end of the war, Keir recalled, “*we were left with a handful aged 34-35 years, a few in their twenties, but the rest under twenty and many only just left school.*” This required “*a new kind of League and a new pattern of rallies was created to meet this.*” Besides such internal challenges YPL, like the rest of the country, had to face the possibility

of invasion and occupation by Hitler's forces. Keir recalled that YPL took the situation very seriously yet faced it with "*an odd matter-of-factness.*" The names of all YPL's thousand-plus members were gathered, revealing that the largest branches (he mentions Hyde, Stalybridge, Bury and Preston) had between 40 and 50 members. These membership lists were "*sent to about six people to hide*" with a view to organising "*some kind of underground work*" should the country be occupied. Of his own activities as General Secretary at this time he wrote, "*There were night journeys all over the country, V-bombs in London, missed trains and all-night sessions in Salvation Army lodgings.*" Keir reckoned that he "*covered about 20,000 miles in trains for YPL, writing minutes and correspondence most of the way.*" Denominationally a significant plus for YPL during the war was gaining its own seat on General Assembly Council, of which Keir himself was the first occupant. He also recalled a particular wartime problem with regard to YPL's AGM weekends at Great Hucklow. He wrote that he "*struggled to keep the number [of attenders] large and the place full*" but that the Homes staff "*insisted on certain limits*" because of "*ration problems*". Nevertheless, Keir recalled, "*the meetings never failed to be in some measure an inspiration, and remained so through the war.*" And in spite of everything, the League endured. Keir concluded, "*one felt real satisfaction that the unbelievable had happened, the war had come and gone and the YPL was still there.*"

But how did YPL see and present itself during the war years? An undated single-sheet leaflet, almost certainly the work of Keir Murren as General Secretary and headed "*Young People's League*", sets out YPL's aims and how it was fulfilling them. YPL is described as "*An Association of young people...who are attached to the Churches of the General Assembly*" and which exists to "*knit together Unitarian and Free Christian Youth throughout Great Britain*" and "*to form the natural link...between the Sunday School and the Church*", a role identified at the very birth of the League. The leaflet gave YPL's "*Essential Aims*" as, firstly, "*To strengthen the religious life and the spirit of service of its members...*", and, also "*to give youth an avenue through which the Essentials of the Christian Faith...may find expression.*" These aims existed so that YPLers "*may devote themselves to the cause of liberal religion in their own neighbourhood and in the world at large*" and in so doing, "*promote and maintain a real sense of comradeship in high endeavour.*" And the YPL activities furthering these aims were said to be "*regional and national rallies and conferences*" and, at local branch level, "*Youth Services, Sunday School and Club leadership, lectures, discussions, 'book nights', the support of refugees, first-aid classes, etc.*"

YPL's international commitment through IRF gets a mention too, hard though this was to maintain in time of war. The leaflet calls IRF "*an international fellowship of all Unitarian and Free Christian Youth*", although it only lists the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania, Great Britain and the United States as having member-organisations. The leaflet reflects the wartime situation when it says that, "*A British committee has now undertaken the Secretariat in Holland*", the Dutch being unable to fulfil their pre-war role under Nazi occupation.

In closing, the leaflet answers the question, "*How do I join the League?*" by stating, "*Membership is open to all Youth Societies and their members and to all young people who are in sympathy with the faith and ideals of undogmatic Christianity.*"

This indicates clearly the predominant theological stance, not only of YPL, but of British Unitarianism more generally in the 1940s.

1945: Recovery begins

One important development in May 1945 was the appearance of a YPL newsletter called *British Unitarian Youth (BUY)*. The editorial stated “*This is our first issue in this year, 1945*” but if there were earlier issues I don’t have them. Something of the war’s consequences for YPL branches can be discerned from an item in the November *BUY* which said, “...one of our smallest groups, Kilburn, with only five members, after bravely maintaining their membership during the years of war, instead of capitulating, like many groups did, hope with the restarting of their Sunday School to recruit new members and to resume full activities.” Exactly how many YPL branches, of the sixty plus existing in 1940, survived the war it’s hard to say but Franklyn Johnson – writing twenty-two years later in *The Young Unitarian* – put the figure as low as twenty. One indicator is a *BUY* report on YPL’s Refugee Fund in September 1946, when it was being wound up after six years, having raised £323 7s 9d. Forty-two contributing YPL groups were itemised but “of the contributors only 25 are at present branches, the others having fallen by the way during the war years.”

But there were signs of revival with the return of members from the Forces. In 1946 there are several references in *BUY* to YPLers such as these. William Rutter was elected branch president at Pendleton in 1946 “after six years in the in the forces”. In the same issue there was mention of Eric Wild of Stockport branch who was “now out of the forces” and was “to commence studies for the Unitarian ministry”. At Accrington branch, which was starting an under-14s group, Norman Bolton, “recently returned from the Forces, has been appointed club leader.” A Swinton branch event, called “Navy Mixture”, heard about “The war-time experiences of two returned Forces members.”

Franklyn Johnson later wrote of this period, “The urgency...was to get some form of organised youth activity in our churches. Young people did exist in Sunday Schools but there were few youth societies for them to join.” So what was YPL doing in 1946 in the aftermath of war? North-East Lancashire Region held a rally at Accrington, with YPLers from Padiham, Preston and Rawtenstall also attending. North-West Region held a rally at Mossley and, importantly, decided to hold a Drama Festival the following year. In South-East Wales a conference was held, which included “a very impressive candle-lighting service.” A rally followed at Swansea in September when a new South-East Wales Region was formed with branches at Swansea, Trebanos, Cefn Coed and Pontypridd. At a meeting in Wakefield in June a new Yorkshire Region was formed, with branches at Wakefield, Bradford and Pudsey – “and friends from Lydgate”. In the chair was Dudley Richards of Bradford.

November’s *BUY* reported new branches in Birmingham (at Moseley) and Nottingham (at High Pavement), along with a work-camp at Urmston to clear up the grounds – a precedent for many such events in years to come. Regional rallies had been held at Pudsey, Padiham and Urmston, and Newington Green branch held “a great stuffing of animals” for their church’s Christmas Fair! In December Highgate branch hosted a rally which included “an amazing three-course supper – unrationed – for nearly forty people.” Worship next morning was led by three Highgate YPLers,

Len Fisher, Eric Cooper and Maurice Pocock, “*all recently demobbed from the services.*”

YPL’s international dimension was recovering too and IRF’s first post-war conference was held at Unitarian College, Manchester, in the summer of 1946. Delegates from eight, mainly European, countries attended but significantly there was no-one from Germany. Wounds were still raw and as the September *BUY* reported, “*...free religious youth on the Continent had been in the vanguard of the fight against Nazi oppression.*” The report went on to say that “*a large number of the delegates from Europe*” had been “*arrested, imprisoned or had gone underground*” during the war. Nevertheless they had retained their “*faith in Free Christianity*” and were chiefly concerned with “*restoring their organisations*” and “*reconstructing their war-ruined countries.*”

A survey of YPL’s approximate membership was done in 1946, although the results weren’t published until February of the following year. This stated that YPL had 600 full members (350 aged 16-20, 250 aged 21-35) along with 300 under-16 junior members and 150 over-35 associate members. It also mentions 100 members in the Forces, which adds up to an overall membership of about 1150. Annual membership subscriptions were given as 6d for full members, 3d for junior members and 1/- for associate members. A plea was made for people to pay up as “*we are spending quite a lot of money on expansion*” and “*sixpence in 1934 went twice as far as sixpence in 1947.*”

The pattern of old branches revived and new ones formed continued in 1947, which was to prove a significant year. And the severe winter of 1947 was notable too, as we learn from the *BUY* report of a YPL rally at Hunslet attended by members from four Yorkshire branches. The report says that the planned programme “*was abandoned owing to the cold, the majority preferring to sit round the fire and discuss their favourite films.*” And the weather also featured in reports of what was one of two important innovations to be made that year, namely that great YPL tradition the Drama Festival.

Enter the Drama Festival.

On 8th March 1947 North-West Region held the first YPL Drama Festival at Rochdale. The report in April’s *BUY* indicates that the auguries were not good: “*the trophy was unfinished because of electricity cuts...and the Rev. Raymond Holt*” –who was to have presented it – “*was confined to bed.*” In addition, “*...a terrific snowstorm was blowing*” and threatening transport links as that terrible winter continued unrelenting. Nevertheless, “*despite snowbound roads nearly 200 people attended the festival, the great majority of whom were visitors to Rochdale.*” Four branches each put on a one-act play and this was to be the pattern in all subsequent Drama Festivals, which were held annually throughout the rest of the League’s existence. At that first one the winning branch was Stalybridge, followed by Gorton, Warrington and Pendleton. One of the adjudicators was no less a figure than the Rev. Henry Harris Cheetham, then minister at Stand Chapel, Whitefield, and the trophy was presented by the Rev. C.P. Scott, President of the Northern Sunday School Federation. In spite of everything it had been a great success. Drama was a YPL interest outside the North-West too and around the same time Brighton branch entered a play in a local youth drama festival.

Among the other YPL events reported in early 1947 was one that showed interest in an issue that was to recur as a League concern throughout its remaining existence. This event was a Mansford Street, Bethnal Green, branch meeting when one member spoke on *“England from a Jamaican’s point of view.”* The same branch also held a *“panel discussion on ‘The Equality of Women’”* Another controversial topic, Palestine, was the subject under consideration by Nottingham branch who had a speaker who’d been stationed there, Lt. Col. J.L. Thomas.

YPL was well-represented during the GA Annual Meetings in London in April. A *“very successful”* youth meeting, held at the denomination’s temporary headquarters in Gordon Square (Essex Hall having been bombed in the war), featured some leading YPLers. Margaret Smith, South-East Region President, was in the chair and the speakers included Basil Short, Ronald McGraw, Dorothy Smith, Michael Thornycroft and Raymond Hodgkinson. However, YPL faced some criticism at the Meetings, the critics including the new GA President, the distinguished Rev. Lawrence Redfern. But Basil Short, *BUY* reported, had replied to the *“wild statements which various people had deemed fit to make,”* declaring that YPL, *“was an organisation which was ready and willing to serve in the advancement of Unitarianism.”*

But the second important change for the League was to come at its 1947 AGM. The chair would be taken by outgoing National President Basil Short and ahead of the meeting he wrote a ‘farewell message’ in May’s *BUY*. In it he wrote of, *“...having seen the League rise from the pale shadow of war-time into a full-bodied organism, lively and active. We have rediscovered the League’s true spirit, which was being lost even before war broke out, and we have gone even further than our founders in fulfilling the aims they started with.”* There was news of new branches that spring, those at Oldham and Unity Church, Sheffield, bringing the total to 49. *BUY* declared, *“Our aim is nothing less than a branch or group in every church”* – an optimistic ambition that was never achieved!

YPL to UYPL

Held on 17th/18th May at Great Hucklow, the 1947 AGM attracted (*BUY* reported), *“Over 120 young people from nearly thirty branches...all over the country.”* The League was said to have *“been restored to its pre-war strength”* and to be *“ready to move forward...with confidence.”* General Secretary Franklyn Johnson reported that the number of branches had now advanced to fifty, that YPL had a total membership of 1250, and that the policy of forming *“smaller more compact regions”* would continue. But the main item on the agenda was the adoption of a new constitution and the most important part of that was a change of name. Henceforth, it was agreed, YPL would be UYPL – the Unitarian Young People’s League. There was also a revised set of objects:

- “1. To bring the young people of the Unitarian Churches into closer relationship with one another by uniting them in one federation.*
- 2. To encourage every member to be an active supporter of his church and its institutions.*
- 3. To advance a religion which unites reverence for the past with adventurous faith in the future.”*

The new National President, Ian Toseland, was handed the *“oak roll of presidents”* – also known as the *“coffin lid”* – which now hangs in the Old Chapel vestibule at

Great Hucklow. The Annual Service was, as usual, held there on the Sunday morning, conducted by Irene Smith, Secretary of North-West Region. Ian Toseland preached: "*Tradition,*" he said, *is what we receive from our elders, not as something fixed and unalterable but upon which we can build...*" It had been the most important AGM since before the war.

More branches were formed as the year progressed and according to one source the total was up to 55 by September and *BUY* was pushing for more with the following suggestion in its August issue: "*There are... youth groups...not yet affiliated to the YPL. There may be such a group within your district. Why not invite them to join activities with you? Try to bring them into the wider fellowship of the League?*" Among activities reported in that issue was a weekend camp at Kinver Edge when "*the Rev. Rosalind Lee...even brought her car to the village to carry our luggage, and us, to the camp site.*" There was also a request for possible designs for a UYPL badge.

On the international scene, UYPL had received greetings from the 51st Annual Convention of American Unitarian Youth, held at Star Island in June. AUJ's members, who included Canadians, had reaffirmed "*...our purpose of encouraging total participation and active loyalty in church life*" as well as seeking "*cooperation with all who seek to build a classless and just world community free of racial, religious, or national discriminations.*" AUJ President David B. Parke was in England that August, visiting UYPLers at Swinton, Rawtenstall and Unity Church, Bolton, where members from five branches had gathered for a social evening. There was news from Czechoslovakia too. Margaret Smith, President of South-East Region, wrote in *BUY* (October issue) of her summer visit, describing "*Krizany, the Czech Unitarian Youth camp site. As we came through the village I saw their pennant fluttering high over the field. It is a blue triangle, in the centre of which is the golden sunflower (emblem of the Church) with a blue letter 'U' superimposed.*" Margaret also mentions that "*the Communist Youth of Slovakia were organising...rebuilding campaigns,*" a hint of the disaster that would overwhelm Czech democracy the following year.

October's *BUY* announced the appearance of Section 1 of a UYPL '*Branch Manual*', which consisted of a '*Model Branch Constitution*'. Further sections would cover "*Study Group Organisation*" and "*Subjects*", "*Services*" and "*Techniques of Worship*", "*Meeting Procedure, Drama, Social Activities, etc.*" This illustrates well how UYPL prepared its members for leadership.

UYPL seems to have been recovering well in these immediate post-war years. The 1947 survey, published in the March 1948 *BUY* gave the total membership as 1570, with 950 full members, 290 juniors, 260 associates and 70 in the Forces. But this was all against a background of austerity in an impoverished country. A suggestion of this came in a 1948 New Year message from National President Ian Toseland in January's *BUY*. He talked about financial problems and urged UYPLers to raise £100 "*for the Development Fund*" But he also praised the "*good work*" being done in the branches and celebrated "*what enthusiasm and grit and fun there are in the movement.*"

There was also a willingness to talk about controversial and possibly divisive issues within the positive atmosphere of UYPL. A UYPL meeting in London at Stamford

Street Chapel that January had the theme, “*Why I intend to be a Unitarian pastor and what I hope to do*”, itself testimony to UYPL’s significant part in providing recruits to the ministry. In this case, though, the speakers, A. Hamilton Birtles and John Gill, were two young men both destined for the Unitarian ministry who held very different convictions on a particular issue. As the *Inquirer* report puts it: “*It was interesting to have a pacifist and an officer in the Royal Navy frankly avowing their divergent loyalties: it was intriguing to speculate which had rendered the greater service to God during the cataclysm.*” This “*fine meeting*”, as the *Inquirer* called it, closed with vespers led by Mansford Street, Bethnal Green, UYPL.

Other UYPL news in early 1948 included a rally in Oldham where “*enthusiasts*” gathered despite “*wintry rain*” for a programme that included a film on the Tennessee Valley scheme, for which two UYPLers provided “*an impromptu running commentary when the sound apparatus failed.*” There was also a proposal to provide UYPL “*service squads*” to “*carry out...projects of practical service to Unitarianism outside your own church.*” It spoke of “*small Unitarian chapels*” that are “*in a bad way*” in just about all respects, and that “*service squads*” could provide help to such “*struggling congregations*” and so “*prove that UYPL is worth its weight in £ s. d. to the denomination.*” It was a way to “*share in what is so obviously God’s work.*” Meanwhile some senior UYPLers, including Dorothy Smith, Raymond Hodgkinson and Franklyn Johnson, were engaged on a “*Mission to Merseyside*” to revive the pre-War Region there. A “*message of greeting and encouragement*” had been sent by no less a figure than the Rev. Lawrence Redfern. The “*Mission*” achieved its aim.

Amidst much positive news of new branches and varied activities came the 1948 Drama Festival – still billed as a North-West Region event. The *Inquirer* report (3rd May) quoted the stated object of the Festival: “*To encourage through Dramatic endeavour a communal spirit among branches.*” Held at Stalybridge on 8th March, the Festival attracted seven entries and an audience of 450. The winners were the branch at Stand Chapel, Whitefield, with Dukinfield second and Pendleton third. The trophy was presented by the Rev. Raymond Holt, Principal of Unitarian College, Manchester (UCM) and Regional President Kathleen Twining chaired proceedings. The *Inquirer* reporter (possibly UYPLer Ron McGraw) commented: “*...the Festival is fulfilling a vital part in the life of our churches...attempting to encourage progressive dramatic effort...and to cultivate that sense of a wider fellowship.*”

The General Assembly Annual Meetings in April approved the setting up of a Religious Education and Youth Department (REYD), for which UYPL (amongst others) had been pressing. Speaking at the Youth Meeting, UYPL National President Ian Toseland commented that, “*the new REYD was like an improved cart-horse for the UYPL but it still remained for the League to use it fully and keep it moving.*” The REYD Committee would include two UYPL representatives.

According to the *Inquirer*, 160 UYPLers gathered at Great Hucklow for their 1948 AGM on 8th/9th May, the delegates representing 35 branches. Although the tone was positive – “*Year by year the AGM of the UYPL grows in scope, in understanding, and in enthusiasm*” – a letter from the new National Treasurer Henry Tittle in June’s *BUY* warned that UYPL was in a “*precarious financial position*” and urged people to donate to the Development Fund with its target of £100. By December this had been reached and passed, with a total of £108 13s 3d. Meanwhile, back at the AGM in

May, Kathleen Twining succeeded Ian Toseland as National President. At the Old Chapel on Sunday morning, worship was conducted by Yorkshire Region President, Mavis Binks, and the preacher was the Rev. Henry Harris Cheetham. His message: *"We are living...in the most vital, spectacular period in history, a time of change. If we are to make that change a success, a change for the better, it must be a change of heart and mind for the better; that we must have sincerity of vision; that we must have belief."* A visitor to the AGM was the Rev. Carl Finlay, who brought the greetings of America's *"Unitarian youth"* and spoke of their efforts *"to promote a feeling of closer inter-racial relationships, not only between whites and negroes, but between Americans of Mexican and Anglo-Saxon stock."* On another international issue, the AGM heard of disturbing news from IRF: *"the next meeting planned to be held in Prague was menaced by an ugly shadow"*, namely the Soviet-inspired Communist coup.

1948 saw another innovation that was to gain a long-standing place in the UYPL calendar, namely September Weekend. The first was held, like its successors, at Great Hucklow and was billed as being *"of a social nature"*. It was declared *"an outstanding success"* and it was decided to hold another in 1949.

BUY ended 1948 by announcing that December's issue would be the last. However, in his editorial Franklyn Johnson wrote that *"our New Year present to you will be the first issue of our new magazine, 'The Young Unitarian'."* That too was destined to 'run and run'. The first issue of what UYPLers would always call *"TYU"* duly appeared in January 1949 – with Franklyn Johnson as editor. It was clearly printed with a pale blue cover and contained a powerful message from National President Kathleen Twining. She wrote: *"...youth is the life blood of our Churches. We are the new growth, the new branches and the young green leaves, that year by year help the old tree to take on a new lease of life."*

The February issue contained an article on *'The Crusade for World Government'* by Basil Short. Referring to Olaf Stapledon's excellent sci-fi novel, *'Last and First Men'*, Basil wrote, *"The world divides into fewer groups until there is a final conflict between the last two rivals and a world state emerges."* Basil seems to doubt the desirability of this scenario and asks a question that reads very awkwardly today: *"There are serious problems. Will the Russians come in? What about the preponderance of coloured peoples?"* More comfortably there is an article by Henry Harris Cheetham, *'The League and the REYD'*, which includes news of the first General Assembly Youth Sunday on 6th March. On this day, as on the first Sunday in March for many years following, young people – especially UYPLers – would *"occupy our pulpits and declare their faith based on their hopes, ideals and aspirations."* Reflecting on that Youth Sunday, April's *TYU* reported, *"In the majority of churches having UYPL branches, members of the League were either completely responsible for the service or took part in it."* *TYU* rightly predicted that *"The first Sunday in March should become one of the most important dates in our calendar."*

Another event announced in the February issue of *TYU* was what was now called the Northern (as opposed to North-West) Drama Festival, indicating a trend towards expanding its appeal for both entrants and audiences. It was to be held at Bank Street, Bury, on 26th March. No less than ten branches were reported to have entered, of

which (April's *TYU* afterwards reported) the winners were Pendleton UYPL from Salford, with Stalybridge second and Rochdale third.

UYPL's 1949 AGM was held at Great Hucklow on 28th/29th May. The new National President for 1949/50 was Margaret Smith. It is worth noting that she was succeeding a woman, Kathleen Twining, and was the fourth woman to hold the League's Presidency since its foundation. And furthermore Margaret was the first of seven women to hold the office in the 1950s, a decade which saw more female National Presidents than any other in which UYPL existed. This may have had something to do with the fact that this was the period (from 1949 to 1960) when compulsory National Service took most young men into the Armed Forces for a period of two years. The 1940s had seen UYPL survive the Second World War and then recover to rebuild its strength, its activity and its vision. It seemed set fair to enter a new decade, but the 1950s would see many changes in the wider society in which the League existed, few of them favourable to the long-term prospects for organised religion.

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 4: the 1950s

1950

By 1950 UYPL was poised for what was to be its most successful decade, consolidating the post-war revival of the later 1940s. However, we learn from the first *TYU* of the year that the magazine had had financial problems and was going from monthly to quarterly publication and that it had a new editor, Robert Foulkes of Rawtenstall. The issue had an article by Raymond Hodgkinson on the desirability of a 'balanced programme' of activities for UYPL branches, something on which he was to write more extensively a couple of years later. Raymond also wrote in the *Inquirer* that spring (22nd April) urging support for a "*Unitarian Forward Movement*". Still serving in the Forces at that point, Raymond wrote, "*Everywhere I go in the Unitarian Movement I see the crying need for a direct...challenge to people and churches...They need a refreshing vision.*" With most congregations, what he called "*our plodding churches*" run by elderly people, their "*ultimate future*" depended on young people, and "*We in the UYPL will do all we can to secure and inspire and train them.*"

Other UYPL news in the *Inquirer* in 1950 included a report that Hinckley branch's annual service included "*questions put by members of the YPL to the minister...his answers being illustrated by appropriate hymns and readings.*" Clearly he had plenty of notice! At Cefn Coed the junior UYPLers assisted the Rev. Jacob Davies in the devotions at a Sunday School festival. On Youth Sunday a "*Tea Table Conference*" at Park Street Chapel, Hull, concluded that "*Youth Organisations should give more time to the study of the Unitarian Gospel.*"

South-East Region held a weekend meeting at Oxford which considered "*the special problems confronting members in the London area.*" It also welcomed "*a young German Unitarian*" named Harro Paysen, who gave "*an interesting account of...Unitarianism in Germany since the war.*" This was significant as German Unitarians had had what might be called a doubtful record during Nazi rule. Nevertheless, Harro brought greetings to UYPL's AGM and, according to National President Margaret Smith, "*travelled a good deal among our churches and UYPL branches.*" Later in the year, South-East Region UYPL, jointly with London Unitarian Sunday Schools, held a "*mixed swimming gala*" and a "*social evening at Hackney*". Another snippet from the South-East: "*Next year the Festival of Britain will call for still further efforts, plans for which are now being discussed.*"

Held in April (15th & 22nd) at Monton Unitarian Church, the fourth Drama Festival was now dubbed 'Northern' and although nine of the ten entries were from the North-West, the other was from Yorkshire in the persons of Bradford's Broadway Avenue branch. The Festival winners were Bank Street, Bury and the runners-up were Rochdale.

"The practice of helpful friendliness"

At its Annual Meetings in April 1950 the General Assembly celebrated its 21st anniversary, and Margaret Smith gave a speech there that was reported in the *Inquirer* (6th May) under the heading, '*Youth and the Churches*'. Among the points she made was the declaration that "*Only through action could faith be made known*" and that in society as it was in 1950, "*the individual was in danger of being overwhelmed by*

mass organisation.” In this situation, said Margaret, there seemed to be little opportunity for what she charmingly called, *“the practice of helpful friendliness.”* On UYPL specifically, its National President spoke of *“the value of the renewing of youth in the life of the churches,”* and told her audience that the League had 60 branches aiming at a *“balanced programme of activities”*. Margaret chaired UYPL’s 1950 AGM in May, which got a surprisingly downbeat report by Robert Foulkes in TYU: *“The feeling I was left with...was one of doubtfulness for the future of UYPL. Many things were wrong...”* Among those specified were *“the poor attendance”, “apathy”, “the absence of teen-agers, and the consequent absence of rebellion.”*

German links renewed

The AGM saw the National Presidency of UYPL pass to Dorothy Smith from Margaret Smith, but in June Margaret wrote an account of the organisation represented by Harro Paysen at the AGM, which she refers to as *“German Unitarian Youth”* and which she had visited the previous year at their Second Annual Meeting. Proposing as she did closer links between this group and UYPL, Margaret was touching on a sensitive issue only five years after the war, but she could still write: *“For it is in creating a bond of friendly feeling and helpfulness between like-minded groups of young people of different nationalities that a real and lasting contribution can be made towards world peace.”* Of her time with the German Unitarian Youth she wrote, *“They hoped I would take news of them back to England and that they would be able to get to know more about our UYPL...Isn’t that the way real peace begins, with mutual understanding and concern on the part of individuals?”* Margaret concludes her account – sent to me by her husband, the late Rev. Phillip Hewett – with this positive comment about the German group, *“They deserve our sincere and active encouragement.”*

1950’s IRF Conference was held at Great Hucklow. UYPLer Ron McGraw wrote of it in the *Inquirer* (26th August): *“Out of this...Conference has come the knowledge that...IRF has a great part to play in the world-wide liberal religious movement.”* Also on an international note, there was a report by the Rev. Margaret Barr in the Summer issue of TYU announcing the formation of a new Unitarian youth movement in the Khasi Hills of North-East India called Seng Samla (Young People’s League) and involving *“some hundreds of young Unitarians”* Activities were summarised as *“Worship, Service, Recreation”* but, Margaret Barr wrote, *“the greatest of these is worship.”*

1951

Drama Festival goes national

Drama Festival finally went national in 1951, with a Welsh winning entry from Trebanos. Runners up in the seven-entry field were Pendleton with Bury third. The Festival was held at Dukinfield in April. UYPL’s 1951 AGM was said to have been *“a tremendous success”* with *“a record number...present”*, according to the *Inquirer* (19th May). The new National President was Edith Lee of Mossley and the outgoing President, Dorothy Smith, was reported to have preached *“a great sermon”* in the Old Chapel on the Sunday morning. Apparently, *“It was a moving moment in the life of our League.”*

TYU’s Three-year plan

In its *Spring Number* in 1951, *TYU* editor Keith Treacher announced a 'Three Year Plan' for UYPL's magazine. Over that period Keith intended *TYU* to produce "a kind of printed workshop...showing what we as young Unitarians think about things." The plan (which I don't think was ever fully completed) was this: Year One – 'Unitarians and Personal Problems'; Year Two – 'Unitarians and the Church'; Year Three – 'Unitarians and the Community'. The writers were to include Unitarians and non-Unitarians and one of the latter evidently caused Keith some embarrassment. Writing in the June issue, which focussed on adolescence and growing-up, an anonymous 15-year old girl attacked "the churchy way of looking at things". "The church talks a lot of rubbish about 'going too far'," she wrote regarding sex, and added, "So long as nobody gets hurt, why can't we go as far as we want?" Keith, while rejecting "out of date prudery", felt the need to denounce "erotic self-indulgence" and to say, "don't use other persons merely for satisfaction of your self-indulgence."

Although *TYU* was largely devoted to the wholesome subject of marriage in September 1951 it also continued a series of songs deemed suitable for a 'Branch Song Sheet'. The song selected that month seems rather an odd choice. Entitled 'Morphine Bill and Cocaine Sue' it is about two junkies who, having failed to get a fix, commit suicide. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust", go the merry lyrics, "if cocaine don't get you, morphine must." The moral of the song? "There ain't no sense in sniffing snow" and the refrain offers the invitation, "Honey have a (sniff), have a (sniff) on me." I wonder how many UYPLers in 1951 knew what that meant? Whether they did or not, that song remained a UYPL favourite until the 1960s!

UYPL's links abroad feature in an "International Issue" of *TYU* in December 1951. At the time the President of IRF was UYPLer and minister Ronald McGraw of Birmingham. Ron wrote, "Just as our UYPL seeks to establish fellowship on a national basis, the IRF seeks to...extend the fellowship...to people living in other countries." Under the heading "Links With Many Lands" there was news of a German group camping at Flagg, the visit of some UYPLers to Offenbach as guests of the Freireligiose youth group, and the journey of thirty young British Unitarians to the IRF Conference in Switzerland. UYPLer Keith Walton of Stockport wrote of this that "each day was started by a short service" and "most...days there were discussion groups and meetings." One speaker was the Rev. Fred Kenworthy who "helped us to a better understanding of our place as young religious liberals."

1952

The *Inquirer* editor, E. G. Lee wrote in praise of *TYU* in the issue of 26th January 1952. Writing that *TYU* "goes its own way" he continues, "it is a good way because it is courageous." He refers particularly to an article by "a young Unitarian married woman", named Helen Wardworth, in which she wrote, "I honestly believe that Christ by his life and teaching can offer us a way to the abundant life..." However, Lee commented mysteriously that in "these words...addressed...to young Unitarians...there is much to be deeply concerned about." In its March issue, though, *TYU* moved on to the subject of the church and the accusation that it dealt in "childish imagination", to which Keith Treacher, as editor, responded that *TYU* would now "be out to show how unreasonable (and unscientific) is this attitude." In support of his view Keith included articles by the Rev. Basil Short and Jean Henneth, and in the interests of balance he also published an article, 'Why I Object to the Church' by a non-Unitarian "youth club leader" called Stanley Rose.

Meanwhile UYPL activity got off to a start in 1952 with a “*Young People’s Weekend Conference*” held in Hull on 23rd/24th February and reported in the *Inquirer* (22nd March). Speakers were the Rev. Henry Harris Cheetham on ‘*What is Unitarianism?*’, Dudley Richards on ‘*The Young Unitarian’s Approach to Community*’, and Raymond Hodgkinson on ‘*Unitarianism and Youth*’. Raymond also preached at the Sunday morning service, which was led by UYPL Vice-President, Dorothy Smith.

‘Young People in the Unitarian Church’

1952 saw two major developments for UYPL. The first was the publication by the Lindsey Press of a substantial booklet called ‘*Young People in the Unitarian Church*’. Written by leading UYPLer J. Raymond Hodgkinson, it developed his idea of ‘*The Balanced Programme*’ as the way for a League branch to organise its activities. Raymond argued that Unitarian youth activities “*must be directly related to that real world outside*”, that they must bring together “*the needs of young people*” and those “*of the Unitarian movement*”, and that the UYPL group must be an integral “*part of a church*”. He then dealt with what had always been the four principles guiding UYPL activity: worship, study, service and recreation.

Of worship Raymond wrote, “*Modern young people and many Unitarian groups don’t like church services and don’t go.*” His answer was for the young people themselves to be involved in planning, composing and conducting acts of worship, both in church and in their own youth settings, worship that was more interesting and relevant to their needs than what was usually on offer. Of study Raymond thought this sounded rather dull, especially for youngsters who were already studying at school or college. In its place he suggested ‘*exploration*’, with young people choosing things in which they were genuinely interested and looking more deeply into them. Raymond wrote that young people “*are ready to search for great truths and great ideas*” by means other than “*study in its usual sense.*” Of service, Raymond suggested that UYPLers should work for their own churches in whatever ways presented themselves, that they should reach out to young people in churches where no UYPL branch yet existed, and that they should involve themselves in working to improve their local communities. He also mentioned specifically “*working for peace*” as “*War is our greatest social evil.*” Fourthly, of recreation Raymond wrote that, despite what some may think, this needed planning if it was to be varied and attractive. He commented that “*many groups have incredibly dull and badly organized recreational activities, and consequently lose members.*” Activities that could be part of this “*essential*” aspect of a UYPL branch’s recreation might include games/sports (including leagues and tournaments), sing-songs, playing records, holding socials and dances, and outdoor activities like camping and youth hostelling.

When it came to organising the balanced programme, Raymond stressed the importance of involving the membership. An “*ideas evening*” and “*giving everyone a job*” were part of this, so producing a “*Programme Calendar*” to which everyone had contributed. In discussing ‘*Leadership*’ Raymond set out the classic democratic ideal of UYPL, writing “*every member is given equal rights in every aspect of the life of the group.*” At every level UYPL “*is to be an organization of young people, run by young people, for young people.*” “*Co-operative leadership*” was the UYPL way, not dominance by one or two individuals, with office-holders – Chairman (well, it was 1952!), Secretary, Treasurer, etc. – being elected by the membership. Raymond

did concede that an “*adult advisor*” – such as the minister – might possibly have a role.

Raymond addressed two particular problems that UYPL faced. One was the difficulties of catering for such a wide age range – 16 to 35 – in a single branch, not to mention the younger teenagers in the junior membership and the older associate members. This was something that UYPL was soon to address. The other problem was “*Developing the Youthless Church*”, bearing in mind that “*two thirds of Unitarian churches have no youth activities of any kind*” and mostly “*no Sunday Schools either.*” Raymond had some suggestions, but they were predicated on the idea that there were some youngsters around somewhere who might be contacted and drawn in. He made this wildly optimistic statement: “*there is not a single Unitarian church where a youth group of some kind could not be started.*”

An appendix listed “*A Hundred Subjects for Meetings*” grouped under headings like “*Exploring Unitarianism*”, “*Our Human Selves*”, “*Social Progress*” and “*World Problems*”. The fifteen subjects listed under this last heading included “*Racial Prejudices: From Ignorance or Justified?*”, “*Can Religion ever sanction war?*”, “*Communism and Western Democracy: Live and Let Live?*” and “*Raw Materials – an Endless Supply?*” There was plenty for UYPLers to get their teeth into, and Raymond Hodgkinson’s little book gives us a comprehensive picture of what UYPL in the 1950s aspired to be and probably was.

A Matter of Age

Since its foundation in 1934 the age range for full membership of UYPL was 16 to 35. By 1952 this was increasingly being seen as anachronistic and when UYPL held its 1952 AGM at Great Hucklow on 24th/25th May it decided that the time had come for a change. This was the main issue on the agenda and, as Raymond Hodgkinson wrote in his report for the *Inquirer* (14th June), “*the delegates showed their mettle over the resolution to make 15 to 30 years the age for full membership.*” He added that “*The decision was declared to be an expression of faith in youth*” and a recognition that “*already most of UYPL’s members are younger than 25.*” The AGM was attended by “*More than a hundred young people from many churches*” and “*their instinctive sense of purpose*”, their “*youthful vigour and gaiety,*” so impressed a visiting observer from the Women’s League that she “*confessed her excitement at discovering that such meetings take place in the Unitarian movement.*” An interest and a concern about UYPL’s geographical spread is also evident in Raymond’s report. He noted that there was “*for the first time a very strong delegation from Birmingham*” and tells how three delegates from South Wales “*endured two all-night journeys to be there.*” And he also pointed out a glaring gap in UYPL’s coverage: “*How long shall it be before Scotland is also represented?*” In the elections, Geoffrey Waywell of Stand Chapel, Whitefield, succeeded Edith Lee of Mossley as National President. The office of General (later National) Secretary passed from Franklyn Johnson to Raymond Hodgkinson. The AGM weekend included such customary ingredients as the Saturday-night social and “*midnight ramble*” and Sunday-morning worship in the Old Chapel. At the service the preacher was outgoing National President Edith Lee who, wrote Dudley Richards (*Inquirer*, 5th July), “*crowned her year of leadership with a fine sermon.*” According to the summary in June’s *TYU*, Edith told the congregation, “*we do not stop at being a member of UYPL, we are also members of a Unitarian Church which is trying to make its influence felt in the world*

of today.” Our “*adventurous faith in the future*”, she said, is “*a Living One, Vital, Truthful at all times, and Tolerant.*” She also urged UYPLers to extend that tolerance to older Unitarians with whom they might feel impatient: “*Remember*” she warned, “*the boot will be on the other foot when we have children who are old enough to become members of UYPL.*”

The other UYPL national gathering that year, September Weekend, although primarily social did discuss the League’s ideals and decided that “*Possibly the greatest value of UYPL...is the contribution it makes to those who pass through it.*” There was also a “*Candlelight Service in the open air*” with the “*theme The Glory and Grace of the World.*” The *Inquirer* reporter commented, “*It was moving to see the wide semi-circle of candles and lit faces in the darkness, to hear the readers’ voices on the still air, and to feel the intense silence at the end.*”

1953

Welsh Dramatic Dominance

1953 saw the second in a remarkable sequence of Welsh dominance at UYPL’s Drama Festival. Trebanos branch had won for the first time in 1951 but now in 1953 they won again (when the Festival was held at Bury on 24th & 28th March). And they were not the only Welsh entrants. Swansea branch were there too, finishing in fifth place out of eight. The runners-up that year were Pendleton branch. In 1954 (at Dukinfield, 2nd/3rd April) Trebanos won for the third time and Swansea came second, the two branches having brought with them a coachload of supporters to boost the attendance of “*about 200*” according to *TYU* (June, 1954). Trebanos didn’t enter in 1955 but Welsh dominance was upheld for one more year by a victorious Swansea branch. Their highly delighted team of Mary Landry, Julianne Richards, Dudley Evans, Edna Sturdy, Peter Jones, Hilary Ford, Joyce Shufflebotham and Glenys Williams were pictured in May’s *TYU*. The Festival that year was held at Brookfield Church, Gorton, in Manchester. In second place out of the four entrants was Renshaw Street, Manchester, branch.

The 1953 AGM: New Objects

Other reports from 1953 are few, but the *Inquirer* (6th June) tells us something about the UYPL AGM at Great Hucklow. About one hundred attended from 20 of the 47 branches that were reported to exist. The removal of moribund branches from the list was said to account for the decline from the previous year’s figure of 56. Keeping track of precisely how many branches were functioning at any one time was always a problem. The total membership was said to be down from 1240 to 1150, although this had been the year when the new reduced age-range had come into effect. There were new branches too, including one at Essex Church, Kensington. One innovation was the decision to give the *TYU* editor a seat on National Committee. The new National President was Nora Jackson of Bury and when she wrote “*A Message from the President*” in the February 1954 *TYU* she reported that the 1953 AGM had “*adopted new objects*” for UYPL. These were:

1. *To bring the Young People of the Unitarian Churches into closer relationship by uniting them in one Federation.*
2. *To promote balanced youth programmes of worship, exploration, service and recreation in all Unitarian churches.*
3. *To encourage every member to be an active supporter of his [sic] Church.*

4. *To advance by thought, word and deed, a religion that combines reverence for the past with adventurous faith for the future.*
5. *To exploit the spiritual resources of free religion for the service of youth.*

Nora also gave an insight into her personal faith as it related to UYPL. She wrote: “...we can always rely on God, and I am grateful that through UYPL I have the opportunity of gaining the best from our religion...Truth and goodness are often very hard to find in this world of changing values and we, the young people of the Unitarian Churches, must show...that we still cherish these qualities.” Nora believed that UYPLers “have ‘got something’ in addition to the good times we have.”

Nora’s article also included a lengthy summary of UYPL activities around the country, including regional rallies in North-East Lancashire and Yorkshire and Christmas and New Year parties in East Cheshire, North-West and Midland Regions. North-East Lancashire had held a party preceded by worship and “*Hum and Buzz*” sessions to discuss such subjects as “*smog, holidays, horoscopes, international experiences and IRF, television and church attendances.*” Newchurch branch had held a “*Supersonic Social*” with games and dances “*in keeping with jet-propelled flight*”!

UYPL was always to have its detractors who accused it of being frivolous and only interested in having a good time, but the League always had its defenders too. One was the Rev. Dudley Richards who wrote in an article, ‘*An Approach to Youth Work*’, in the same issue of *TYU*: “*The Unitarian Young People’s League includes in its ranks a number of giddy-headed young people bent chiefly on their own pleasure. It also includes a number of young men and young women of fine character who are devoted to the cause and give it faithful and intelligent service, consecrating to it a very large portion of their leisure time. The worth of these...members is not helped by sweeping criticisms.*”

1954

Dudley preached at a rally in York in January 1954 when UYPLers from branches in Yorkshire and beyond held a workshop on the aims of the League and its relationship with churches and Sunday Schools. The League’s serious side was also reflected in *TYU* articles by UYPLers championing, on the one hand, Conscientious Objection (by Donald Dunkley) and, on the other, National Service (by Edward Berry). Among the UYPL activities reported in the spring of 1954 was a South-East Region Youth Sunday weekend held at Essex Church, Kensington, and attended by about 60 UYPLers (*Inquirer*, 3rd April). Youth Sunday worship elsewhere in London that weekend was led by Nora Jackson at Kilburn, Geoff Waywell at Hackney and Dudley Richards at Brixton.

UYPL’s 1954 AGM in May was unremarkable. Attendance was given as 95 (*Inquirer* and *TYU*) and, as usual, money problems were reported. One topic of discussion was the wooden Presidential Roll, affectionately known as the “*coffin lid*”. It was decided that henceforth this cumbersome object should reside permanently in the Old Chapel at Great Hucklow, as it still does, and be replaced by something more suitable for UYPL Presidents to take round with them. Nora Jackson, Alice Crombie (Nora’s successor as President) and Raymond Hodgkinson were photographed for *TYU* with

the “*coffin lid*”. In her sermon on Sunday morning Nora reflected on “*the idea of God’s kingdom as shown in various hymns.*”

The other big gathering in 1954 was September Weekend, reported for *TYU* by Martin Davies. Previously involving only a one-night stay, the Weekend was now showing signs of expanding to two nights with “*about seventeen of us there on Friday night.*” Nevertheless, the official programme didn’t start till Saturday afternoon with a talk by a former prisoner of war. The social that evening was organised by North-East Lancs. Region and was evidently a great success. Martin commented that “*Anybody who did not have a thoroughly good time...had no right to be there.*” He also recorded that the “*M.C.*” for the occasion was “*Mr. Neville Kenyon of the yellow waistcoat*”. The company included “*jivers from Hinckley, singers from Cheshire, Virginia Reelers from Yorkshire, and Continentals who created havoc by attempting Scottish dances.*” A “*quiet epilogue*” and the traditional midnight hike ended Saturday’s proceedings. Sunday morning worship was “*sincerely and thoughtfully*” led by National President Alice Crombie, with the help of readers Eileen Kielty and Philip Butler. The preacher was the Rev. Dudley Richards who, according to Martin Davies’s report, lamented that “*many Unitarians...did not think deeply enough*” and were wrong to regard “*all other denominations as intellectually weak merely because they recited creeds.*” A first-timer at September Weekend, 18-year-old Doris Cross of Preston, wrote to *TYU* to express her appreciation. She wrote, “*Everyone was so friendly that I felt that I had always belonged at Hucklow...Meeting young people from other Unitarian Churches, feeling the warmth of real friendship amongst young people whom I had never met before and joining in a religious service conducted by young people for young people made me realise the importance and meaning of the simple and natural things of life.*”

Dudley Richards was by this time Secretary of the GA’s Religious Education & Youth Department (REYD), with which UYPL always had a close relationship while being independent of it. That autumn of 1954, Dudley held two of his recently-introduced Youth Leadership Courses, one at Great Hucklow and the other at Highgate Unitarian Church in London. Senior UYPLers were among the speakers and 23 young people attended “*from as far as Plymouth, Trowbridge, Bristol and Birmingham*” (*TYU*, December 1954).

Developments across the Atlantic were of interest to UYPLers and a *TYU* article (August 1954) by Jean Grant reported the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist youth organisations there to form “*one new organisation – the Liberal Religious Youth*” (LRY). Like UYPL it was completely independent and “*of youth, by youth, and for youth.*” But unlike UYPL its age-range was a more youthful 14 to 25. The merger anticipated by seven years the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations in North America. A first hand experience of LRY was reported by the Rev. Eric Shirvell Price in *TYU* (April 1956). He focuses on LRY worship services, of which he attended several, including an impressive one in the open air. “*They were all of a consistently high standard*”, he wrote, and concluded, “*I came to feel that the young people...have a naturally true sense of worship and...give expression to what they find true, beautiful and joyous in their own lives.*”

1955

Celebrating UYPL’s 21st

1955 saw the 21st birthday of UYPL and in April (16th/17th) a weekend rally was held in London to mark the occasion. A meeting at Essex Church, Kensington, on the Saturday afternoon commenced with devotions “*conducted with sincere reverence*” by UYPL’s 1949/50 National President, Margaret Smith – by this time married to the Rev. Phillip Hewett. Another UYPL veteran, the Rev. Keith Treacher, then chaired a series of “*short talks*”. UYPLers were there from the South, the Midlands and the North and they all enjoyed the Saturday evening social. Sunday morning worship at Highgate Unitarian Church was led by Ivan Knowlson and the preacher was another former President of UYPL, Franklyn Johnson, who had also been General Secretary in the immediate post-war years. The service was, according to *TYU* reporter Derek Jackson, “*a true inspiration to all who were present.*”

The anniversary was also marked in *TYU* by a letter from the League’s first General Secretary, the Rev. Henry Harris Cheetham, who had also been National President in 1937/38. Henry wrote: “*The League has made an important contribution to the life of our Churches in the past twenty-one years, disturbed by a world war, critical years in which democracy and liberalism have been tested to the utmost. That the League is able to take part in such a birthday after the bitter experience of recent years is a testimony to...its vitality and staying power. It is a matter of thankfulness that during these years...young people...cared enough about Unitarianism to...run a League of Youth, for youth and by youth...The future lies with youth; it alone can give the inspiration, drive and vision needed by the Churches...In the early days...we laboured against open opposition and without financial help...That the League ever came into existence is a marvel...The founders are happy that today a new generation shows their devotion and service. Carry on UYPL – forward to better things.*”

Bearing in mind the occasion, the AGM in 1955 (May 21st/22nd) seems to have been rather downbeat, with only 18 branches represented. Also it was reported that “*nearly half of the total number of branches*” were in arrears with their subscriptions, some by as many as four or five years. Some had never paid at all and others had disaffiliated still owing money. It was little wonder that UYPL always seemed short of money at this time.. The meeting saw the creation of three new regions – North Lancs, West Lancs. and South Lancs. (which included Manchester) - out of their two predecessors. Bearing in mind that there were also the Merseyside and East Cheshire Regions, this configuration illustrates just how dominated by this part of England UYPL was. In the elections Barbara Johnson of Swinton was chosen as the National President for 1955/56. Outgoing President Alice Crombie preached on Sunday morning in a service conducted by Martin Davies.

The 21st anniversary celebrations continued at September Weekend, as reported in November’s *TYU*. Amongst other things, there were reminiscences of the League’s early days from some former National Presidents: Rev. John Kielty, Rev. Basil Short and Franklyn Johnson. The Rev. Dudley Richards addressed ‘*The Future of UYPL*’ and stressed that the “*development of our activities must always take place within, through, and for our churches.*” At the Sunday morning service the preacher was another veteran of the League’s beginnings, the Rev. Arthur Vallance, and the service also saw the handover of the wooden Presidential Roll, or “*coffin lid*”, to the care of the Great Hucklow Old Chapel.

But although 1955 was supposed to be a year of celebration for UYPL, it also saw some strident criticism coming from within the League itself. One such critic was the teenage editor of *TYU*, Sylvia Tempest. In a hard-hitting editorial, written at Great Hucklow as she watched “*the night fall over the distant hills*”, she slammed “*the apathy with regard to Kinver Camp, to the national and regional rallies, and to the League in general.*” And although “*the branch members themselves*” did not escape criticism, Sylvia reserved her sharpest attacks for “*those who govern the activities of the League*”, meaning “*National Committee, the National and Regional Officers*”, and, for good measure, “*the Annual General Meeting.*” Poor leadership, she felt, meant the neglect of UYPL’s “*five neatly set out and carefully constructed aims*” and the failure of branches to achieve “*a carefully planned and balanced programme.*” She cited the case of a branch that had been closed down by its church secretary who had accused it of being a “*romantic hot-pot*”! Youngsters aged 12 to 15 were being lost to Unitarianism “*because the church has nothing to offer them*” and because “*only a handful...have heard of the UYPL.*” Sylvia was highly critical of a decision to disband UYPL’s Publicity Committee which, she said, “*should be the most important sub-committee in the League.*”

An anonymous “*Observer*” also wrote in the same September *TYU* complaining of apathy and the difficulty of persuading branch members to “*attend regional and national rallies*” This needed to be addressed so that “*When they see what good times we have there, they will surely carry on supporting them.*” Ivan Knowlson was another discontented voice. Writing in November’s *TYU* he asked, “*Consider our League. What is it? It is first and foremost a religious movement. Yet in how many of our branches does worship play an important part? Indeed, how many have serious activity at all?*” The ideal of the “*balanced programme*” was likely to be confined to “*a forgotten publicity leaflet*” and yet, “*in these anxious days, when the mushroom shape of the atom bomb looms large...Unitarians have a unique contribution to make.*” The urgent need to live up to the Unitarian principles of “*Tolerance, Understanding, The Brotherhood of Man*” applied to all Unitarians, said Ivan, and that included “*all members of UYPL.*”

Another complaint being heard was about rowdy behaviour by UYPLers in the village of Great Hucklow and the failure of some of them to actually attend the meetings when there for the AGM weekend. Fortunately it was not all like this in 1955. There was the usual range of UYPL activity, for example a work camp at Ipswich on 29th April/1st May. Work camps, more often than not devoted to working on church buildings or in their grounds, were a very popular UYPL activity and the historic Meeting House at Ipswich was actually to benefit from a total of three. This one, the first of them (reported in the July *TYU*), involved “*a motley crew of London UYPLers*” whose aim was to “*clean up the Meeting House*” which at that time was in rather a poor state. *TYU* tells how “*The floor was swept and pews and gallery washed. An efficient method of throwing wet rags eliminated water problems for the gallery men but caused acute anxiety and much discomfort.*” Next morning the work-campers were back in the Meeting House for a youth service – said to be “*moving*” – led by the minister, the Rev. Phillip Hewett. They were still there for the evening service too. Like so many such events during the life of UYPL, this weekend combined the objects of service to the churches, worship and recreation – because they were always great fun.

One of the gaps in UYPL's geographical coverage had always been Scotland but in December 1955's *TYU* we read that some senior UYPLers had been in Edinburgh for a Youth Leadership Course and had used the occasion to try and correct this situation. *TYU* reported that "*Barbara Johnson, Shirley Roberts and Geoff Waywell...explained the ideals, history and workings of the League.*" Two years later, in December 1957, *TYU* announced that a Scottish Region of UYPL had been formed.

1956

UYPL and the "race problem"

On March 3rd 1956 a South Lancs. Region rally, hosted by the Blackley branch in Manchester and reported in *TYU*, discussed an increasingly pressing issue, namely "*the colour bar in Britain and the reasons for colour prejudice.*" Subjects raised in response included the traditional symbolism associating "*black with evil and white with good*" and "*fear of mixed marriages and the consequences socially for the children.*" It was suggested that there was "*a lack of appreciation of each other's society and culture*" and a need for "*education on all sides*". Later in the year *TYU* returned to the subject (November issue) with an article by Tom Wardle of Stannington branch, Sheffield. Entitled '*A Job for UYPL*', the article said that "*UYPL can recover its vitality and strength only when it recovers its sense of service, its mission to the world.*" Of the "*desperate human problems crying out for...attention*" Tom singled out that of race. Prophetically, he wrote "*Some people think this is over when in fact it's just beginning.*" Seeing the problem as both local and global, Tom wrote, "*...the thing is being allowed to drift...and who knows what may yet happen in Bulawayo, Algiers, Moss Side, Tiger Bay or Brixton.*" What is UYPL doing about it? Tom asked. He had his own suggestions.

Firstly, a "*Unitarian Race Relations Group*" should be set up, with UYPL representation. Secondly, UYPL should "*organise without delay an inter-racial study conference at Hucklow*" with "*not less than 25 coloured immigrants or students present.*" Terminology has, of course, changed greatly since 1956! Thirdly, Tom suggested "*inter-racial dances, socials, discussions and conferences*" and the formation of "*inter-racial groups attached to local churches.*" Fourthly he raised the possibility of an "*inter-racial work-camp.*" What became of Tom Wardle's suggestions? One result was a significant conference at Great Hucklow in April 1957, of which more later.

In the meantime the issue was raised again at the 1956 Drama Festival, held at Chowbent Chapel, Atherton, on 24th March and reported in May's *TYU*. Among the six entries was one from Renshaw Street, Manchester, branch, called '*Colour Bar*'. It didn't win though, that honour going to Stalybridge, with Swinton in second place.

Enter the President-Elect

From the foundation of UYPL each AGM had elected a National President who served for the next twelve months, and then automatically became Vice-President for another year. The 1956 AGM introduced a change, voting into existence the office of President-Elect. Henceforth the AGM would choose someone to serve for a year as President-Elect, after which they would succeed to the National Presidency. After that they would become Vice-President as before. The 1956 AGM had to elect both a National President and a President-Elect for the year 1956/57. The people they chose

were, respectively, Shirley Roberts and Ivan Knowlson. Guest speaker at the AGM was the Rev. John Kielty, representing the General Assembly. A former UYPLer himself, he spoke of the “*urgent need for more ministers and appealed to UYPL to find ten students [for the ministry] each year.*” This ambitious target was never reached but UYPL continued to supply the Unitarian movement with new ministers well into the 1970s.

1957

Regional activity

In January 1957 *TYU* included a round-up of recent regional activities in UYPL. Ivan Knowlson reported on a “*new start*” for South-East Region. Over fifty people had attended East Cheshire Region’s Carol Service and Christmas party at Ashton-under-Lyne. At West Lancs. Region’s Christmas party the music was provided by the skiffle group from Halliwell Road branch, Bolton, “*complete with tea-chest bass.*” North Lancs. and Merseyside Regions had also held rallies, as had Yorkshire Region. This one was held in Hull and, according to reporter David Craven of Broadway Avenue, Bradford, included a visit to the house of anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce. Reflecting UYPL’s concern for issues of race, David wrote, “*When we saw the whips...it brought home the terrible conditions of those negroes,*” adding, “*it took our thoughts to others who still suffer from prejudice and discrimination.*”

‘Towards a Better World’

In April 1957 Tom Wardle’s call for an “*inter-racial*” UYPL conference came to fruition at Great Hucklow. It was reported in *TYU* in May and July under the title ‘*Towards a Better World*’. The 23 participants were said to come “*from both sides of the Equator*” and they discussed the issue of race as it was manifested in such things as employment, accommodation, education and the United Nations. Ignorance and prejudice were identified as the particular challenges needing attention, and the way forward for UYPLers was seen as encouraging “*personal contact*” and “*bringing both sides together*”. An Indian student who was there commented that “*The questions of UYPL members showed they were deeply interested in the colour-bar.*” So-called “*mixed marriages*” came up, prompting the extraordinary question of whether the children of such unions “*were defective*”. This nonsense was ably and good humouredly dealt with by a Jamaican participant. The conference split into groups to identify “*10 points for racial harmony.*” These were summed up as “*fostering contacts and agitating for tolerance.*” Worship in the Old Chapel took the form of “*an inter-religious service*” led, appropriately enough, by Tom Wardle. The conference was highly thought of by that Indian student, whose name was Karna Archary. He wrote that it was “*outstanding in its lack of unnecessary formalities*” and that “*all participants were relaxed and contributed freely to discussion, tackling the business with gusto.*” One UYPLer commented that “*It was terrific; one of the best weekends we’ve had.*”

The conference was a suitable riposte to an article by Martin Davies in April’s *TYU* in which he accused UYPL rallies of “*being frivolous and irresponsible*”, comparing them unfavourably with one that South-East Region had held and which had involved “*a first rate series of lectures*”, although he did concede that there had been “*a lot of pleasure thrown in.*” I don’t know if Martin thought that skiffle was “*frivolous*” but it featured as the interval entertainment, courtesy of “*enthusiastic lads and lasses*”, at the 1957 Drama Festival. This was held at Bank Street, Bolton, on 16th and 23rd

March, with eleven entries and “*packed houses*”, according to *TYU*. The winners were the Stand Chapel, Whitefield, branch with Platt Chapel, Manchester, joint second with Bank Street, Bury.

This more positive mood continued at the AGM in May. *TYU* (July issue) called it “*the brightest and best for many years*”. Incoming National President, Ivan Knowlson, declared that “*After many years of early development, war-time disruption and post-war reconstruction, the UYPL is at last ready to move forward.*” The year was said to have included successes but the remaining causes for concern were “*lack of support*” for Kinver camp, the problematical “*finance position*”, the lack of good quality UYPL publications and the League’s inability “*to exert greater influence among Unitarian congregations.*” A new National Commission and a finance committee had been formed to address UYPL’s problems. With regard to supporting Kinver it is worth noting that 1957’s successful September Weekend was held there (6th/9th September) rather than at Great Hucklow. In the elections at the AGM Joe Fairhurst of Hindley was chosen as the new President-Elect. Unwinding at the Saturday evening social involved “*a surprising amount of energy...especially when it came to...Rock’n’Roll.*” Sunday morning worship was led by Norman Bailey and the outgoing National President, Shirley Roberts, preached the sermon.

The IRF Conference in 1957 was held in Switzerland on the theme ‘*Education – Why and How*’. It prompted an interesting reflection in *TYU* (September issue) by Anthony Steel, a London UYPLer who was there. Drawing on Bertrand Russell, he criticised the dismissive educational attitudes to other cultures and asked “*how our schooling affects prospects of peace in the world.*” He instanced such things as the “*condescending glance at the strange habits of the Eskimos or Bushmen*” and the approval of their westernisation, if they are “*not already dying out.*” “*Unitarians*”, Anthony concluded, “*professing belief in the Brotherhood of Man, must press for revision of the present system.*”

On the theme of broadening horizons, an educational trip by UYPLers to the Norwegian Arctic featured in October’s *TYU* that year. Led by the Rev. Keith Treacher, they had spent three-and-a-half weeks in the summer based on the island of Arnoy, observing the wildlife, climbing mountains, exploring a Trollsdalen, and Rockin’n’Rollin’ with local teenagers in the village hall.

More evidence that UYPL rallies were not “*frivolous*” came from two that were held in the autumn. Merseyside Region met in Toxteth on October 12th to consider the beliefs held by Unitarians (*TYU*, November). Topics covered included “*Man, Evil and the Bible*”, predestination, the nature and existence of God, the place of Jesus and his teachings, and the question of religious authority – with reference to the role of ministers. In November, South Lancs. Region met at Chorlton to consider ‘*Youth and Age*’ (*TYU*, January ’58). The participants split into small groups and visited old people’s homes before reassembling to hear talks by workers in the field and ask them questions. One speaker, a nurse, was also a UYPLer. Among the suggestions for further action was this: “*Old people like entertainment and would probably enjoy a skiffle group. And so some of our branches which have skiffle groups plan to give them a few shows*”! What was skiffle? Ask an old person!

1958

1958 brought a change of editor at *TYU*, Neville Kenyon of Stand Chapel, Whitefield, branch succeeding Sylvia Tempest. In May *TYU* reported on the “Youth Rally” at the General Assembly Meetings. One distinguished attender was the new GA President, the Rt. Hon. Chuter Ede MP, whose comment was: “*I have been attending this sort of meeting for sixty years. It is running true to form, but for the first time it has been exhilarating.*”

UYPL’s AGM, held at Great Hucklow on 17th/18th May, saw more changes. Martin Davies took over from Geoff Waywell as General Secretary, and Joe Fairhurst, described in *TYU* as “*everybody’s friend*”, succeeded Ivan Knowlson as National President. One particularly significant change, *TYU* reported, was the appointment of a new warden at Great Hucklow. This was Henry Tittle, a former UYPLer, of whom *TYU* said that he “*kept a fatherly eye on all his young guests*” and wished him “*many happy years at Great Hucklow.*” Henry did indeed have many such years and was always a good friend to UYPLers (including me), although I don’t know that “*fatherly*” is quite the word I would use to describe him! In the AGM a motion from Glasgow branch “*calling for unilateral nuclear disarmament*” was, somewhat surprisingly, lost. At the Sunday morning service Ivan Knowlson “*delivered a very interesting address in his usual challenging manner.*”

UYPL and the Unitarian Movement

In July 1958 *TYU* was asking about the priorities of UYPLers as Unitarians: “*which should they support primarily – their individual chapel or the Unitarian movement as a whole*”? *TYU* inclined to the latter, seeing exclusive parochial attitudes as “*highly dangerous to our future as a vital religious movement.*” All this was in the context of a denominational “*Advance Campaign*” with the wildly optimistic aim of increasing “*the number of Unitarians in the United Kingdom by 50% to 30,000 by 1962.*” But *TYU* was concerned that divisions between Christians and Humanists posed problems and asked “*How can we introduce a set of beliefs acceptable to all congregations?*” “*Divided we stand*”, said *TYU*, “*but for how long?*”

When the newly rebuilt Unitarian Headquarters at Essex Hall were opened in the autumn of 1958, the old one having been bombed in the war, a piece headed ‘*Diary of a Londoner*’ appeared in November’s *TYU* and commented, “*It is hard...to realise that many UYPLers have never seen death drop from the sky in the shape of a V2 or a ‘Doodle-bug’ and have never squatted wearily in the dismal darkness of an Anderson shelter.*” A new generation of UYPLers had arisen since then and “*we are going forward convinced of the world’s need for liberal religion. Let UYPL lead...and it is to the future we must look with hope, with faith, and with determination.*” The point was made that the GA’s General Secretary, the Rev. John Kielty, who had overseen the rebuilding of Essex Hall had “*served his apprenticeship in the UYPL.*”

1959

UYPL’s interest in the ‘race issue’ continued at the 1959 AGM (as reported in June’s *TYU*) where there was “*an excellent discussion on the Colour Problem which ensued from a motion by the Kensington branch.*” Greetings from the General Assembly were brought by the Rev. Arthur Vallance, GA President and one of UYPL’s founding figures. The incoming National President, Alan Curren of Horwich, used the analogy of the football team to say that UYPLers would be a successful one if they were “*united and secure in the knowledge that we have a job of work to do.*” His

friend, the outgoing National President Joe Fairhurst, preached on the Sunday morning in a service conducted by Jill Watling.

June 1959 saw the beginning of World Refugee Year (WRY) and UYPL pledged its support. In July *TYU*, with its new 'red top' heading, carried an appeal from Roy Buckle for UYPLers to give two shillings each "*for Europe's forgotten people*". With a thousand members, UYPL could thus raise £100, Roy said. In the event UYPL was to raise a lot more than that. Special WRY supplements appeared in *TYU* throughout the year. Rather poignantly, December's *TYU* carried the obituary of the Rev. Emma Rosalind Lee, a good friend of UYPL and donor of the Kinver camp-site, who had done so much for Czech refugees in the late 1930s. *TYU* called her a "*generous, brave and kind person.*"

Autumnal Convention

1959 saw the introduction of UYPL's Autumnal Convention. Held at Great Hucklow in late October and/or early November, this was to become an important addition to the League's regular calendar. It was an opportunity for UYPL's officers, National Committee and sub-committees to meet with Regional representatives to "*discuss in an informal atmosphere, the problems and difficulties facing UYPL today.*" According to *TYU* some thirty UYPLers attended this first 'Autumnal' (as it became known) and the "*problems and difficulties*" they faced were "*personnel, dying Branches, apathy of members & the difficulties of all Committees within the League.*" This sounds rather grim but apparently "*It was an exciting & invigorating weekend during which every delegate present contributed towards a team effort...*"

Reports came from the League's various officers, including the following. Camp Secretary Malcolm Sadler, who was "*full of optimism*" about Kinver, Neville Kenyon, who talked about UYPL's publications, including *TYU*. Publicity Secretary David Dunn, who announced "*exciting plans*" for "*a motion picture showing the UYPL in action.*" National Treasurer Martin West, who bemoaned the failure of some branches to pay their subscriptions, threatening them with "*compulsory disaffiliation*". Grenville Needham, "*newly-appointed President of the International Religious Fellowship (IRF)*" who spoke about "*UYPL activities in this field.*" The 1959 IRF Conference had been held at Barnston on The Wirral, and "*was a great success*" with 115 attending, including 30 from Britain, of whom 20 were UYPLers.

There were reports from the Regions too. Caroline Bell gave Scotland's, where the objective was a branch in all four churches there. For North-East Region, Carole Wood reported "*considerable success*", with dances, a new news-sheet and a new branch at South Shields. Graham Freeth spoke for Midland Region with news of travels in Waverley Road, Birmingham, branch's old bus, 'Charlie Boy', and Walsall branch's European holiday. Brian Dalby reported that ten-branch South Lancs. Region had held five rallies and an "*inter-regional Carol Service*" at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, with 150 people present. West Lancs. Region's report, by Sheila Heppenstall, spoke of two residential weekends "*primarily for junior members*", a dance and New Year's party, and a "*Midnight Hike*" from Bolton to Horwich, arriving "*in time for breakfast*". Eileen Kielty reported that South-East Region had organised "*a party for all the teenagers in the London region...which had been a riotous success*", and held a Carol Service at Essex Church, Kensington. Croydon branch had "*staged their annual Gay Revue*", which didn't mean then what it would

mean now! North Lancashire Region's report, given by Amy Grimshaw, proved controversial as some questioned how genuinely committed to a national UYPL the Region was.

This first 'Autumnal' was hosted and chaired by Alan Curren, combining "*his great personality and sense of humour*" with "*a shrewd appraisal of the nature of the weekend.*" Sunday morning worship, held in Nightingale lounge, was led by Neville Kenyon and Betty Ashworth. Despite the concerns expressed at Autumnal Convention, and not all the news was good, it nevertheless suggested that UYPL was ending the 1950s in good heart.

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 5: The 1960s

UYPL in 1960

According to *TYU*, when this momentous decade opened UYPL had “*some fifty branches with a total membership of just over a thousand.*” Regional and branch activity continued as usual if the April issue is any guide. East Cheshire’s “*young but enthusiastic*” membership had held a rally and were hoping to recruit new branches at Glossop and Flowery Field Church, Hyde. Halliwell Road, Bolton, had been playing football with Horwich who, amongst other things, had been visiting London, swimming and skating, and re-decorating three rooms at their church. That great UYPL tradition, the Drama Festival continued to flourish, with seven branches entering in 1960. The Festival was held at Bank Street, Bolton, on 26th March and the winners were Swinton, said to be “*14th time lucky*”, with Swansea second. The factors in judging, incidentally, were acting, production and choice of play – it was a serious business. Looking forward, there was to be an Easter Camp at Kinver Edge and North-East and Scottish Regions were planning “*Summer link-ups, pushed ahead by two of UYPL’s most go-ahead Secretaries, Caroline Bell and Carole Wood.*”

UYPL and CND

An early controversy in 1960 arose from a report in February’s *TYU* that “*London UYPLers are planning to carry the Unitarian flag from Aldermaston at Easter*”, the Aldermaston march being in support of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. However a UYPL Individual Member, Roger Fieldhouse, responded with the complaint that while UYPLers had every right to march as individuals they should not presume to represent all UYPLers or all Unitarians, calling this “*improper and unconstitutional*”.

‘Massacre’ at the AGM

At the AGM at Great Hucklow in May the big issue was a National Committee proposal to change UYPL’s name to British Unitarian Youth but this didn’t find favour with the assembled membership. Ernest Baker recalls someone asking “*Would you like your girlfriend to walk down the street wearing a badge that said BUY?*” As *TYU* put it in June, “*Not only was it defeated – it was massacred!*” The new National President was Florence Stark of Glasgow, and the new President-Elect was Len Smith, a student for the ministry at Unitarian College, Manchester (UCM). That first National Committee of the 1960s also included Trevor Jones, Pat Hopkins and Doug Copley – “*a very fine body of ‘Tin Gods*” according to *TYU* (edited by Neville Kenyon). *TYU* felt very positive about the future: “*there are definite signs that UYPL is becoming a real driving force within our Unitarian Movement*”, while an observer at the AGM from the Sunday School Association, Alex Rogers, observed, “*The keenness of the discussions augurs well for the future of our Movement, which is undoubtedly in the hands of your members.*”

Introducing the ‘Flaming Chalice’

A plan to have a new badge for UYPL was floated in July’s *TYU* and design ideas were invited. The upshot was a badge that incorporated the so-called ‘Flaming Chalice’ – one of the first times it was used in British Unitarianism. The Flaming Chalice, which had its origins in the American Unitarian Service Committee working in Europe after the war, has since become an international symbol of Unitarianism and Universalism. UYPL’s international links in 1960 included the IRF Conference at Rudlingen, Switzerland, where over a hundred young people gathered from Europe

and America. The theme was, 'Where is Technical Progress Leading Us?' – if only they had known!

Events in 1960: from Youth Week to Autumnal Convention

Summer 1960 also saw UYPL's second Youth Holiday Week, an innovation introduced the previous year in response to a request for an event long enough to enable Scots to attend as well as English. Held at Great Hucklow, as all Youth Weeks were until 1968, *TYU* described this one as "7 days of madness controlled only by ex-President Joe Fairhurst and Jill Cummings." It set the pattern for subsequent Youth Weeks (the word 'Holiday' was rarely used – everyone soon knew what it was!) with a range of visits and activities that made the most of the Peak District and its facilities. Worship always featured on Sunday morning and in 1960 it was led by London UYPLer Gill Waddington. September Weekend followed in the UYPL calendar and in 1960 the attendance was "as near to 200 as makes no difference." Activities included "American interpretive dancing" led by Sigrid Dunkley and Elva Swanstrom, and the Sunday service was led by the Rev. Keir Murren. At Autumnal Convention in October, UYPL was reported to have "a near-record number of sixty-two branches", most of them "in an active and virile state." A UYPL Song Book was said to be nearing publication and Publicity Secretary Peter Short "Outlined... plans for an official UYPL Cine Film." There was news from IRF of "new contacts" in Nigeria, France, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Guest speaker was the Rev. Keith Treacher.

'Teddy-boys'

An interesting insight into branch life was provided by Barbara Johnson of Swinton in December's *TYU*. Apparently an influx of "teddy-boys" into UYPL meetings had alarmed the congregation, but not the UYPLers, who had prevailed on the "teddy-boys" to "join in the epilogue." Nevertheless, under congregational pressure, the "teddy-boys" were asked to leave, prompting Barbara to write, "we thus lost...a grand set of lads and one of our own favourite and most valuable members", adding, "Our numbers are even more depleted now."

World Refugee Year

UYPL's support for World Refugee Year was a major focus of fund-raising activity in 1959 and 1960, the most unusual initiative probably being Peter Hewis's efforts "selling coffee to the troops in Cyprus" where he was serving in the Forces. Other UYPL fund-raising during WRY, which ended on 31st May 1960, included a supper at the GA Annual Meetings, a "Refugee Youth Service" at Bank Street, Bury, and the sale of WRY pencils. Brixton branch had held rock'n'roll sessions on Sunday afternoons, leading to the comment "we need more rock'n'roll on Sundays." By the end of WRY UYPL had raised the impressive sum in 1960 of "over £1000", with Regions and branches throughout the country playing their part. One UYPLer, Dawn Buckle, wrote a poem in support of WRY which appeared in one of *TYU*'s special supplements. This is it:

*Hopeless,
Forgotten,
Wasting,
Wasted,
Waiting people.*

*Once there was life in the now still body,
Something to long for:
Comfort,
Home,
Friends.*

*Around is a sea of despairing faces
Gazing at nothing
Hands idle.*

Is life worth living?

*Old people, young people
Bonded together in hopeless abandon.
For what are they waiting?
For Life or For Death.*

1961

As usual *TYU* recorded various UYPL events during the course of the year. In February 1961 it was reported that West Lancs. Region's ongoing series of 'Sunday Break' evenings, held bi-monthly at Bank Street, Bolton, had "*a regular attendance of 60 UYPLers*" from its nine branches and involved "*a great deal of enjoyment.*" Each 'Break' was organised by a different branch and featured a "*competitive spirit...during team games.*" Sheffield's Stannington branch had acquired "*a dilapidated ex-NCB ambulance*" called 'Mabel' for outings and had opened a coffee-bar in the Rev. Trevor Jones's cellar. Edinburgh branch reported activities too numerous to mention and were busy rehearsing for the Drama Festival under the direction "*of our bearded friend and minister from Australia – Rev. Bruce Findlow.*"

The Drama Festival itself was held on 18th and 25th March 1961 at Mill Street Mission, Liverpool (as reported in *TYU*, April). It received an encomium from the adjudicator, R. G. Curry, who said it was "*One up on the British Drama League*" and "*One of the highlights of the amateur stage season.*" Ten branches entered from places as far apart as Edinburgh and Croydon, who were the winners. The Spring Camp, previously held at Kinver Edge, took place at a snowy Great Hucklow, with UYPLers there from "*as far afield as Stockton-on-Tees, Bolton, Leicester and Stockport*" and was organised by Carl Holden.

The GA Annual Meetings in 1961 stirred some controversy thanks to the behaviour of one UYPLer who was said to be "*a crazy mixed-up kid*" by no less an authority than Henry Tittle. Henry was warden at Great Hucklow, where UYPL's 1961 AGM was held - now over a whole weekend - on May 12th/14th. A new film on '*UYPL in Action*' was premiered and a young man called John Hewardine was named as the "*compiler*". Len Smith succeeded to the National Presidency, the new President-Elect was Martin Davies, and the outgoing President, Florence Stark, preached on '*Attitudes*' on Sunday morning in a service conducted by Brian Dalby. Afterwards the new UYPL Song Book was launched. Singing was always popular at UYPL

gatherings and in his review in *TYU* Grenville Needham wrote of “*the unity of song*” that it was “*a binding force as powerful as any I know.*”

Youth Week in 1961 was led by Joe Fairhurst and included such customary activities as swimming at Hathersage and being “*baptised of the waters*” at Monsal Dale and Matlock Bath. There was also a visit to the Wedgwood factory at Stoke-on-Trent. September Weekend was reported in October’s *TYU* by John Allerton. Under the leadership of Trevor Jones, the new UYPL Song Book “*was put to good use.*” There was a “*Sports Day*” and a talk and discussion on ‘*Getting Married*’ that covered such “*controversial topics...as courting, chastity, engagements*” and many others. Sunday worship was led by Gill Waddington and the preacher was the Rev. Richard Kimball from the United States. After service the UYPL’s £500 Appeal for new furniture for Great Hucklow was launched. This did so well that the target was raised to £1000 in December.

Autumnal Convention 1961 (*TYU*, November) was attended by 25 leading UYPLers. It included “*lengthy discussion of the problems which face our League*”, a talk (by the Rev. Glyn Pruce) and “*lively discussion*” on ‘*The Ministry Today*’, “*an exceptionally fine sing-song*”, “*a brisk social*” organised by Carl Holden, and “*the inevitable country dancing session*” accompanied by Grenville ‘Neddy’ Needham (accordion) and Trevor Jones (fiddle). Neddy, as he was usually known, was co-credited (with Eileen Kielty) in that same issue of *TYU* with having initiated a new East Midland Region in October, with branches at Leicester, Hinckley, Chesterfield and Mansfield. Also in that *TYU* was an article by Neddy on his visit to Unitarians in Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

UYPL and the challenge of racism

South Africa having just been expelled from the Commonwealth because of apartheid, Neville Kenyon wrote a challenging editorial in *TYU* in April 1961. He asked UYPLers to examine their own attitudes “*now that the scapegoat is gone*”. He talked about “*the indignity, disillusionment and loss of self-respect*” suffered by “*coloured people...at the smug hands of whites.*” “*Change is coming*”, wrote Neville, “*But we still have a long way to go.*” He asked this question: “*if a Jamaican bus-conductor is rude to you, do you mutter ‘Ruddy Nigger’ or ‘Ruddy Fool’? There’s a world of difference.*” He continued, “*Why do our feelings defeat our common sense of humanity?*” Neville asked UYPL branches to “*consider these questions*”.

UYPL and the Beats

The August 1961 issue of *TYU* was devoted to the phenomenon known as the ‘beat generation’. For the most part this ‘generation’ – also known to themselves by such terms as ‘hipsters’, ‘beats’ and ‘subterraneans’ was an informal grouping of radical American writers and poets. They represented a break from the attitudes, conventions and culture of mainstream American society, which they dismissed as ‘square’. Originating in the 1940s, the ‘beat generation’ continued through the 1950s into the ‘60s. Musically they were associated with be-bop jazz, as exemplified by musicians like Charlie Parker, but from 1962 Bob Dylan’s songs provided a bridge from ‘beat’ to the dawning counter-culture that was to succeed it. The writers who formed the ‘beat generation’ were the likes of Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The ‘beat’ writers and more particularly their followers (in Britain as well as America) became known as ‘beatniks’, a term

created, not by themselves, but by a somewhat contemptuous newspaper columnist in San Francisco, who coined it in 1958. In 1961 the 'beatniks' were a controversial component of youth culture in Britain, hence *TYU*'s interest

In that issue an article appeared with the title '*Apology for Beatniks*'. It was by Alan Wilkinson, a UYPLer from Stockton-on-Tees. In defence of the 'beat' philosophy and its proponents, Alan wrote: "*The beatnik...strives to experience life to the full in all its aspects. Experience and more experience represents his only opportunity of becoming a real person, a complete person. This is the justification for...sexual promiscuity, drugs, drink, early marriage – even early death, the ultimate experience.*" The 'beatniks' were notorious (amongst 'squares') for their anti-establishment, anti-conventional attitudes and behaviour, not least their distinctive dress and unkempt appearance. Alan wrote that the 'beatnik', far from being a mere "nihilist" without "hope for the future" was, in fact "an idealist to the point of anarchy" whose "dress reflects this desire for a complete overthrow of society." Alan wrote that 'beatniks' had no time for conventional politics, opposed nuclear weapons, and renounced "the shapeless, patchy attempts at living of our predecessors." He declared: "Extremists we may be, but extremism is the only way to avoid hypocrisy," and summed up, somewhat contradictorily perhaps, "We do not judge, we observe and record – 'Go and do thou likewise'. I AM A CAMERA."

Clearly not all UYPLers shared Alan's 'beatnik' views. In the same issue of *TYU* the League's General Secretary, Norman Bailey, addressed this riposte to Alan: *So you're looking for the fullest experience of life. Did you know that fulfilling one's potentialities is one of the greatest sources of happiness, and an unrivalled experience? If sitting unwashed on street corners, drooping over sloppy tables listening to beat and indulging in drink, drugs and cheap sex, is the limit of your experience, you've a lot to learn about life.*" Norman exhorted Alan to give up on what he saw as the cynicism of the 'beatniks', which he regarded as being "for people who haven't the courage to defend ideals. There is still opportunity and good-will in this world...Let's fight for life, and a BETTER world. It can be done."

As *TYU* editor, Neville Kenyon thus opened up a debate that continued for the rest of the year. The Rev. Arthur D. Williams, who was Alan Wilkinson's minister at Stockton, wrote that "*Beat...only illustrates all too clearly the confused state of mind in which so many of our young people live.*" He continues, rather patronisingly, "*Many of us older people are truly anxious to enter into sympathy with and to understand the younger generation, and it would help us...were they to seek out for themselves the inconsistencies of their professed philosophy.*"

Alan came back with this: "*I do not want readers to imagine that I care enough about the criticisms of others to enter into a pen-and-paper battle over them.*" Responding to Arthur Williams he wrote, "*We don't care whether we are understood...if we cannot be tolerated then let us be ignored!*" But support for Alan came from Donald Dunkley, a UYPLer who had recently entered the ministry. He summed up the 'beat generation' position as being, "*the rejection of the past and the future, the rebellion against organised authority, the revulsion felt for the square (the man who played it safe, who stuck to his rut...and thought that his own life embodied all decent moral values).*" Donald also gave a definition of the somewhat elusive term 'beat': "*the primary meaning...is a sense of being beaten or defeated, the secondary sense is of being 'beatified' or blessed.*" Donald took a positive view: "*Beatnik philosophy...is a*

progression from one tentative answer to the next – answers which may be contradictory; but Unitarians of all people allow development of thought and experience.”

But Alan’s critics weren’t finished. Hazel Smith of Pendleton thought Alan was saying *“that beatniks don’t care”* and wrote, *“What kind of adults are these people who have no feelings for others, and why do they ask tolerance when they themselves cannot tolerate those of diverse opinions?”* This correspondence, which illustrates the lively intellectual nature of debate within UYPL, was brought to a close by one of the League’s founders, the Rev. Arthur Vallance, who wrote in the Christmas *TYU*, *“we have to choose experiences. We can choose sexual promiscuity, or we can choose complete sexual faithfulness to one person for life. I for one am tremendously glad that I made the second choice and not the first.”* It was to be many years before the poignancy of Arthur’s affirmation could be fully appreciated.

One footnote to all this: that issue of *TYU* carried news that *“Pat Hopkins...has become engaged to none other than our old beatnik friend, Alan Wilkinson.”*

1962: A Region rises from the ashes

In January 1962, as recorded by Mary Drake in February’s *TYU*, South-East Region, which had *“flickered out and died quietly”*, was brought back to life. She credited Dudley Richards of the General Assembly’s Religious Education & Youth Department (REYD) for this. The previous November he had called a meeting of UYPL-aged young people *“within striking distance of London”* and sixty had attended, Norman Bailey presiding. It decided to revive the moribund Region. The follow-up meeting on January 21st was attended by forty-one UYPLers, some from existing branches, some from a new branch (Portsmouth) and some Individual Members. The re-constituted Region was to have David Marks of Portsmouth as its President. Mary Drake was Secretary, Janet Richards was Treasurer and Ernest Baker was to edit the newsletter, *‘The Phoenix’*. Although this was South-East Region, as someone pointed out, Mary, Janet and Ernest were all northerners!

UYPLers and 1662

1962 saw the tercentenary of the ‘Great Ejection’ of 1662 that the Dissenting denominations, including Unitarians, saw as the date of their predecessors’ enforced separation from the Church of England. There were various ecumenical events to mark this from which Unitarians were often excluded by the other denominations. But Neville Kenyon in *TYU* was disdainful of the whole business. He wrote, *“...perhaps the majority of UYPLers prefer to concentrate their attentions on the present and the future...and leave the historical controversies to their elders.”*

Hucklow work-camp

At Great Hucklow *“on a snowy February weekend...some twenty UYPLers led by Donald Dunkley and Carl Holden, set about...transforming the interior of the Old Chapel”* (*TYU*, March 1962). The ceiling was painted blue, the walls *“light grey”*, resulting in a *“very light, airy and pleasing effect.”* The UYPLers came from as far afield as the North-East, Wales, London and Manchester and the caterers, Janet Critchlow (Dukinfield) and Jen Pickles (Broadway Avenue, Bradford) got special mention. *“We did a lot of work. We had a lot of fun”* concluded the *TYU* report. This work-camp was but one example of UYPL’s commitment to Great Hucklow, and it was not the last time that UYPLers were to decorate the Old Chapel.

Drama Festival & GA Meetings '62

1962's Drama Festival, held on 17th and 24th March at Stalybridge, attracted "packed audiences" and was entered by eight branches. The winners, for the second year running, were Croydon (led by Roy Smith), and second-place went to Swansea. The trophy was presented by Henry Tittle "in his usual sparkling manner." At the GA Annual Meetings in London in April a UYPL motion about Great Hucklow was passed, saying that, "the Unitarian Holiday Centre should be recognised as being valuable to the movement and that churches should pledge their support." The proposer was Martin Davies, seconded by Henry Tittle. At the Youth Meeting, Trevor Jones suggested setting up a programme that would encourage in young people a deeper understanding and knowledge of Unitarianism and embrace "the elements of worship". This idea later bore fruit as the President's Award Scheme.

The 1962 AGM

The 1962 AGM at Great Hucklow (19th/20th May) was, on the whole very positive. Neville Kenyon, as *TYU* editor, spoke of a "potential surge forward" for the League but felt that "real progress is restricted by the lack of a full-time Youth Officer." The work required needed more time than UYPL's officers had to give, though "working at absolute capacity." The upshot was a resolution from UYPL urging "GA Council to give urgent consideration to the early appointment" of such an officer. The National Treasurer, Martin West, reported that UYPL was "on a reasonably firm financial basis." This probably owed much to Martin himself, who had been in office since 1959, prior to which UYPL always seemed to be in a state of financial crisis. Changes on National Committee saw Dick Turpin replace Norman Bailey as National Secretary and Neville Kenyon become President-Elect. His replacement at *TYU* was Harold Code. Martin Davies succeeded to the National Presidency. A film by John Hewardine, 'Fryed Eggs for Breakfast', received its premiere during the weekend. It promoted UYPL's furniture appeal (UHFA) for Great Hucklow, the "first fruits" of which were said to be "in place in the...Holiday Centre.", consisting of "seven modern comfortable arm(less) chairs." On Sunday morning outgoing National President Len Smith preached on "the Great Ejection of 1662." *TYU*'s verdict on the AGM weekend: "one of the most enjoyable ever" with "a great future ahead" for UYPL. June's *TYU* also included a UYPL Branch Directory, listing 56 branches, grouped by Region. These were East Cheshire (8 branches), East Midlands (4), Midland (4), North-East (2), North-East Lancs. (3), Scotland (3), South-East (5), South Lancs. (8), West Lancs. (8), Yorkshire (5). In addition there were 6 branches which, for some reason, did not at that time belong to a Region. That issue also had a piece by retiring Individual Members' Secretary Joe Fairhurst, introducing his successor, Mary Hallyday "of our Edinburgh branch" who had "fought hard and long to establish the League in Scotland." Joe added that in three years the number of Individual Members of UYPL had increased, perhaps significantly, from 20 to 60.

The last Spring Camp

UYPL's annual Spring Camp had been a regular item on the calendar for many years and had been held at Kinver Edge until 1960. It had transferred to Great Hucklow the following year and was held there again in June 1962. However, this appears to have been the last one, even though the report in July's *TYU* suggests that it was a success, despite only five of the twenty-three UYPLers there being girls! Martin Davies wrote of it, "Complete with a blazing camp-fire, a motor-bike cavalcade to Castleton, and a

tramp up to Mam Tor, it was a good weekend.” Joe Fairhurst, who had reached UYPL’s upper age-limit of 30, waxed nostalgic in *TYU*, expressing regret *“at parting from another wonderful weekend of comradeship and fellowship...the hallmark of UYPL.”*

Work-camps and my entry into UYPL

UYPL work-camps were not about camping and didn’t usually involve sleeping in tents. They were, more often than not, about working to clean-up, clear-up, decorate and generally improve the condition of Unitarian church premises outside and in. National President Martin Davies wrote about them in the June ’62 *TYU*. He said of them that *“more and more UYPLers are getting involved”*, and referred to one that had recently been held at Great Hucklow. This was a follow-up to the one held in February and had completed internal decoration of the Old Chapel and *“made a start on the outside.”* Martin referred to *“Ideas for more Work Camps in other parts of the country”*, including one at *“the new Albert Schweitzer House in Huddersfield.”* This was a large house into which the Huddersfield congregation had moved from their 19th century church building. The downstairs rooms were to be for congregational use, including a worship area. The work-campers would decorate these. The upstairs rooms were to be let as bed-sits, so generating some income. The work-camp was held on Saturday 22nd September with a follow-up on 20th October, and I was at both. In fact this work-camp was my introduction to UYPL, having been invited to go along by David Craven of Broadway Avenue, Bradford, branch, which supplied most of the other work-campers. I was 15, little knowing where that work-camp would lead me!

In fact work-camps became an increasingly popular way for UYPLers to fulfil one of the League’s objects, namely to serve the churches of the General Assembly. I took part in quite a few. During the remaining years of the ‘60s work-camps were held in such places as Reading, Ipswich (twice), Folkestone (at a Hibbert House), Manchester (Blackley and Brookfield Church, Gorton), Croft (near Warrington), York, Lancaster, Hull, and twice at Lydgate chapel (New Mill, near Huddersfield). In 1970 we were ‘work-camping’ back at Great Hucklow, decorating the Old Chapel again.

Rallies in the 1960s

Rallies – gatherings of UYPLers for purposes serious and otherwise – had been a feature of League life for most, if not all, of its existence. Its inaugural weekend in 1934 could be said to have been UYPL’s first rally. Nevertheless an article by National Committee member Pat Hopkins in *TYU* in August 1962 bemoaned the state of Regional rallies in particular, declaring them to be *“obsolete and pathetically ineffective.”* For good measure she had a go at Regional committees and newsletters too, comparing them all unfavourably with what was going on in the branches. Quite why she made these criticisms I don’t know, but I don’t think she need have worried. The 1960s were to see something of a resurgence in Regional newsletters and as far as rallies are concerned the decade might be seen as a ‘golden age’.

UYPLers greatly enjoyed getting together and their increasing incomes, mobility and leisure time made it much easier than before. The three big National gatherings – Drama Festival, the AGM and September Weekend - were rallies, of course, and branches sometimes held them too, but it was the Regions who organised them most often, bringing together people from their own branches and often from further afield

as well. In fact the July '62 *TYU* reported on a rally at Broadway Avenue, Bradford, attended by National President Martin Davies and “five other National Committee members” at which a five-branch Yorkshire Region was re-constituted. Pat’s negative view received a spirited riposte from Mary Drake, who was then South-East Region’s Secretary, but happened to come from Bradford. But the best answer to Pat came from the events of the 1960s. I have been able to identify at least 25 rallies, nearly all organised by Regions, that were held between 1962 and 1969, and there were certainly more. Some were fairly modest one-day events but others were more ambitious. South Lancs. (later, Manchester) Region ran its highly successful January Weekends at Great Hucklow from 1967 into the early ‘70s, rallies that were, in effect, national in their appeal. Similarly Yorkshire Region ran its popular Yorkshire Yarn rallies over a long - usually Easter - weekend from 1966 to 1970, initially based in Leeds and then at Lydgate chapel in the more rural setting of the Holme Valley. One of the most successful was West Lancs. Region’s ‘Rally’ Rally, based at Rivington chapel in October (20th-22nd) 1967. Designed to demonstrate how a good rally can be run, it involved participants in devising, organising and running “impossible” activities, such as an Elephant Hunt, a Himalayan Expedition, a Cross-Country Ball Game and an Ocean Cruise. Held outdoors in beautiful countryside these apparently crazy ideas resulted in some very imaginative and enjoyable activities. As with just about all rallies there was a Saturday night social, for which yet more UYPLers arrived, and a Sunday service, led by Frank Potter of Bank Street, Bolton, branch.

UYPL and worship

Writing in *TYU* in August 1962 National President Martin Davies wrote a damning critique of conventional Unitarian worship. He reckoned that “any...gathering of Unitarian Young People” would agree “that the form of worship...practiced in 95% of our churches is...unhelpful, sometimes meaningless, and always archaic.” It was up to UYPLers “to create new forms of praise and meditation”, said Martin, not “gimmick or trickery” but rather a greater “simplicity in worship.” He cited as an example recent UYPL worship at September Weekend - led by Donald Dunkley, Veronica Needham and Trevor Jones - with its “use of guitar and candlelight”, its “physical close-togetherness” and “the simplicity and straightforwardness of the spoken word.” Martin urged UYPLers to “develop forms of worship that are meaningful and relevant to their own lives.”

UYPLers created many imaginative acts of worship, not just for themselves but for their own and other congregations. For example, in April (18th & 19th) 1964, South-East Region held a weekend hosted by the Guildford and Godalming congregations, with the UYPLers taking services at both churches. At Guildford the theme was ‘*God in Nature*’, with readings from the works of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, George Herbert, William Law and Thomas Traherne, and Psalm 107. There was recorded music from the works of Alan Hovhaness, Arthur Honneger and Vaughan Williams. At Godalming’s Meadrow Chapel the theme was ‘*The Undiscovered Country*’ with readings from Emily Dickinson, Plato, Walt Whitman and Mark Rutherford. Music came from Mahler, Faure and Hanus, along with the spirituals ‘*Deep River*’ and ‘*Wayfaring Stranger*’. Youth services sometimes bemused or annoyed congregations but more often than not they delighted them. This was the case at Guildford and Godalming, where the UYPLers were asked to come again. The Meadrow chapel newsletter reported the service thus: “They entirely re-arranged the Chapel furniture...so that we gathered in a horse-shoe...instead of sitting in rows...which

enhanced the feeling of fellowship. Each of them took a distinctive part in the service. An impressive occasion...and we look forward to seeing them all again.” South-East Region took their services to a number of congregations in their area in the early to mid-60s with great success. A further tribute came from John Moore in a letter to Gordon Lowthian, dated 8th February 1965. He wrote, *“We at Guildford have most happy memories of your visit last summer and your complete departure from the usual routine type of service,”* adding that *“the Meadrow [Godalming] folk are just as keen as we are to have you again.”*

The particular occasion for UYPLers to lead worship was the annual GA Youth Sunday at the beginning of March. Another tribute to a service led by UYPLers came from a senior member of Aberdeen Unitarian Church on March 7th 1965. Andrew Marjoribanks wrote, *“...something at long last happened. Our survival as a congregation seemed more than ever secure...when we reached the end of that memorable service provided by the YPL.”* The eclectic mix of music included ‘Go Tell It On the Mountain’, ‘Walk Tall’ and ‘All in the April Evening’, not to mention *“the rousing hymn of the Young People’s League”* – namely, ‘Lord of the Wondrous Earth’. Mr. Marjoribanks was much moved and encouraged *“To hear the benediction pronounced by a member of the weaker sex, to see her walk from the pulpit...followed by some twenty youths...uplifting hearts that very often have known heaviness...”* He was there again in the evening to hear *“two short sermons given by two youthful members”*, noting that *“at both services every member of the YPL had a part.”*

‘No thought of the harvest’

Those tributes show what UYPL services could mean to Unitarian congregations in the 1960s, but probably the League’s most notable act of worship in those years came at the GA Annual Meetings in 1964. It was called *‘No Thought of the Harvest’*, a phrase from T.S. Eliot’s *‘Choruses from “The Rock”’*, and it was described as *“A miscellany in words and music.”* An introductory note in the published script says that *“It was intended as a worship experience...in sharp contrast to normal forms of worship...in nonconformist churches.”* It was held in Lewisham Unitarian Church on Sunday 5th April with an audience, or congregation, of 300. Gordon Lowthian, President of UYPL’s South-East Region gave a description of what it was about in *TYU*: *“The action centred around a Seeker and a Sceptic, while the five other members of the cast attempted to present the attitudes and impressions of young people towards such aspects as violence, money and human relationships.”* The music included the Rolling Stones’ recording of ‘Money’, *“the gang theme”* (the script says *“the fight scene”*, presumably ‘Rumble’ or maybe ‘Jet Song’) from Leonard Bernstein’s ‘West Side Story’, and original songs written and sung by Rosemary Goring. There were readings from Wilfred Owen’s ‘Strange Meeting’ and Stan Barstow’s novel, ‘A Kind of Loving’, amongst other things. Gordon wrote that *“...the excellence of the cast and the well-timed lighting and sound effects, had a stimulating effect on the audience, bringing the message...home in no uncertain way.”* An American visitor, the Rev. Max Gaebler, called it *“Unquestionably the high point of the meetings.”* Writing in the *‘Unitarian Universalist Register Leader’* (Midsummer, 1964), he commented, *“The service was presented with professional artistry, yet without becoming mere performance...I have never witnessed anything...in America to touch it.”* ‘No Thought of the Harvest’ was the work of Martin Davies, then UYPL Vice-President, and the cast were UYPLers John Allerton, John Midgley, Margaret Pickston, Veronica Needham, Mary Drake and Ernest Baker.

The text was later published and at least one UYPL branch, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, afterwards used it for a Youth Service of their own - on 17th January 1965. On that occasion the 'Seeker' was Anne Dale and the 'Sceptic' was Andrew Ashwell with Sheila Harvey, Lynne Green, Bob Fay and Margaret Warren taking the other parts. Carole Wood sung, accompanied on guitar by Graham Gardiner. In her report for TYU Anne commented that "*it worked*" for the congregation and "*made them think*" – which, she wrote, "*was something of an achievement*"!

What UYPLers believed

As their interest in worship showed, UYPLers in the 1960s cared about belief, even if their beliefs did not follow traditional lines. In December 1962's TYU, Ernest Baker – editor of South-East Region's newsletter, *Phoenix* - wrote a summary of what he thought were the prevailing beliefs and theology of UYPLers, based on a survey made at a Regional rally, along with his "*experience at other UYPL functions.*" Ernest wrote: "*The general feeling I have encountered...is that while man chooses his destiny himself, there is a strong sense of a divine presence which guides the world and man in some way. This view could perhaps be christened... 'Theist-Humanist.'*" Relating this to the contemporary situation, Ernest continued that it was unsurprising if "*...in the presence of a mushroom shaped spectre, with the Chinese and the Indians killing each other off, babies being born deformed, London's homeless, and kids in all parts of the world starving to death while politicians prattle on,*" UYPLers "*do reject the Omnipotent God.*" What mattered for them, said Ernest, is improving the ways in which we treat each other personally. "*I should like to think that in UYPL we 'do our best' guided by the divine presence we feel, particularly in our relationships with other people. This is the only answer...to the frustrated 'What can I do anyway?' of the ordinary person confronted with a likely 'end of the world'.*"

An Irish view of UYPL?

Not everyone was able to discern UYPL's serious side and the spirituality beneath the fun-loving image the League sometimes acquired. An example of this, a cartoon attributed to someone called Bill McGucken, appeared in the newsletter of the General Assembly's sister denomination, the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, of Ireland (NSPCI). This is overwhelmingly concentrated in Northern Ireland, where the atmosphere was much more conservative, both socially and theologically. The cartoon was reproduced in *The Unitarian*. It shows youngsters misbehaving on what are presumably church premises. Two men look on and one says to the other, "*In our Great Britain churches there is UYPL for those not mature enough to join FOY.*" Given this negative attitude it is not surprising that the League was never able to establish itself in Northern Ireland, despite efforts to link young people on either side of the Irish Sea. One such effort was reported in TYU in February 1963. Grenville Needham spoke at an NSPCI weekend meeting with the hope of encouraging the formation of a youth association in Ireland, and the UYPL hymn was duly sung (as a solo) in the service, but nothing seems to have come of it and there were never any Irish UYPL branches.

1963

Solid and Prosperous – National Committee in the early '60s

In his *'President's New Year Notebook'* in TYU (January 1963) Martin Davies gave a picture of National Committee at work. He wrote: "*Five times a year two teachers,*

two ministers, a commercial representative, a joiner, a probation officer, a bank clerk, a chartered accountant, a quantity surveyor and a research assistant come together to make sure that the wheels of UYPL are running smoothly." Their meetings lasted for "six solid hours" and Martin elaborates further on this image of solid respectability: "they sit round a solid table on solid chairs in the solidly Victorian bowels of Unitarian College, Manchester." It seems that UYPL's finances were looking pretty solid too, thanks to the work of Martin West, who had been National Treasurer for four years. Acknowledging this, Martin Davies wrote: "*The League has never been in a healthier financial position. Gone are the days when the inevitable annual deficit was followed by frantic appeals for help.*"

Drama Festival 1963

Held on 23rd and 30th March at Bank Street Chapel, Bury, UYPL's 1963 Drama Festival continued to maintain its popularity and its high standards. The winners for the third time running were Croydon branch, with Padiham in second place. It was Padiham's "very first attempt" according to the TYU report, their play being 'Colour Bar' by Joe Corrie. Those appearing in or producing the eight entries included two future General Secretaries of the General Assembly, namely Roy Smith and Jeff Teagle (of Croydon and Altrincham branches respectively) and two future Presidents of the General Assembly, Eileen Kielty (Leicester branch) and David Dawson (Chesterfield branch). A handwritten guide to arranging the Drama Festival survives from 1963 and was probably the work of Bob Vickers, the Drama Festival Secretary. Its detailed month by month list of things to be done is further evidence of UYPL's organisational ability and the high levels of competence of its leadership. Drama Festival was, apart from the AGM, UYPL's longest-running annual event, held every year from 1947 for some 36 years.

AGM 1963 - the second age range change

Writing ahead of the AGM in May 63's TYU, National President Martin Davies anticipated the coming proposal to further change UYPL's age-range of 15 to 30. Martin predicted that "UYPL will become more youthful and more enthusiastic than ever before." By 1963 a 30-year-old was not regarded as young by teenagers! Martin wrote, "*The 1960s are exciting years in which to be a Unitarian, and the younger generation is leading the way...The UYPL has a vital part to play. If it grasps this opportunity of giving a lead to the Denomination on its youth policy, then it has an exciting future ahead.*" He also quotes a tribute to UYPL that had appeared in '62', the newsletter of a denominational ginger group set up at the 1962 GA Meetings. In contrast to the "cold and uninviting" atmosphere in "many of our Unitarian churches", UYPL was a "true community" possessing the "closeness and the communion of shared experience." When UYPL held its 1963 AGM at Great Hucklow on 24th-26th May, the age-range was the major item on the agenda. The proposal to change UYPL's age-range for full membership from 15 to 30 to 14 to 25 was carried, though not overwhelmingly, and some feared the loss of more mature voices from the League. Partly to meet this objection, it was agreed that the General Assembly's new "Youth Director" would have a seat and a vote on UYPL's National Committee. In fact UYPL had been instrumental in the creation of this post at the GA Meetings and its first occupant was to be Grenville 'Neddy' Needham, a former UYPLer himself. The AGM also merged the Publicity and Publications Committees, so creating what was always referred to afterwards as 'Publi-Publi'. The Current Trophy, presented to UYPL a few years earlier by a former National President, the

journalist Alan Curren, and awarded annually for the best Regional (or, later, branch) newsletter, was won by South-East Region's *'Phoenix'*, edited by Ernest Baker. The incoming National President was Neville Kenyon and he was presented with the "*magnificent new Presidency plaque*" – actually a modest wooden shield that the President could easily take round on official occasions.

The Sunday morning AGM service was conducted by Jane Guise of Edinburgh and the preacher was outgoing National President, Martin Davies. His sermon was summarised in *TYU* (July/August issue). He outlined "*Five Aims for UYPL*" which were (in further summary); 1. to help young people gain self-confidence; 2. to take on responsibilities and to learn how best to use them; 3. to help young people cope with their sexual development and their relationships; 4. to encourage a morality that respects and cares for others and develops the appropriate personal values for living in an increasingly competitive modern society; 5. to broaden the scope of UYPLers' "*leisure time horizons*". Martin closed his thoughtful and timely address with these words: "*Here...in a tiny chapel two and a half centuries old, we commit our lives to the service of our faith, in the awareness that we may be nearer to the attainment of that ideal than many of us dare to imagine.*"

Youth Week, September Weekend and Leigh & Astley branch – a personal note

Since my introduction to UYPL the previous autumn, I had been engaged in trying to gather potential UYPLers at the two Lancashire churches, Leigh and Astley, where my father, the Rev. Lionel O. Reed was minister. As part of this, four of us went to UYPL's Junior Youth Week at Great Hucklow from 17th to 24th August 1963. The week was led by UYPL's President-Elect, John Allerton, and Jen Pickles. Seventeen teenagers were there from churches in Bradford, Mottram, Dukinfield, Rochdale, Ipswich, Manchester, Horwich, Astley and Leigh. We were also joined for part of the time by two girls from India. It was a thoroughly enjoyable holiday which further strengthened my commitment to UYPL. This continued at my first September Weekend a few weeks later (27th/29th September), which I attended with Bill Cartwright from Astley. We met UYPLers from all over the country and were further encouraged in our efforts to form our own Leigh & Astley branch. This we finally did at a meeting in Leigh on 1st December, when we were joined by UYPL President Neville Kenyon and his wife, Betty. I became chair of the new branch and Bill became secretary. As a branch we were soon active within West Lancs. Region and at its AGM the following April I was elected Regional Secretary.

South-East Region

The early to mid-'60s saw South-East Region become very active, not least because of the leadership of Gordon Lowthian, who was elected Regional President in November 1963. Gordon was among the UYPLers from South-East Region – and beyond – who descended on the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House that autumn (8th/10th November) to "*spend the weekend treating dry rot and renovating the floor*", according to the local newspaper report. Described as a "*twenty-year-old civil servant*", Gordon told the *Evening Star* reporter that "*the dry rot is very bad*" and added, rather worryingly, that the "*very amateur*" workers "*had not received any instruction in treating dry rot but somehow they manage.*" The Regional AGM at Brixton two weeks later was attended by UYPLers from four branches (Ipswich, Portsmouth, Richmond & Wandsworth, and Ilford), several Individual Members from other churches, and two Foy Society representatives. In a letter Gordon lamented that

the Region's largest branch, Croydon, was not represented but nevertheless declared the weekend "a great success". In a further reflection, Gordon wrote that "*the last year has seen both decline and rise*" and that "*the weekend at Brixton was ample evidence of...enthusiasm in the region.*" Citing "regional weekends" and "work-camps" as "excellent" ways of bringing UYPLers together, Gordon made the significant comment that "*the region is becoming more mobile with members wanting to travel around*", something that was true of UYPL more generally as the 1960s progressed. South-East Region's vitality was further evidenced that November by the addition of a new branch at Newington Green, led by Jim Cannell. The Region also had international links, as was mentioned in a report in early 1964. Some members had attended the 1963 IRF Conference in The Netherlands and the Region had hosted fifteen members of America's Student Religious Liberals (SRL) that July, with hospitality at Essex Church, Kensington, a dance and a youth service. The Region was also strengthening links with the London District Provincial Assembly (LDPA) and the London Unitarian Sunday School Society (LUSSS). Youth services in LDPA churches were planned and the Region's newsletter, 'Phoenix', now edited by Jim Lee, had won the Curren Trophy.

UYPL and Foy

The long-standing issue of relations between UYPL and the Foy Society (previously FOY) surfaced again in November 1963 in a *TYU* article by National President Neville Kenyon. UYPL, with its new upper age limit of 25, was now a significantly younger organisation than Foy but, Neville noted, the two organisations were separated by more than just age. Nevertheless, both had a role to play. Neville wrote, "*After almost 30 years of cold war, the two rival youth organisations of our Denomination are soon to repair their differences and emerge from the fray as one united force.*" The idea was that as UYPLers passed the age of 25, they would move seamlessly into Foy, which had a much older membership. Neville declared, rather desperately, that "*This venture MUST be a success.*" This subject was also of interest to South-East Region which had a number of members nearing the age of 25, prompting it to contact Foy "*which is to become the young adult movement.*"

The UYPL Programme File

With UYPL's reduced age range and new branches (like Leigh & Astley) forming with much younger memberships, National Committee produced the 'Programme File' to give guidance on a number of topics, not least organisation and the conduct of business. A former National President, Franklyn Johnson, and the National Secretary, Dick Turpin, contributed a 'Model Constitution' for a UYPL branch, with a very helpful commentary. This was an example of how UYPL provided youngsters with skills and knowledge that would be of lifelong value. The File showed how to construct constitutions, run meetings, run elections, appoint officers, keep ordered finances and so on. In the second section Martin Davies wrote about that fabled retreat, the UYPL Room, and how one might be obtained and used. In section three, Dudley Richards provided a comprehensive guide to the preparation and conduct of worship, which helps to explain the innovative youth services that UYPLers provided for their churches – and maybe why quite a number went into the ministry. Section four, by Donald Dunkley, was on 'The Epilogue' and gave a thoughtful and detailed consideration of worship within the context of specifically UYPL activities. Don's opening paragraph is as follows: "*UYPLers have long found worship easy to discuss but difficult to practice. The very word itself sounds old-fashioned. Our attempts at*

worship are often uncomfortable and remote from the life we live. Perhaps our fault is that we too often try to imitate our elders; we come to think that the way they worship, the things they do, and the way they speak is the only 'correct' way. But each generation feels and understands in *its own way*, and we must create our own ways of making sense of life." Section five, 'Putting on a Play', was by Croydon branch's highly successful actor/producer, Roy Smith. This section's inclusion is testimony to the importance of Drama Festival – and of local branch productions too – in UYPL throughout its post-war existence. The sixth section, by Arthur Vallance, is a guide to 'UYPLers and their Church' and gives guidelines for a day dedicated to topics like 'What is a Unitarian Church?', Unitarian teaching and ways of doing things, fundraising and activities that a UYPL branch might include in its programme. All in all, the '*Programme File*' was a remarkable piece of work that helped set the scene for UYPL in the exciting 1960s.

1964

General Assembly Council – a UYPLer's critique

UYPL was one of those affiliated societies which had representatives on GA Council, the Unitarian denomination's ruling body, along with the District Associations. In 1964 the UYPL representative was Martin Davies and in the February issue of *TYU* he gave this rather stinging assessment of the Council, on which he had sat for three years. Martin wrote: "*The Council is an august body and if it has a faint aroma of disillusionment and despair, I don't suppose it can be said to be anybody's fault.*" He called it, "*a large, unwieldy gathering which can...do little more than act as a rubber stamp for the various committees which really make the important decisions.*" Martin took a dim view of the haphazard chairing of Council which changed each year, the new GA President taking over the chair regardless of his or her ability in this regard. He complained that Council was dominated by the "*backwoodsmans-like*" attitudes and actions of the old people who formed its majority. Even members in their forties were "*frequently regarded as 'young upstarts'*" - the UYPL rep. was "*a mere babe in arms*" – and "*the most radical and constructive members had been subtly silenced.*" Martin wrote of its proceedings that, "*Occasionally it gets tired of being only a formality and makes a futile attempt to come to life by arguing the toss over some footling expenditure...or allegedly rude comment.*" With what degree of irony I don't know, Martin identified "*the only bright spark*" as being Dr. Dorothy Tarrant's objection to the new President's Award Scheme "*because it required a fourteen-year-old girl to prepare a menu 'including something to drink'.*" Martin thought the Scheme to be one of the Council's "*important achievements*", along with the setting up of "*the new Youth Department*" – something for which UYPL had campaigned. However, he returned to the attack by lambasting the GA's Ministry Committee for its "*stubborn refusal to recognise the crisis in the ranks of our professional ministers,*" and its Publications Committee, which had "*shown a singular lack of enthusiasm and initiative in its publishing policy*" and "*learned nothing about modern design.*" *TYU*'s bright young editor, Veronica Needham, affected to have learnt that Martin was soon to be exiled to Outer Mongolia: "*his ticket was bought for him by the over-80s on GA Council.*"

Publi-Publi, the Hucklow Ball, and Regional magazines

That same February '64 *TYU* carried some other significant items of UYPL news. The new 'Publi-Publi' Committee had "*streamlined*" *TYU* and increased its content, the '*Programme File*' was to have a new section on 'Work Camps', and UYPL had now

produced several films with a new one, *'The Pennine Way'*, planned. Publi-Publi Secretary, Peter Hewis, wrote that *"The future aim of Publi-Publi is to strengthen existing branches, help to create new ones, and to publicise the League – in that order."* In the National Committee report, National Secretary Dick Turpin mentions *"the most successful Hucklow Ball"*, held the previous August as a fund-raiser for the Hucklow furniture appeal. Dick revealed the possibility of repeating the Ball and in the event it became one of UYPL's most popular social occasions and certainly the most glittering! It was held annually in Manchester and until 1971 the venue was (with one exception) the Kent Suite at Belle Vue. The exception was in 1965 when it was held at the CIS Building. Events called the 'Hucklow Ball' were held in 1972 and 1973 but neither of these, which were held in a pub in Wythenshawe, really merited the name. Also in that February '64 TYU were notices about the six regional newsheets being entered for the Curren Trophy that year. They were *'The Nor'Easter'*, South-East Region's *'Phoenix'* (*"20 sides of excellent material"*), East Midlands Region's *'Mercian'*, East Cheshire Region's *'Cheshire Cat'* (including *"Reflections on Christ"*), South Lancs. Region's *'Hot Pot'* (with one page left *"hopefully blank"*), and Scottish Region's *'Scottish Unitarian Youth'* (complete with picture of a *"bare-chested, hairy-legged highlander"*). TYU urged the four Regions without a newsletter to *"get editing"*.

Drama Festival 1964

For the first (and only) time Drama Festival went south in 1964. It was held at Croydon Unitarian Church in acknowledgement of their UYPL branch having won the Festival trophy for three years running. They didn't win in '64, though, the prize going to Salford's Pendleton branch, whose *"entire...cast modestly traipsed on to the platform to receive it"* from the Rev. John Kielty. The Festival had twelve entries and was held over two weekends, 14th/15th and 21st/22nd March. Among the branches taking part was Ipswich with its all-girl membership. In his report in April's TYU, Geoff Kent wrote that they *"managed to get over the problem caused by their female majority by presenting a dramatic account of Henry VIII's meeting with...his late wives in the waiting room of the 'hereafter'."* I have heard it claimed that Ipswich, who came second, would have won had not one of the cast – who Gordon Lowthian called *"the beleaguered and lonely females of East Anglia"* – forgotten to remove her 20th-century wrist-watch, which hardly went with her 16th-century costume! This was my first Drama Festival, having travelled down from Lancashire in a minibus for the second weekend with Leigh & Astley branch and others, including TYU editor Veronica Needham.

News from the branches

TYU regularly carried news of UYPL branch activities and the March 1964 issue is a good example. Here is some of what it reported. Richmond & Wandsworth branch had *"conducted an enterprising Youth Service"* on the theme *'Youth and Change'*. The introduction said, *"It is our contention that much can be done to...bring up to date...older forms of service which do not seem relevant to...young people."* Ilford branch had been *"entertaining patients in the local hospital."* Leicester branch had held a Valentine's Weekend, welcoming UYPLers from five other branches for discussion, a social and a service. Hinckley branch had opened a coffee bar, been skating, and were *"knitting an Oxfam blanket"*. Mansfield branch, who also had a coffee bar, had decorated their UYPL room. Chesterfield's UYPLers (they too had a coffee bar) had *"shot an exciting thrill-packed film."* - my own Leigh & Astley

branch would soon be engaged on a similar project. Mossley held a “*Pre-Shrove Tuesday social*” to raise money for church renovations and nearby Mottram branch held a coffee evening. In Salford, Pendleton branch held a “*terrific*” Leap Year Dance, complete with a talent competition featuring “*The Cockroaches*”, “*Miss Killer Blackhead*”, and the Rev. Trevor Jones singing ‘*Four Days Drunk*’. In Manchester, Wythenshawe branch “*had debated, collected for the NSPCC and ice-skated.*” At Altrincham the UYPL’s “*Beat Balls continue to be a success*” and their Youth Service included “*a trumpet solo and a lusty rendering*” of a Chorus from T.S. Eliot’s ‘*The Rock*’. Stand branch, Whitefield, had “*formed a new Junior UYPL.*” The new “*enthusiastic and ambitious*” Leigh & Astley branch were planning a rally, with “*rambling over the Rivington moors*” and “*a little social life*”. Bradford’s Broadway Avenue branch had heard a “*talk about programme planning*” by General Secretary Dick Turpin, watched Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy films, and joined Jen Pickles “*in a sing-song*”. In the north-east Newcastle branch had “*conducted an original Youth Service complete with ‘We Shall Overcome’*”, the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. Geordie UYPLers had also “*crawled to the Leap Night Hop in lengthy columns.*” More branch news appeared in May’s *TYU*. In Bolton, Halliwell Road branch had three teams in a local table tennis league and had heard a “*most successful*” talk on “*Sex and VD.*” Nearby Horwich branch had organised two dances, “*finished the new kitchen*” for the church, and won the town’s Youth Drama Festival. The branch at Hindley, near Wigan, had visited an art gallery, a sculptor and a Jewish boys’ club. The news wasn’t always good and sometimes there were reports of a branch closing, but generally speaking these news reports show the UYPL of the 1960s to be keen, active and imaginative.

AGM 1964

Held on the 8th/10th May at Great Hucklow, as usual, UYPL’s 1964 AGM was personally significant as it was my first. After the customarily raucous Friday evening, the business meetings began on Saturday in what *TYU* reporter, Anne Williams, called the “*rather austere surroundings*” of the Old Chapel with its “*cold pews*” and “*no-smoking rule*”. Neville Kenyon was in the chair. A proposal to change the name of UYPL to ‘Young Unitarians’ was heavily defeated. The Saturday evening social was held in Bradwell village hall and featured the “*unforgettable rendering of ‘TYU Blues’ and ‘Oochy Coochy Man’ by the ‘Kangaroo Valley Sound’ of ‘be-leathered flat-mates, Ern and Pete’*” (Ernest Baker and Pete Wheeler). Sunday morning worship was, as always, in the packed Old Chapel, and outgoing National President, Neville Kenyon, preached “*an inspiring sermon*”. What it was about we are not told. The AGM’s final session duly installed the new National President, John Allerton, originally of Pudsey branch but by then a ministry student at UCM.

Tensions with the London District

In 1963 UYPL’s South-East Region had produced a report, ‘*Young Unitarians Present Questions and Answers*’, suggesting the existence of a gulf between Unitarian youth and their seniors. The document stated that “*The key fault is youth having no sense of belonging in congregations, where youth finds itself a separate and segregated group – where the adult alone sits on the committee and has responsibility.*” It then made a demand: “*We want equality, to be helped to accept responsibility, trust and confidence...given these we will respond in turn. Treat us like irresponsible children and we will remain irresponsible.*” The upshot of all this was messy and inconclusive, with a poorly-organised Open Meeting between UYPL and

the LDPA, held in July 1964. It had a confused agenda and was poorly attended, at least by UYPLers. Gordon Lowthian commented, "*the meeting was not very successful*" but at UYPL's Autumnal Convention South-East Region's report called it our "*greatest set-back*". The business not only created tensions between UYPL and the LDPA, it also created tensions within South-East Region, including an acrimonious resignation from the committee. Fortunately, though, good relations continued between South-East Region and individual congregations, with UYPLers invited to lead worship at Billingshurst that October.

Youth Week'64

Junior (under-18s) Youth Week (15th-22nd August) was led by Roy and Carole Smith, who were always reminded of the experience by the 'record of the week', the Beach Boys' *'I Get Around'*. The week was attended by sixteen teenagers, including five of us from Leigh & Astley branch and eight from Broadway Avenue, Bradford. Activities followed a familiar pattern of walking, swimming, rowing at Matlock Bath, going to places of interest like Eyam and Castleton, and hanging out in coffee bars in Bakewell and Buxton, not to mention various indoor activities at Great Hucklow. We also visited Chesterfield UYPL. Senior Youth Week followed, but unlike us these older folk needed a midweek "*morning of rest*"! On the Saturday in between the two weeks, most of us were at the Hucklow Ball in Manchester.

September Weekend '64 and 'The Pennine Way'

Held on 25th/27th September this most popular of UYPL weekends saw Great Hucklow filled to overflowing. One notable item in the programme was the premiere of the new UYPL publicity film, *'The Pennine Way'*. The work of John Hewerdine, the film chronicled the long-distance walk from Edale in Derbyshire to Kirk Yetholm on the Scottish border by Trevor Jones, Peter Witham, Mike Hurst, Bob Maguire and John himself. *TYU* afterwards recorded that the support team comprised Maggie Eccleshall ("*chief cook and bottlewasher*") and Martin Willescroft ("*driver and tent-putter-upper*"). After enduring treacherous peat bogs, "*wobbly knee disease*", and involuntary blood donation to "*every flea, midge, horsefly, and other vampire-like insect*", the walkers, having traversed the length of the 'spine of England' – as the Pennines are known - finally "*drank the most craved-for pint of the fortnight.*" The 8mm. colour film, called "*a great epic*" by Bob Maguire, not only delighted the UYPLers at that September Weekend, it went on to be widely-shown and much-used in promoting the League. My diary records that Leigh & Astley branch, who were then engaged in making a film of our own, were at Hucklow in force for the Weekend's fun and games, along with a talk on *'Mods Through the Ages'* by a "*vivacious*" art teacher and worship in the Old Chapel on Sunday morning. This was led by the Rev. Keith Hill, who preached on *'The Way Unitarians Treat Their Freedom as Free Christians'*.

Approaching Autumnal Convention

The autumn of 1964 was an active one, with a West Lancs. Region work-camp at the dry rot-riddled Croft chapel and its overgrown burial ground – which prompted calls to the police, reporting "*that a gang of youths was burning the place down*" (which we weren't, of course!). The same weekend (10th/11th October) there was a rally in Sheffield attended by UYPLers from Liverpool, Hinckley, Manchester, Leicester, Newcastle, Leeds, London and Chesterfield. Trevor Jones spoke on the President's Award Scheme and Grenville Needham led worship on the theme *'Take No Thought*

of the Harvest, with an address by Michael Savage. In that, Michael said that “we should all be sowers concentrating on the seeds we sow.” Passages from Stan Barstow’s *A Kind of Loving* and George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* were read by John Hewerdine and Susan Maycock. The following weekend UYPLers from England and Scotland gathered for a rally at Newcastle’s magnificent art deco Church of the Divine Unity. As reported by Anne Dale in *TYU*, the weekend included a “very interesting and amusing” talk by John Allerton on *A Touch of Old Theology* and a beach barbecue at Seaton Sluice, with “long queues for beans, sausages and coffee.” After the Sunday morning service one member of the Newcastle congregation told Anne Dale that “she nearly wept to see the church so full” – and that enormous church takes some filling! One unprecedented surprise announced in October’s *TYU* was the resignation of UYPL’s President-Elect, Sydney Smith of Croydon. National Committee appointed Michael Savage of Sheffield in his place.

On 30th October/1st November UYPL’s senior National and Regional leadership gathered at Great Hucklow for Autumnal Convention. It was my first, attending as Secretary of West Lancs. Region. Only five of the Regions (“Where have all the rest gone?” asked *TYU*) presented reports, one of which was mine, West Lancs. having seven “active” branches with about seventy-five members at the time. A new Region, Sheffield & District was announced, with three branches and a fourth in the offing. The two branches in the North-East were said to be “very active with large numbers”. There was a talk by Maggie Kahan of UYPL’s American counterpart, Liberal Religious Youth (LRY), and Ernest Baker led worship and preached on Sunday morning, with Dorothy Stretton reading.

The busy autumn continued in November and December with Leigh & Astley branch giving three well-attended performances of a variety show, produced by UYPL veteran Joe Fairhurst. After one performance we also showed the film we’d been making – a crime drama called *Foiled* – along with *The Pennine Way*. The audiences included church members from Leigh, Astley and other congregations in the district, not to mention “many UYPLers” from other branches, as I noted in my diary. Meanwhile, South-East Region held its AGM at Rossllyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, and an anonymous account of the weekend (27th/29th November) survives. It tells us, amongst many other things, that Regional activities had included work-camps at Ipswich, youth services at London District churches, and a debate on total abstinence with the Band of Hope (“We lost” was the comment). There were branch reports which revealed, *inter alia*, that Ilford had been to a Beatles show, Ipswich had “arranged coffee evenings in aid of the church” and held a dance in aid of OXFAM, and Richmond & Wandsworth had been to the theatre, gone ice-skating and had talks on the PDSA and 20th-century music. Croydon’s report told of carol singing for the Thalidomide Babies Fund, a party for the Sunday School and fifty orphans, camping at Hayley Island, and much else besides. The anonymous reporter lists among visitors at the AGM representatives of Foy (Susan Brockenshaw), the London District churches (Alan Ruston), the GA Youth Department (Grenville Needham) UYPL National Committee (Ernest Baker), and from LRY, an unnamed “beautiful red-head from Atlanta.”

‘Man, Woman and Child’

As the result of a proposal by UYPL at the 1963 GA Annual Meetings, a report with this title appeared in 1964 and was reviewed in December’s *TYU* by Susan Johnson.

The study commission of “*Unitarian men and women*” who produced the report had been charged with looking at such things as “*the changing roles of husband and wife*”, sex inside and outside marriage and “*pre-marital intercourse*”. A section on “*The family and outsiders*” was said to deal with “*the unmarried mother, the homosexual, the ex-prisoner and the alcoholic.*” Susan thought the report tried to cover too much ground and of these four subjects in particular only the first had been sufficiently dealt with. Nevertheless, Susan told *TYU*’s readers, the report is “*well worth your attention.*” This UYPL-inspired initiative had the value, Susan Johnson thought, of “*stimulating renewed Unitarian thought*” on “*this most essential human problem.*”

1965

‘UYPL Looks Ahead’

This was the title of an ‘Inquirer’ article by Ernest Baker, UYPL’s National Secretary, on 6th March 1965. He wrote that the UYPL of the mid-‘60s was “*a small national organisation with an estimated potential membership of some 1,100 (over 70% teenage) spread over 50-odd groups from Portsmouth to Aberdeen.*” However, although “*fellowship on the national level...plays an important part in terms of inspiration and training...these must be taken back to local member groups.*” Ernest made the point that “*it is in strengthening branch activities that the future character of UYPL lies.*” The link with the local church was vital, with the “*ideal*” UYPL branch existing in the context of “*those churches which are themselves most active*” and where young people are welcome and accepted as integral to congregational life. Where a youth group was “*weak and unstable*” he saw a role for an adult adviser to act as a “*guide, philosopher and friend*”. At regional level too Ernest wrote that “*it was the intention of the League*” to appoint “*youth advisers*”. Inter-generational communication at all levels was important in church life, said Ernest, but he thought that this had declined as churches ceased to have “*a strong weekday social life involving all the generations.*” Nevertheless, Ernest sought to be positive: “*Drawing adult and UYPL life together...holds the exciting possibility of finding together...what really is of value in our church life.*” He continued, “*For we believe that our ‘way of life’ offers something unique...which young people are unlikely to get at their job or school.*” This was a combination of “*fellowship and activity...search and discovery; an opportunity to find a system of moral standards...and to grow towards a ‘faith by which to live’ in complete freedom.*”

Drama Festival ‘65 and UYPL’s first ‘LP’ record

Held over the weekend of 19th/21st March at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church in Manchester, Drama Festival attracted seven entries in 1965, of which Altrincham’s was the winner with Pendleton’s in second place. Perhaps the most lasting legacy of that weekend was not the plays but what happened afterwards in the evening. Although singing had always been important in UYPL, by the mid-‘60s the traditional ‘sing-song’ was giving way to the ‘folk session’. This was the time of the folk revival and folk clubs were springing up everywhere, including one which met at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church, led by its minister, Trevor Jones – himself an accomplished folk-singer, guitarist and fiddle-player. That evening brought together singers from the folk club and from UYPL, including John Allerton, Joan Allerton, Pip Walker and Brian Hopkins. It was a splendid session and thanks to John Hewardine it was recorded and released as a vinyl album (or ‘LP’) called ‘*Folk Drama ‘65*’. This was the first of two records that UYPL produced, so preserving a

memory of something that was so important when UYPLers met and which made our gatherings so very enjoyable.

GA Annual Meetings '65

When the General Assembly met in Swansea (12th/15th April 1965) one highlight was the presentation to the first winner of the new President's Award Scheme – and the winner was a UYPLer. This was Hilda Davies, appropriately enough the branch Secretary of Swansea UYPL. She was also a Queen's Guide. A particularly moving moment during those GA Meetings was the unanimous adoption of an emergency motion on the recent brutal murder of Unitarian Universalist minister, James Reeb, by white racist thugs in Selma, Alabama, where he had gone with colleagues to take part in the great Civil Rights march there. The Assembly sang '*We Shall Overcome*' in tribute. The preacher at James Reeb's memorial service was Dr. Martin Luther King.

UYPL AGM '65

The main item on the agenda at the UYPL AGM (28th/30th May 1965) was a new constitution which, after due discussion, was adopted. It included revised aims for the League, which were:

To unite young Unitarians in a national fellowship;

To support and encourage the formation of active young people's groups in all Unitarian churches;

To encourage young people to give active and constructive support to the Unitarian Movement.

In the elections Michael Savage was confirmed as the new National President. I was one of two nominees for the position of President-Elect, but on this occasion the winner was Bill Hayhurst – who was heard to remark "*I had to win, Cliff and I had a pint on it.*" Nevertheless, I was elected to serve on National Committee for the first time. One UYPLer standing down from National Committee after six years of sterling service as National Treasurer was Martin West. His good friend and fellow 'retiree', outgoing Vice-President Neville Kenyon, paid Martin this cryptic tribute: "*In spite of his appearing to speak in such a way that one would think he was deliberately trying to lose friends and make enemies, he still remains surprisingly popular.*" The Saturday evening social comprised a satirical "*cabaret*" (care of Leicester branch) and what I described in *TYU* as "*wild ranting and folk-dancing*". Sunday morning worship was "*as inspiring as ever*" with outgoing National President John Allerton preaching.

A balanced branch programme

The 'balanced programme' had been the ideal of UYPL branch life since the days of Raymond Hodkinson in the early 1950s, if not before. A printed copy of Richmond & Wandsworth's branch programme for August 1965 has survived. It included play reading, a river trip from Westminster Pier to Greenwich, decorating the church hall, ice-skating, a report on the 1965 IRF Conference (by Gordon Lowthian and Jim Lee), a boat trip to Southend, talks on 20th-century music and Unitarian Social Service, and "*a social evening with the congregation.*" Raymond Hodkinson, incidentally, died in a sailing accident in 1966 and a warm tribute to him by the Rev. Basil Short appeared in *TYU* in November of that year, praising his work for UYPL and his "*fearless support*" for causes that were dear to him, such as "*racial integration*".

IRF '65

Gordon Lowthian also reported on 1965's IRF Conference in *TYU* (October issue). Held in Scotland at Wiston Lodge, Lanarkshire, the theme was *'The Role of the Family in Present Day Society'* and IRFers were there from Canada, the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and, of course, the UK. The appalling weather seems to have been a dominating factor, with UYPL's "Nat. Seccy and Nat. Treasurer" washed out of their tent by a "drainage ditch" turned "powerful torrent". Ironically, though, "The only major event that had to be cancelled...was the International Swimming Gala – reason – not enough water in the pool!" As one American commented, "If the floods come we can all take refuge in the swimming pool." The weather notwithstanding, the Conference – "the biggest and the wettest" – seems to have been a great success, leading Donald Dunkley to write in IRF's magazine, *'Forward Together'*, that IRF "creates an international community whose spirit must be experienced to be believed."

Developments at Hucklow

As was still customary, UYPL ran two Youth Weeks at Great Hucklow that summer of 1965, with the Hucklow Ball on the Saturday in between – 21st August. The highly enjoyable (if rather unruly) first Week (still, rather misleadingly, called 'Junior') was led by Grenville 'Neddy' Needham and Sylvia Johnson, with UYPLers from Lytham St. Annes, Newcastle-u-Tyne, Altrincham, Aberdeen and Leigh & Astley enjoying the usual range of activities, along with visits to Haddon Hall, the Castleton caves and some sheep-dog trials. The record of the week was *'I Got You Babe'* by Sonny and Cher. The second, 'Senior', Week was led by Martin and Judy Davies. September Weekend (24th/26th) saw UYPLers using a new facility at Great Hucklow for the first time. Writing in *'The Unitarian'* Ernest Baker commented that "It was a pleasure to meet in the 'homely' atmosphere of the recently opened social hall in the new extensions. These "new extensions" comprised dormitories as well as the social hall and provided much-needed extra accommodation for young people at events like that "fully booked" weekend when, incidentally, "the girls outnumbered the boys by two to one." Ernest, along with Michael Savage, had been UYPL's official representatives at the extension's opening ceremony on 11th September, UYPL having raised the money to furnish it. Ernest also led worship in the Old Chapel on the Sunday of September Weekend.

Three weekend meetings

One weekend in October '65 (15th/17th) UYPLers were involved in three simultaneous, though distinct, events. At Great Hucklow the second of the GA Youth Department's Weekend Meetings for Young Unitarians (WMYUs) had Ernest Baker as one its speakers and his subject was "The UYPLer and his connection with his church." Activities included writing for "imaginary UYPL branch magazines" and "learning how some UYPLs have contributed to church services",. Another of the speakers, the Rev. Peter Godfrey, led the Sunday service. *TYU*'s reporter, Richard Varley, called the event "a useful weekend" spent "learning about our Unitarian faith and youth activities." Of the twenty young people attending most "came from churches with established UYPL groups." Meanwhile, at the Overdale Youth Centre in Bolton, UYPLers from West and South Lancs. Regions met to consider the roles of branch officers and ministers in youth work. National President Michael Savage was one of the speakers. Sunday worship – "in an informal, relaxed atmosphere" – was led by Bill Cartwright and myself. Down in South-East Region, UYPLers and Foy members met at Great Frenches Park to discuss youth work in the area. Ahead of the

weekend meeting, Regional President Gordon Lowthian wrote that *“In London there are few young people taking an active interest in either their church or in UYPL or the Foy Society”*, while stressing that UYPL *“always urges its members to support their minister and attend their own church.”* He said of the weekend that *“Its aim is to... create a stronger feeling of fellowship between young Unitarians and their churches.”* The speakers were Alan Ruston, the Rev. Peter Hewis and the Rev. Lynn Bowen. Grenville Needham sent a paper to the meeting suggesting the formation of a Young Adult group in Central London. Sunday worship was led by Gill Waddington.

Autumnal Convention ‘65

Apart from the usual reports and discussions, that Autumnal Convention was notable for two things. First was a proposed *“project to send four young people overland to India to work...for a year with [the Rev.] Margaret Barr, and produce a permanent record on paper, film and tape of what she has achieved.”* The proposal was *“received with enthusiasm”*, reported Ernest Baker. Although the project took a slightly different shape in practice, it began the long and fruitful association established by Manchester UYPLer, John Hewerdine, with the Kharang Rural Centre and the Unitarians of the Khasi Hills in North-East India’s Meghalaya State. The other notable thing that happened (during the social) was egregiously politically incorrect by later standards, namely a Miss Autumnal Convention contest! The worthy winner was art student Andrea ‘Andy’ Pugh, of Hale Barns branch.

Re-inventing a branch

Many UYPL branches were not particularly long lived, often because they lost their leading members to further and higher education, to employment-related moves, or to changing personal relationships and marriage. Many branches were unable to survive the departure of these key figures. The secret of long-term survival was constant reinvention, with new and younger members taking the place of those who left or outgrew their UYPL branch. The branch that managed to do this most successively was Altrincham, which had a continuous existence from its foundation in 1943 right through to the 1980s. Formed on the initiative of the Rev. Arthur Vallance when he was minister there, the branch also enjoyed the active support of his successors the Revs. Peter Godfrey and John Midgley. How this branch managed to pull off the trick of reinvention is suggested by a minute book covering the years 1965 to 1969. It records a meeting on 31st October 1965 when a new junior UYPL was established. Present were not only seven ‘juniors’ but also four of the senior UYPL, namely Jeff Teagle, Dave Copley, Frank Pinder and Di Blackman. This overlap illustrates how the branch achieved continuity, as this wasn’t the only time it happened. As the minute book advances we see those ‘juniors’ become ‘seniors’ and new members joining and being integrated in their turn. In 1967 the branch Secretary, Martin Crilly, wrote that *“with the passing of time and the ageing of members, the group cannot continue indefinitely in its present form.”* And in a sense he was right. He was referring specifically to the departure of four members to University. But by 1968 the minute book was referring to new members who would become leading figures in UYPL, both locally and nationally, in the 1970s. They were Ginny Sever and the brothers John and Robert Roper. Between 1974 and 1980 no less than five members of Altrincham branch would serve as UYPL’s National President.

The latter part of 1965 was busy across UYPL branches and Regions. Bonfire Night events were held by Broadway Avenue, Bradford, and Wythenshawe, Manchester,

branches. Broadway Avenue also had a ten-pin bowling match with South Lancs. Region, went carol singing and held a Christmas party. South Lancs. UYPLers held their carol service at Manchester's Cross Street Chapel, and some of them joined about sixty West Lancs. Region members at their Christmas party at Bank Street Chapel, Bolton. Meanwhile, South-East Region's AGM weekend at Mansford Street, Bethnal Green, saw its conscientious and energetic President, Gordon Lowthian, stepping down, to be succeeded by Tony Hall.

1966

The 1966 Unitarian Youth Directory

In January 1966 the Unitarian Youth Department (UYD), led by Grenville Needham, produced its first "*directory of Unitarian Youth Activities.*" In the introduction, Grenville acknowledged that it might not be completely accurate but wrote "*it will at least be accurate enough to give us...a useful summary.*" The section on UYPL said that the League "*has approximately 35 member groups...involving about 500 young people.*" Ten Regions are listed as follows, together with the number of branches they had at the time: West Lancs. (7), South Lancs. (5), South-East (5), East Midlands (3), Merseyside (3), Sheffield (2), Scottish (2), East Cheshire (2), North-East (2) and Yorkshire (1). As this totals 32, maybe as many as three branches did not belong to a Region. The Directory also lists Regional and branch publications as follows: '*Merzigoround*' (Merseyside), '*Phoenix*' (South-East), '*Yorreg*' (Yorkshire), '*Scottish Unitarian Youth*', '*Northern Light*' (Aberdeen), '*Anvil*' (Croydon), '*Apex*' (Sheffield Unity) and '*Tyne-Tees Courier*' (Newcastle and Stockton). The editors were, respectively: David Craig, Jim Cannell, Peter Timiney, David Orr, Nancy Marjoribanks, Janet 'Het' Humphries, Michael Savage and Tony Thomas. Another branch magazine, Hale Barns' '*Barn Owl*' began publication that month. The Directory also records that UYPL's representatives on the UYD in 1966 were Ernest Baker and John Allerton, Its members on the British IRF committee were Ray Evans, Gordon Lowthian and Janet Dawson.

Grenville Needham on Youth Services

The March '66 issue of *TYU* carried an article by Grenville on youth participation in the preparation and conduct of worship, something of especial interest to UYPLers as Youth Sunday fell at the beginning of that month. He wrote, "*At the heart of Unitarianism is that crucial belief 'in the individual's freedom and responsibility in the formation of his [or her] own belief.'*" The purpose of religion is to think "*critically about what is of real importance in our lives*" and to ask "*what sort of society we should be helping to build, and just how we fit into its building.*" The importance of events like Youth Sunday, said Grenville, is that they give to UYPL groups the chance to plan and conduct worship and "*force us to think about these matters of ultimate concern.*" He concluded, "*our Youth Sunday worship gives us the opportunity to stand back, look at the problems, and then to plunge in and search for answers.*"

Course for branch officers

One of UYPL's great achievements was the way it prepared young people to take responsibility, and an excellent weekend course organised by West Lancs. Region in Bolton on 26th/27th February 1966 was a good example. Grenville Needham spoke on the duties and responsibilities of the branch secretary and organised role-play to back this up. The idea was for participants to simulate undertaking the tasks that would

have been necessary for planning a rally, and then review the results. Neville Kenyon spoke on the role of the chair, and gave advice that has been of great use ever since, and which I recommend to everyone called upon to chair committee meetings. As I recorded Neville's advice (TYU, April '66) it was as follows: the chair should "*keep a grip on the meeting, know just what is going on and make sure that all views get a fair hearing. The chairman should not force his own views on the committee nor allow anyone else to dominate meetings. Each subject should be fully discussed, but should not be allowed to drag on.*" The treasurer's role was well covered by Martin West in his characteristically concise and straightforward manner. It was typical of UYPL that a group of teenagers could not only attend such a weekend but could enjoy it too.

Drama Festival '66

UYPL's twentieth Drama Festival was held at the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle-u-Tyne on 11th/13th March 1966. Coachloads from Scotland and Manchester were reported to have provided "*the bulk of the attendance*" (TYU, April '66). "*There were seven entries in all, including the talented home team,*" and first on were debutantes "*the bonnie lasses from Hale Barns*" – plus their one lone male – whose play had been written by their minister, Kenneth Ridgway. The winning entry was Altrincham's with Aberdeen second and Wythenshawe and Newcastle joint third. There was "*a great dance, with a group*" on the Saturday evening, according to my diary, and on Sunday morning, wrote Tony Thomas in TYU, "*The church was extremely well-filled for the service.*"

Birth of the Brookfield Red Guards

In February 1966 I moved from Leigh to Manchester, where my father had taken over as minister at Brookfield Church, Gorton. The church had not had a UYPL branch for many years so I set about organising one, initially with teenagers associated with the church but soon adding more from the surrounding streets. Sixteen youngsters came to the inaugural meeting on 27th March and we decided to affiliate to UYPL as a branch. This lively bunch, mostly in their mid-teens and many with no previous church connection, soon became a prominent presence on the UYPL scene, acquiring the soubriquet, the 'Red Guards' – quite why I can't remember!

UYPL Poetry

UYPL had poets and TYU editors sometimes printed their poems. This was particularly true of Susan Short (Ullet Road, Liverpool) who took over as editor in February 1966. One poem that she published in the April '66 issue, without the poet's name, is this:

Hypostasis

*Great love has flourished in the past
And no doubt will flourish again.
Yet, in the present, emotions move too fast.*

*Life is so affluent, meaningless, protected and dull,
Exploration can only come from love,
Even I am being sucked into its whirlpool.*

The following month another one appeared, the work of Hale Barns UYPLer, Ann Garside:

Young Thoughts

*Oh how I long for a world that is free –
Free from the cares and the trials,
Free from the evils that gnaw at one's life.
A world where a wise man can smile.*

*Oh how I long for a world that knows peace –
A peace which no man need fear,
A world which embraces both black and white,
Where equality shines as the one true light.
A world in which love bears the crown.*

*Show me the way I may bridge the crevasse
Of greed, and the ocean, Mistrust.
Show me a ford o'er the river of Hate,
Show me the key to unlock the gate
Of the land where a footstep is firm.*

*Oh lend me some faith and I'll dig for that peace,
I'll search for freedom and love,
I'll conquer those evils and vanquish all fear –
Then I'll see that the land that I long for is near.
And that land I'll call heaven.*

This poem reflects themes and ideals that became popular in the youth culture of the 1960s, with its protest against war and injustice and its embracing of love and peace. Another, by Lawrence 'Loz' Malkin of Leeds, appeared in the July '66 *TYU* and is an angry expression of the contemporary anti-war sentiments:

Peace – or I shall now protest, so there

*Who Knows
Does it all lead to the Bomb?
Who Knows
Who are these people
Who threaten to terminate our lives?
We do not know them
They cannot be like us
For they are power drunk
I pity them, misguided people
For in the last judgement
They will meet the devil*

*What fiendish torture
Will he dream of?
Perhaps he'll
Hang a Bomb
From a piece of string
That burns
Above their heads*

To see how they all like it.

South Lancs. Region ‘National Weekend’ and the first Yorkshire Yarn

A so-called ‘National Weekend’ was held by South Lancs. Region at Altrincham, on 25th/27th March 1966. It was attended mainly by South Lancs. members, with some from Bradford and Leigh & Astley, but it was the precursor of the more truly national weekends that the Region would be running from January of the following year. The Friday evening, wrote Jeff Teagle in May’s *TYU*, “*saw a cool groovy folk scene*”, with a tour of Cheshire and ice-skating the next day. Saturday night’s “*intimate social*” was held in a small room “*lit only with a red spotlight*” with “*the crowded, cramped and foul conditions...so essential for the production of ‘atmosphere’*”. Sunday worship, led by Bill Hayhurst and Marion Wellington, was described by Jeff Teagle as “*startling*”. My own comment, in my diary: “*the sermon, I thought, was rubbish.*” Another regular UYPL gathering of the later 1960s and early ‘70s also saw its beginnings in 1966. This was the Yorkshire Yarn, another Regional event that gained national status. The first Yorkshire Yarn was based at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, on Easter Weekend – 8th/10th - April 1966. Activities included a folk night (led by Bradford’s Peter Timiney), a Treasure Hunt around the city centre, a dance, a “*Grand Turkey Barbecue*” and Sunday morning worship (followed by more turkey).

UYPL AGM 1966 – A plan for the future

According to John Allerton’s report in *TYU*, National President Michael Savage told the AGM, held 6th-8th May, that UYPL was “*now in a stronger position to plan for the future.*” National Secretary Ernest Baker reported that six new branches had been formed during the year and that the total number was now 35, although National Treasurer Harold Code said that only 24 were “*fully paid-up*”. There were 35 Individual Members and 45 Associates. Reflecting on the two years since the age-range change, Ernest thought they had been “*pretty rough*” but John Allerton commented that “*Much hard work and searching thinking has been done to remould the League, both organisationally and spiritually.*” He thought that “*This AGM showed that the work was not wasted.*” A proposal by Bill Hayhurst and Marion Wellington to set up a social service subcommittee was “*carried very convincingly*”. And Bill, as the incoming National President, had another idea, namely an expansion drive, or ‘Two Year Plan’, that would “*require much travelling, much fact-finding, making contacts in all parts of the country and...a reshaping of the systems of communication.*” UYPL, now younger in its membership, would be strengthened and taken to parts of the country where it was then weak or absent. Bill saw this as occupying his own year of office and also that of his successor, the new President-Elect – who the AGM decided would be me, as I was elected unopposed. Bill saw the Plan as something “*which he and Cliff would undertake jointly as Presidents*”, although in the event it didn’t actually start until I became National President twelve months later. Bill afterwards set out – at National Committee and in *TYU* – what would prove to be a somewhat over-ambitious and over-complicated structure for the Plan and one which UYPL didn’t have the people-power to fully implement. Bill himself admitted that his proposals were ambitious, maybe too ambitious, but he made no apologies: “*We are aiming high and even if we fall short, we will gain something in UYPL.*” Other changes on National Committee at the AGM saw a new National Secretary (Kathy Myers), National Treasurer (Gavin Mason) and Publi-Publi Secretary (Jeff Teagle) elected to office. The weekend had its other activities, of course, such as a dance, epilogue and midnight hike. There was also singing, which

prompted this comment from John Allerton: “*whereas this used to mean everybody singing UYPL songs which nearly everybody knew, it now means a performance with the audience singing the choruses.*” This actually indicated a cultural shift to something more in accord with the 1960s folk revival. John noted that “*UYPL has some extremely talented performers*”, of whom he was too modest to say he was one. Sunday morning worship was conducted by Sue Johnson with Mike Savage, as outgoing National President, preaching the sermon. He spoke about “*two great proponents of liberal religious mission*” – Albert Schweitzer and Margaret Barr.

My year as President-Elect 1966-67

I already attended many UYPL events anyway and was a regular at my own branch meetings in Manchester at Brookfield Church, Gorton, but my position as President-Elect meant visiting branches, taking services, and attending a wide range of meetings and gatherings wearing my official ‘hat’. These numbered over thirty during the year. They included: rallies at Wakefield (Yorkshire Region AGM weekend), Horwich, Leeds (the second Yorkshire Yarn) and Aberdeen; South Lancs. Region’s first January Weekend at Great Hucklow; work-camps at Brookfield Church, Gorton, and York; Regional AGMs and committee meetings in South Lancs. and West Lancs.; National Committee and subcommittee meetings; four Youth Leadership Training Courses; Hale Barns branch’s Whit Hike and their second anniversary party; meetings of the GA’s so-called ‘Sex Committee’; West Lancs. Region’s Christmas party and South Lancs. Region’s carol service; a “*Nursery Rhyme Social*” at Wythenshawe and South Lancs. Region’s Sports Day. And, of course, I also attended all the national UYPL events and, for the first time, the IRF Conference.

IRF ‘66

Held in West Germany near Offenbach-am-Main from 23rd – 30th July, the year’s IRF Conference attracted a strong British contingent of UYPLers and Foy Society members. They joined delegations from liberal religious youth organisations in the Netherlands, Switzerland, West Germany and the United States, along with individuals and smaller groups from Canada, Nigeria, Rhodesia (as it then was), Czechoslovakia, India and France. The study theme was *The Uses and Abuses of the Mass Media*. I wrote of it in September’s *TYU* that the subject “*proved to be one of great scope and had led to some most interesting discussions...It enabled us to hear about conditions in other countries, and this must be one of the most valuable things that IRF has to offer.*” Worship featured strongly, with daily services each led by a different national delegation. The main Sunday service was held in Offenbach’s Free Religious Church, the minister of which, Helmut Manteuffel, was IRF President. An International Service, on the theme ‘*Who is my neighbour*’, was held in Mannheim during the ‘day out’ (which also took in Heidelberg) and “*even included an Indian hymn,*” noted Wendy Dalton in her *TYU* report. There were business meetings too and UYPL’s official delegates were International Secretary Geoff Kent, Jeff Teagle, Richard Varley, Gordon Lowthian, Wendy Dalton and me. There were plenty of recreational activities too, both official and unofficial, and as Jean Fielding wrote, “*We sang anywhere and everywhere*”. It was also the first time that many of us saw a frisbee, which the Americans had brought. My diary reveals some things that went on outside the programme, for example: late one evening, “*go on a mad ride into Offenbach to Wolfgang’s [a bar] with Christel, Gudrun, Bill, Cappy and a Dutch girl on three bikes...*” It was also the week leading up to the 1966 World Cup Final and we watched the semi-finals on TV, with everyone supporting the West Germans and

the English. We had scattered by the time the Final was played! For me, the week was a wonderful introduction to IRF, to Germany, and to living in an international community. One of the UYPLers there, David Bleasdale, summed things up thus: *“A general feeling of international fellowship prevailed, fun was present as was business. The latter was enjoyed almost as much as the socials, and I do believe more by some folk.”*

Publi-Publi and the Two Year Plan

With the Two Year Plan in mind, Publi-Publi Secretary Jeff Teagle wrote in August's *TYU* about the role of his sub-committee in it. He wrote that UYPL is *“ready to grow a little in the sure knowledge that we have something unique and meaningful to offer to the adventurous and open-minded young people in our churches.”* Jeff stressed the need to *“gear up to the plans of our National President...and President-Elect”* otherwise *“we are going to miss an excellent opportunity and our...efforts will meet with...anti-climax.”* Publi-Publi's role was to spread *“the gospel of UYPL near and far”* and its main vehicle would be the Publi-Publi 'Circus'. This was *“a team... of seasoned UYPLers who are both willing and able to travel anywhere (almost) and at any time (well, not quite) to give a lively introduction (part talk, part film show, part folk singing) to any groups of young people interested in UYPL.”* Jeff said that *“Publicity is fundamental to progress”* and that the Publi-Publi sub-committee were *“determined to make our contribution in the best way possible.”* In the event, Publi-Publi and its Circus proved to be a key aspect of the Two Year Plan and perhaps its most successful. The other members of the Publi-Publi sub-committee at this stage were Susan Short, Margaret Hotchin and Richard Varley.

UYPL Youth Week and the Hucklow Ball '66

The plan was to run the Junior and Senior Youth Weeks concurrently from 13th-20th August, with Grenville Needham and Sylvia Tempest leading the former and John and Joan Allerton the latter. What actually happened was that the two Weeks merged and became one. The idea of separate Junior and Senior Weeks was discontinued after this, the distinction having become meaningless when those attending were nearly all teenagers. The activities followed a familiar pattern, and also included a visit to Hardwick Hall. The Week was enjoyed by everyone there and its soundtrack was the Beatles' *'Revolver'*. The Hucklow Ball, back at Belle Vue's Kent Suite, followed Youth Week and was described in *TYU* by Maggie Grimmer as *“the social occasion of the year”* with *“Our President, Bill Hayhurst, looking ever so smart, going the rounds...well supported by the rest of National Committee”* and, Maggie concludes, *“A great time was had by all.”*

New films

Some of UYPL's films were looking rather outdated by 1966 so two new ones were shot one Sunday afternoon in August (21st). John Hewardine did the filming and those appearing were Frank Pinder, Di Blackman, Geoff Kent, Di Beswick, Gavin Mason, Paul Reiber (a visiting SRLer and IRFer) and me. The films had no serious intent other than providing some light relief at UYPL meetings and Publi-Publi Circus presentations. Both films were set to records popular at the time and I suppose they most resembled what later became known as 'pop videos', with *“much capering about the centre of Manchester”*, as I noted in my diary. The records involved were *'Summer in the City'* by Lovin' Spoonful and *'They're Coming To Take Me Away, ha-ha'* by Napoleon XIV.

September Weekend '66

This was, as usual, a primarily social weekend (30th September/2nd October) but it did feature a presentation, with films and a talk, by *“two members of International Voluntary Service, which proved to be very enlightening,”* as Sue Paget wrote in November's *TYU*. Sunday worship was led by the Rev. Peter Short.

Difficulties on Merseyside

In November 1966 *TYU* reported that UYPL on *“Merseyside has been experiencing a number of difficulties...on the organisational side.”* One problem was the recurrent issue of leading members departing *“to continue their education elsewhere.”* As a response UYPL Vice-President Michael Savage held a meeting with Merseyside UYPLers. The result was that a new constitution was agreed for the Region and new officers appointed. The chair of the new committee was Austin Fitzpatrick, the secretary was Martin Short and the treasurer was Norman Hodgins. The Rev. Keith Treacher, a former UYPLer himself, had recently moved to the area and it was hoped he *“will be able to assist the Region and accept the office of adult advisor and President.”*

Yorkshire Region 'Carnival' rally

Some thirty Yorkshire UYPLers held what they called a *‘Carnival’* weekend in Hull on 14th/16th October. They had a *“conducted tour round the King George V dock”* and indulged in *“UYPL activities”*, a barn-dance, and *“jam butties in the kitchen...at 3-30 a.m.”* In her report for *TYU* (December '66), Gill Whittaker wrote that on Sunday morning, in the Park Street church *“we gave our tenth performance of our ‘Freedom’ Service, much to the delight of the large Hull congregation.”* Lunch followed: *“excellent meat and potato pies made by mothers of Hull UYPLers.”*

The Social Service Sub-committee

UYPL's Social Service Sub-committee was set up at the 1966 AGM and a report on it by Michael Savage appeared in November's *TYU*. Mike wrote optimistically that this was *“now beginning to fulfil a useful service, not only to UYPLers but to all young Unitarians as well as the whole denomination.”* Besides Mike himself (as its secretary), the sub-committee included (at this stage) Marion Wellington, the Rev. Trevor Jones, Susan Hall, Susan Short and the Rev. Donald Dunkley. As National President, Bill Hayhurst was a member *ex officio*, as I was the following year. The subcommittee's stated aims were *“to investigate possibilities for voluntary service by young Unitarians, principally abroad but also at home, to co-ordinate such activity; and to spread information about opportunities for this kind of activity as widely as possible amongst young Unitarians.”* The sort of things that were envisaged were International Voluntary Service and Voluntary Service Overseas, work in India (*“particularly the Khasi Hills”*), as well as local volunteer projects in the UK, not forgetting UYPL work-camps. It was an ambitious idea and it must be said that it did not live up to the high hopes with which it was launched. Nevertheless, UYPLers did undertake voluntary service both at home and abroad, even if this was largely independent of the sub-committee, which only survived for two or three years..

Autumnal Convention '66

At Autumnal Convention, held from 4th-6th November, *“the 2 year plan was officially welcomed by UYPL”*, as I put it in my diary. It was discussed at length and Bill

Hayhurst “*went through it point by point*”, explaining the rather complicated structure that he envisaged, most of which was never put in place. It was anticipated that a special Two Year Plan (TYP) budget would be needed along with fund-raising by UYPL groups. Actually, UYPL’s money situation was not great, with “*a drop in sales and a financial loss*” and Youth Week losing money too. Reports from the Regions were received and *TYU* reporter Ian Grimmer noted that some, notably Yorkshire, “*were prospering healthily*”. I noted in my diary that the formerly healthy South-East Region was “*very weak*”, although there was a chance of East Cheshire reviving. On Saturday evening, 5th November, we went to two bonfires, one in the village of Great Hucklow and the other over at Flagg, organised by Foy members.

1967

How there came to be a new face at *TYU*

Sue Short’s tenure as editor of *TYU* ended in February 1967 and her successor, John Carney, wrote an account of how he got the job in the March issue. He describes how he went to his UYPL branch meeting one Sunday evening: “*I walked into the Dungeon (...the only name by which the Stalybridge UYPL psychedelic hideaway is known) to see a bearded character sitting in state in the best armchair in the room...and being waited on hand and foot by young ladies.*” It was UYPL National President Bill Hayhurst. “*I guessed immediately that something was afoot, as one never sees members of National Committee at UYPL meetings unless they want something.*” What Bill wanted was a new *TYU* editor. “*No, I’m afraid I haven’t the time,*” said John. Bill replied that it was eight-thirty which, John admitted, “*immediately negated my excuse.*” So John got the job.

Early 1967 – York Work-camp, January Weekend, the Aberdeen rally and YY2

This most iconic year in the history of youth culture opened, as far as UYPL was concerned with a work-camp at the St. Saviourgate Chapel in York from 6th-8th January, involving UYPLers from Yorkshire Region, Leigh & Astley branch, and Manchester. From 27th-29th South Lancs. Region held its first January Weekend at Great Hucklow. Although a Regional rally, it was effectively a national event. My own verdict was that it had been “*a marvellous weekend*”. It included Bill Hayhurst’s 21st birthday celebrations amongst other things and the Sunday morning service was led by John Allerton. Scottish Region held a rally at Aberdeen from 10th-12th February, when they were joined by four members of National Committee plus a relatively new UYPLer called Sheila Hibbert. “*I wondered what I was letting myself in for*”, she wrote in the March *TYU*, “*setting out on a 1200 mile journey with four males, two of whom I barely knew, and knowing no-one at the destination.*” The five of us left Manchester and drove through the night – being “*stopped twice by the police*” noted Sheila – arriving at the Unitarian Church in Aberdeen “*at about 6-45 Saturday morning.*” The rally’s busy programme included a talk by Publi-Publi’s Jeff Teagle and some UYPL films, of which Sheila wrote: “*These proved very popular...especially the ones introducing the President-Elect.*” There was also a cinema visit to see ‘*What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?*’, a very cold ‘midnight hike’, “*games and dancing*”, indoor sports, a talk on mental health, and a service organised by Aberdeen UYPL. Sheila reflected on “*my first visit to Scotland, my first taste of haggis, and my first UYPL weekend*” and concluded that they had made the long journey worthwhile. Yorkshire Region’s second Yorkshire Yarn rally, held over Easter (24th-27th March), was based, like the first, at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds. It attracted UYPLers from at least three other Regions.

Drama Festival '67

Held on the weekend of 15th/16th April at Liverpool's Mill Street Mission, the 1967 Drama Festival attracted entries from five branches. But even before it started there was drama of a sort. A party of UYPLers from branches in the Manchester area were much delayed when our coach broke down on the East Lancs. Road. Undismayed we had an impromptu session of folk-song and dance by the roadside, accompanied by Trevor Jones on guitar and fiddle. We finally got to the Festival where the winners were Altrincham, the runners-up were Wythenshawe and in third place were those who had come the furthest - Aberdeen.

GA '67 - an appeal for worship material

At the General Assembly Meetings in Nottingham (7th-10th April) Eileen Kielty, a former UYPLer, made an undertaking – in the face of what she called “*various comments on worship*” – to “*collect...worship material*” and “*explore the question of producing something from it.*” Writing in *TYU* (June issue), Eileen said that “*Youth Sunday...has become notorious for all kinds of experiment*” and that “*Naturally one turns to the UYPL in appealing for information about experimental worship and for the materials used.*” In appealing to UYPLers for help, Eileen asked for material that they had created or which they could create: “*What about epilogue services...? What about plays? What about folk songs? Protest songs? What about...prayers and responsive readings?*” “*It doesn't have to be original*”, wrote Eileen, “*but it must be of value.*”

A Region re-named

At the AGM of South Lancs. Region at Cross Street Chapel on 22nd April 1967 the decision was made to change its name to Manchester Region. This made sense as the Region consisted of branches in Manchester and its adjacent Cheshire suburbs to the south. Frank Pinder of Altrincham was elected Regional President. The following week West Lancs. Region held its AGM at Walmsley and the Rev. Duncan Wilson of Preston was elected Regional President.

UYPL Merchandise

UYPL was into merchandising in the 1960s. In June '67's *TYU* sales manager Frank Pinder wrote a guide to what was available at that time. Probably the most successful item was the Flaming Chalice tie, available in maroon, blue or black for 15/-. This had been promoted using an iconic photograph of UYPLer Veronica Needham (economically dressed only in shirt and tie) taken by John Hewerdine. Other items were cuff links (30/-) and handkerchiefs in sets of three (gents 7/6d, ladies 6/6d), all bearing the Flaming Chalice logo. UYPL badges cost 2/6d each and the UYPL Song Book was 1/6d.

Death of Henry Harris Cheetham – UYPL's founder

The obituary of UYPL's first General Secretary and fourth National President, Henry Harris Cheetham, appeared in *TYU*'s July/August 1967 issue. In it his old friend, the Rev. Arthur Vallance, recalled that, along with John Kielty, Henry “*shared the grave responsibility for founding UYPL in 1934.*” As a young minister interested in Unitarian Religious Education, he was concerned that, at the time, it was a “*dead-end*” with no “*continuation in a young people's organisation.*” This was what led him to initiate the foundation of UYPL. He was its General Secretary from 1934-37

and National President in 1937/38. He was minister at Preston from 1929-35 and at Stand Chapel, Whitefield, Manchester, from 1935-48, after which he served as Assistant Secretary at Unitarian Headquarters, with responsibility for the Religious Education & Youth Department. Later, in the United States, he served churches in Newport, Rhode Island, and Charlottesville, Virginia, before becoming the UUA's Director of Religious Education in 1962. Arthur closed his tribute thus: "*We salute the memory of a founder who had a useful and distinguished career.*"

TYU's TYP special issue

April '67's TYU was devoted to the subject of the Two Year Plan (TYP), with articles by Grenville Needham, John Carney, Arthur Vallance, Bill Hayhurst, Jeff Teagle and myself. The issue carried a new header, featuring a distinctive UYPL 'Flaming Chalice' specially designed for the TYP by Andy Pugh. Grenville, as GA Youth Officer, welcomed the TYP as something emerging from UYPLers "*with a desire...not to have the League stagnate.*" He contrasted the current weakness of UYPL – "*about 30 member groups with an average of...12 members each*" – with the days when it had "*50 branches and 1000 members.*" He quite rightly linked "*this weakness in UYPL...with the present weakness in our parent churches, from which a great deal of our help and encouragement must come.*" Grenville was here putting his finger on something which, in the long term, would be a major factor in UYPL's decline but he struck an optimistic note nevertheless, writing that "*with a clear and realistic idea of our aims and methods...we can break through this weakness.*"

TYU editor John Carney wrote of the TYP that "*the future of UYPL will be affected by the effectiveness or otherwise of it...The TYP depends on us.*" The Rev. Arthur Vallance, one of the League's founders gave a historical perspective. National President, and originator of the TYP idea, Bill Hayhurst, outlined his concept once again but noted that changes had been made to it as the result of "*discussions and comments made at National Committee, Autumnal Convention, and by numerous UYPLers and Associate Members.*" The upshot was something a bit less bureaucratic and more geared to action. His idea of a TYP secretary sitting on National Committee did bear fruit but the proposal for a system of Area Youth Advisors covering the country did not. There were simply insufficient people to put this into practice. Jeff Teagle set out the role of Publi-Publi in the TYP, "*which, we hope will achieve not only a larger League but also a more energetic and revitalised organisation*" as symbolised by Andy Pugh's new chalice logo, which would appear on all UYPL publicity and publications. Andy herself wrote of it (in May's TYU) that it was meant "*to convey the underlying dynamic potential of the young people of the Unitarian church.*" She continued, "*Using the letters UYPL...I devised a new UYPL chalice*" with "*the basic Unitarian symbol as a guide...if it is...commented on and attracts attention it achieves its object.*" Having captured someone's attention, Andy thought, that "*person is almost certain to read the literature attached.*" Andy's UYPL Chalice, which was printed in fashionable purple on TYUs masthead, was very much a design of the times, well-suited to the hopes of the TYP.

Jeff Teagle also said that "*our next year's President will make an authoritative statement of policy and methods.*" My own article followed and it was on similar lines to one that I wrote for the May issue of *The Unitarian* in which I said: "*I am firmly convinced that the UYPL is potentially one of the most important movements in British Unitarianism*" that it "*offers individuals and groups...the chance to meet*

other young Unitarians socially, in worship and in constructive work for our churches and society. The idea of a national League is the strength of UYPL, although local groups are its basis.” UYPL thus “*counteracts the sense of isolation that drives young people out of the churches...to find fellowship with others of their own age group.*” I said that I was looking for “*the full support and assistance of the Unitarian movement as a whole*” which would help bring about “*the blossoming of the League into a strong and truly national fellowship of young Unitarians.*” That was the vision with which I would undertake the TYP as National President.

UYPL and the ‘Pirates’

In 1967 the airwaves of the UK were filled with pop music emanating from ‘pirate’ radio stations moored just outside territorial waters. The government was planning to effectively close them down with its Marine Offences Bill. It should be remembered that these ‘pirates’ were extremely popular with young people, providing a service that the stuffy old BBC with its domestic radio monopoly did not. There was thus a principle involved. As a result on the eve of UYPL’s AGM I was contacted by Neville Kenyon suggesting, as I noted in my diary, that the AGM send “*a resolution...to the Govt. about the pirate radio stations.*” Members of my own Brookfield branch who I discussed it with approved the idea. A motion was drafted, and I proposed it at the AGM but surprisingly and disappointingly, it was lost.

UYPL AGM ‘67

The AGM was held at Great Hucklow over the weekend of 5th-7th May. After disposing of some motions the Meeting spent much time discussing the TYP, then moved on to electing the National Committee who would put it into operation over the next two years. That Committee was as follows: National President – Cliff Reed; Vice-President – Bill Hayhurst; President-Elect – Peter Timiney; National Secretary – Richard Varley; National Treasurer – Gavin Mason; Publicity & Publications Secretary – Jeff Teagle; TYU Editor – John Carney; Conference Secretary – Gill Whittaker; Elected Members – Andy Pugh (who was also UYPL representative on the British IRF Committee); Geoff Kent (who was also International Secretary) and David Orr (who was TYP Secretary). In fact there were several appointees holding ‘portfolios’ who were not actually on National Committee, such as Kathy Bolton (Drama Festival), Frank Pinder (Sales), Marion Baker (Individual Members), Peter Short (Associate Members), Michael Savage (Social Service) and Bob Vickers (Hucklow Ball), Representatives were also appointed to the following bodies: Youth Department Committee (Michael Savage and Jeff Teagle), Northern Sunday School Federation and Homes Committee (Gavin Mason), and General Assembly Council (Cliff Reed). Such appointments were made or approved at every AGM but because of the significance of the year and to give an idea of UYPL’s governance, I have for once listed them all. Besides the business meetings there was the usual social and dancing (“*Rave through till 12-15*”) followed by the ‘midnight hike’ around one or other of the ‘triangles’. On Sunday morning I was duly installed as UYPL National President for 1967/68. At less than a month over 20 I was, perhaps, the youngest person to hold the office up to that point. Worship followed in the Old Chapel with Bill Hayhurst preaching. In the afternoon I chaired a National Committee meeting for the first time.

It was to be a very busy year for me as National President, during which I was also a full-time student. I attended well over fifty events, meetings and engagements in my

official capacity, not counting my continued regular commitments at my own Brookfield branch. They included eight national and international events, at least sixteen visits to UYPL branches and youth groups, three work-camps (at Lancaster, Lydgate and Hull) and eight Regional rallies. I took part in at least twenty committee, subcommittee and similar meetings, and there were a number of speaking and preaching engagements, and assorted others of which the first was the Two Year Tramp.

The Two Year Tramp and the TYP's first year...

The Two Year Tramp was both a curtain-raiser and a fund-raiser for the Two Year Plan, a sponsored walk at a time when such events were still something of a novelty. I wrote in a report for TYU, *"on the fine and sunny morning of Spring Bank Holiday Monday [29th May] 55 walkers, plus numerous well-wishers, hangers-on and personnel of the support party gathered by the sparkling waters of the Ladybower reservoir [in the Peak District]. Ahead lay 25 miles of road."* The walkers' destination was Brookfield Church, Gorton, in Manchester and *"all along the route cars, vans and John Hewerdine's ambulance...distributed drinks, picked up clothes...and collected those who dropped out."* There were ice-creams at the Snake Inn and a lunch of *"butties and soup...in a woodland glade near Glossop"* while Andy Pugh *"kept emerging from the ambulance to put those less fortunate than herself on celluloid."* First to arrive at Brookfield were Bill Cartwright of Leigh & Astley and myself, while *"Last to arrive were the gallant girls of Brookfield who arrived about 18-30 after refusing all the many offers of lifts they received, walking barefoot from Hyde."* Other Brookfield UYPLers greeted the weary arriving walkers with cups of tea, medical help was given for *"blistered and tired feet"*, and the Brookfield Women's League laid on *"an excellent meal of meat and potato pies."* 43 of the 55 walkers completed the whole distance, bringing *"looks of dismay to many a sponsor, who thought that their...walker would be lucky to complete 5 miles."* The Tramp was a great success and raised about £250 for TYP funds, a very handsome total in 1967.

The Two Year Tramp wasn't the only UYPL sponsored walk during the year. On 21st October the Aberdare branch held *"a 16 mile Money-making March in aid of the £1000 Church Repair Fund"* and raised well over £70. The Aberdare UYPL *"was delighted to welcome...Gavin Mason and...Michael Savage...who volunteered to take part...a gesture very much appreciated by all the members"* (TYU, December).

The Two Year Tramp was followed by a year of heightened activity and enthusiasm, beginning with what became known as the 'Summer of Love'. Its ethos of 'love and peace' was well-suited to UYPLers, as were those words from a song on the Beatles' *'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'* album (released on 1st June): *"With our love we could save the world – if they only knew."* The British delegation at the IRF Conference near Schwyz in Switzerland (22nd-29th July) was the largest after the Swiss hosts. We numbered about thirty, the majority of whom were UYPLers. Youth Week, based at Great Hucklow (12th-19th August), included *"a love-in"* as well as the more usual range of activities! The Hucklow Ball with *"just about everyone there"*, as I noted in my diary, brought the summer programme to a suitably glitzy close. September Weekend was attended by *"innumerable UYPLers"* (my diary again) and, amongst sporting, recreational and similar activities, included a talk and discussion, which I chaired, *"on youth & such problems as altering the age-limits on...marriage, jury service, voting, etc."* On Sunday morning Duncan Wilson preached at a *"great*

service” in the Old Chapel. The autumn saw rallies at Rivington (the highly innovative and hugely successful ‘Rally’ Rally), Padiham, Stockton, and Dundee (including the Scottish Region AGM). Autumnal Convention was much concerned with the TYP and I particularly welcomed the presence of three Welsh UYPLers, of whom we hadn’t seen many for some time. Ernest Baker preached on the Sunday morning.

1968

The opening months of 1968 saw rallies at Horwich and Rossendale along with the third Yorkshire Yarn (“*very successful and well-organised*” according to TYU) over Easter, based this time at Lydgate Chapel, New Mill, in the Holme Valley. There was also a work-camp at Lydgate during the year, along with those at Lancaster and Hull.

The second UYPL ‘LP’ record

One of the biggest gatherings of the TYP’s first year was Manchester Region’s January Weekend at Great Hucklow, which was effectively a national event. It was notable for the folk session on the Friday evening which, thanks to Colin Horsfield, was recorded and became UYPL’s second vinyl LP, as they were known. It features such singers as Trevor Jones, Pip Walker, Peter Timiney & Kathy Bolton, Geoff Kent and myself. The tracks to include were chosen by ballot over the weekend. In 2014 the two UYPL records were brought together on one CD with the title, ‘*We’re Folk and We’re Singing*’. It was sold to raise money for the Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund, and is a unique record (in both senses) of UYPLers doing one of the things they loved best – sing. Amongst other things, the weekend also included a “*panel discussion...on birth control*”, a “*Drama session*”, dancing and more singing. On Sunday morning Trevor Jones led “*an effective and beautiful service.*” It was a wonderful weekend, as I noted in my diary and reported for TYU.

‘the challenge of youth...’

1968 saw the publication of an attractively produced and very informative publicity leaflet with this title. It reflects a UYPL that was confident, well-organised, and which knew what it was about. Section one is headed, “*...demands a challenging religion*” which completes the leaflet’s title. It summarises questions faced by young people, including “*What is life? And what is its purpose?*” “*By what moral standards ought men to live?*” “*Are there resources beyond us, or within us, upon which we can call in time of need?*” Some responses to the questions follow, ending with, “*...the freedom of the Unitarian church can help each one of us to discover and develop his own personal outlook on life.*” Gender inclusive language was not yet the norm! Of UYPL and its ethos the leaflet said that the League “*is an organisation for adventurously-minded young people who are not afraid to think for themselves.*” It made the point that UYPL was an autonomous and democratic organisation and that “*National and regional affairs are managed entirely by members of the UYPL*”, as were those of its branches or “*Member groups*”. The constitutional “*UYPL aims were given*,” namely: “*To unite young Unitarians in a national fellowship.*

“To support and encourage the formation and growth of active young people’s groups in all Unitarian churches

To encourage young people to give active and constructive support to the Unitarian movement.”

Under the heading “*UYPL offers*” the leaflet lists and briefly describes the League’s regular national events and goes on to mention such things as TYU, the ‘*Programme*

File, Great Hucklow (“*the focal point for many UYPL activities*”), and UYPL’s co-operation with the Unitarian Youth Department on leadership “*training courses*”. It sets out UYPL’s activities, organisational structure and governance at local, regional, national and international level, the latter being “*the International Religious Fellowship (IRF)...linking liberal religious youth in many countries.*” On membership it gives UYPL’s age range as 14 to 25, making clear that the League was truly a youth organisation, run for young people by young people.

The photograph on the cover of ‘*the challenge of youth...*’ featured the winsome Andrea ‘Andy’ Pugh, who was linked to two more publications with UYPL connections that appeared at that time and which were reviewed in January ‘68’s *TYU*. They were ‘*Bold Antiphony: Meditations in Contrasting Moods*’ and ‘*Hinge of the Year: Christmas Crosstalk*’ (both Lindsey Press, 1967). The author, Leonard Mason, had been UYPL’s National President in 1942/3 and was, in 1968, minister of Montreal’s Church of the Messiah. The books were attractively designed by Grenville Needham (another former UYPLer) and Andy, an artist and current UYPLer, provided the illustrations. *TYU* said of the books that they were “*well-written and...make rewarding reading*”, which is true, although they were very badly bound!

Publi-Publi visitations

As part of the TYP, the ‘Publi-Publi circus’ visited youth groups and gatherings with the intention of interesting them in UYPL. Visits usually involved a talk on UYPL, one or two of the UYPL films, and some singing and informal interaction. One such, involving Jeff Teagle, Gavin Mason, Geoff Kent, David Warhurst and myself, was to a rally of Welsh Unitarian youngsters at the Unitarian Church in Swansea on 6th January. We were joined by UYPLers from Aberdare, whose church we attended the following day. Another visit, in February, by Gavin Mason and me, was to Dudley in the West Midlands, where there was little UYPL activity, and where we spoke to some young people from local churches. Youth groups in Lancaster, Hull, Atherton (Chowbent Chapel) and Whitefield (Stand Chapel) were also among those receiving visits from the ‘circus’ during the year 1967/68, some affiliating to UYPL as a result.

A Region revived

During the course of the year the moribund East Cheshire Region was revived, with the existing UYPL branches at Stalybridge and Dukinfield being joined by new ones at Denton and Mossley. Ken Howard of Stalybridge declared, “*East Cheshire was a great Region and we aim to make it one again.*” In *TYU* (January ‘68) I welcomed the revival and the increasing numbers from East Cheshire attending national events, writing, “*As the Region finds its identity again it will, no doubt, become more ambitious.*” The meeting to formally reconstitute the Region followed a special service at Wilton Street Chapel, Denton on 28th April, which I led. Members were present from all four branches.

The Permissive Society

One of the more unexpected engagements of the year was an invitation to speak to the National Unitarian Men’s League on the then topical subject of the so-called ‘permissive society’. This I duly did at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, on 16th March, accompanied by some supporting UYPLers, one of whom – David Bleasdale – also spoke. I don’t know if David and I – or UYPL more generally - were regarded

by the Men's League as representing 'the permissive society' but I noted in my diary that it "*Goes very well. A good discussion ensues.*"

Drama Festival '68

Held at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, over the weekend of 29th/31st March, the UYPL Drama Festival attracted eight entries and an audience for the plays themselves of "over 200", according to Peter Timiney's report in May's *TYU*. The winners were Altrincham branch, second were Wythenshawe, and third were Hale Barns, with a colourful play written by their minister, Kenneth Ridgway, and which reflected the times! Called '*Which Power?*' it involved a coven of witches who are turned into hippies by means of "*flower power*"! After the adjudication and presentations, Peter reported, "*Everyone congratulated everyone else and then we had some tea.*" Being a UYPL weekend this was not all there was to it. There was singing on Friday night, "*a rave-up*" on Saturday night, and worship in the Chapel on Sunday morning.

The GA Meetings

As UYPL National President I attended the 1968 Annual Meetings of the General Assembly in my official capacity. About fifteen other UYPLers were also there. Our particular interest was the Youth Meeting, which we shared with the Foy Society, IRF and the President's Award Scheme. In the Meeting I was interviewed about UYPL by the Rev. Eric Wild, a UYPLer himself in his youth. We then sang, led by Trevor Jones, Peter Timiney & Kathy Bolton, and me. The Meetings also provided the opportunity for informal conversations about UYPL.

The Underground

In one of its periodic excursions away from UYPL news and events, in April '68 *TYU* published an article by Bill Hayhurst on the late 1960s counter-cultural phenomenon of the '*Underground in London*'. Centred around things like the newspaper '*International Times*' and the psychedelic '*UFO*' club, the "*undefined philosophy of the Underground was,*" wrote Bill, "*one of improvisation, adaptation and individuality.*" Drugs were very much a part of this as Bill wrote: "*some members of the 'new society' do take drugs in order to increase their perception...and their experience of their own minds.*" Bill's closing thought was, "*I'm just waiting to see what the next developments will be.*" *TYU*'s editor, John Carney, thought that instead of taking the "*dangerous and escapist route of drugs*" one might better increase one's perception "*by simply living and helping others as opposed to retreating 'underground'.*" I suppose some aspects of the 'Underground' might have resonated with UYPLers, such as its radical individualism, its opposition to war, and its questioning of oppressive authority, but I don't think it made great inroads into the life of the League and I don't recall drugs becoming a major issue.

UYPL AGM '68

UYPL's '68 AGM on May 3rd/5th was oversubscribed and of the many attending "*Quite a few...had turned up without any written booking.*" Nevertheless, as Dennis Talbot reported in June's *TYU*, the Homes Warden at Great Hucklow, Henry Tittle, managed to fit everyone in somewhere. Richard Varley, writing in *The Inquirer* (22nd June) recorded that "*There were present delegates from 24 branches and 21 Individual Members, a total of 90 people.*" I was in the chair and not everyone approved of my efforts to keep things moving! Dennis wrote that "*the National President was pleased about the speed of progress for misguided reasons.*" National

Treasurer Gavin Mason told the AGM that money raised by the Two Year Tramp had largely taken care of a budget deficit and Richard reported that *“all our annual events had been successful and run at a profit with the exception of Youth Holiday Week.”* In his report as National Secretary, Richard said that six new branches had affiliated during the year 1967/68, that *“on the whole UYPL branches were stronger,”* and that *“both Associate Membership and Individual Membership had increased.”* In his article for *TYU* Dennis Talbot praised Publi-Publi Secretary Jeff Teagle, whose report had announced the new ‘Challenge of Youth’ leaflet and the prospect of *“a documentary film on the UYPL.”* On the downside, Richard Varley reported that National Committee had decided to declare six branches ‘closed’ as they existed in name only. Also, the Social Service Subcommittee report was disappointing. As Richard put it, *“many of their planned work projects had to be cancelled due to lack of support.”* This mixed picture of the TYP’s first year prompted the response from TYP Secretary David Orr that it was *“not as gloomy as at first thought”* but that *“there was still much work to be done.”* He instanced the League’s inadequate presence south of Birmingham where *“there are only three UYPL branches.”* The elections saw several changes to the membership of National Committee. New faces were Ken Howard (President-Elect), Andrew ‘Pip’ Walker (Publi-Publi Secretary), Dot Warhurst (*TYU* Editor) Sue Paget (Conference Secretary) and Gill Whittaker (TYP Secretary), along with three elected ‘ordinary’ members John Clarke, Colin Horsfield and John Coles. Gavin Mason was re-elected as National Treasurer but he was to resign in September and be replaced by Ray Elder of Dundee. In accordance with usual practice, Peter Timiney succeeded me as National President and I became Vice-President – which led Dot Warhurst to comment in *TYU*, *“a position for which some people have remarked that he is admirably suited!!!”* Business done, the social and epilogue followed on the Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, as outgoing National President, I led worship in the Old Chapel, assisted by Carol Sellers and Ken Howard. Dennis Talbot reported that *“Cliff’s sermon...reminded us of man’s responsibilities, of the dangers of passing them off for a hotch-potch of ‘progressiveness’. We must progress but only within the sights of our values.”* Such skimpy records as I have of my sermon mention criticism of *“Unitarianism’s lack of direction and apathy”* and of the need to *“strike out decisively against the evil and exploitation in the world.”* I mentioned *“war and social problems”* along with issues that would later be called environmental, such as imperilled wildlife, the risks of uncontrolled population growth, and such threats to the countryside as *“‘development’, ‘bad planning’ and ‘poor land management.’* One piece of immediate feedback from my old friend, John Clarke, is lodged in my memory: *“Nice harangue, vicar”!* My Presidential year was over.

The new President’s message.

In his message to the League the new National President. Peter Timiney of Bradford gave an upbeat assessment of the TYP’s first year, but lamented the League’s inadequate geographical coverage: *“UYPL is concentrated in the north...but what of our churches elsewhere, oughtn’t they to have young people too? The future of our churches is dependent on the young people who become attached to them.”* He sought a bridging of the *“rift that is often apparent between a congregation and its young people,”* appealing for *“a little consideration and understanding”* so that *“perhaps young people will stay within our movement.”* He looked to UYPLers to *“keep alive a spark of interest in branches that are losing heart,”* and to members of *“our congregations”* to *“open an avenue of interest to young people.”*

UYPL and Hucklow

UYPL's longstanding commitment to the Unitarian Holiday Centre at Great Hucklow was evident again in the June '68 *TYU* where it was reported that the League had "managed to raise sufficient money to pay for all the furniture for the new extension" as well as "other furnishings." But now more money was needed for "extensions to the dining room" and a new appeal for £5000 had been launched at the AGM under the aegis of Michael Savage. The extension was planned to be ready by September Weekend and £1000 had already been raised by early August. Other developments following soon after the AGM were a new branch at Lancaster and work-camps at Glossop and Lydgate.

IRF '68

As usual, UYPL was well-represented at the IRF Conference at Woudschoten, Zeist, in the Netherlands (20th-27th July). The theme was 'Our Task in the World' of which *TYU*'s reporter, Lesley Bushell, wrote that it was "a good choice...and we were spared the academic digressions which...have spoilt previous conferences." Apart from the lectures and discussions there was a 'day out' which took in the Ijssel Meer polders, a National Park and the Kroller-Muller Museum (for the art). There was an international service, held in Arnhem, along with the daily worship services, each led by a different national delegation. The British, drawn from both UYPL and the Foy Society, were said by Lesley to form "one of the most closely-knit delegations which...Britain has ever sent to IRF." Among the delegations were the Czech Unitarians, whose youth group were admitted to membership during the business meeting. In addition there were all the many and various informal activities that made IRF Conferences so enjoyable. In her *TYU* report Lesley Bushell noted that she had been "well-prepared" for IRF because "UYPL had already instilled in me a certain fascination for the intrigue of business meetings, an active interest in purposeful discussion, and a moderate capacity for burning the candle at both ends."

A new-look Youth Week and the Hucklow Ball

For the first time UYPL's Youth Holiday Week (10th-17th August) was not held at Great Hucklow which, for some reason I can't recall, wasn't available. Instead we went to north Lancashire, to the southern fringes of the Lake District. We were based at self-catering accommodation in two old Quaker meeting houses in adjoining villages near Carnforth. On the Sunday morning some attended Quaker meeting and in the evening we all went to Lancaster Unitarian Church for the service and to meet the new UYPL branch. There were about 35 UYPLers on the Week which was a great success, although we didn't enjoy Morecambe where "It was raining and very depressing." So wrote Newcastle UYPLer Noreen Miller in her report for *TYU*. Noreen's verdict on the Week: "This has been a holiday I shall always remember." At the end of Youth Week most of us went on to Manchester for the 1968 Hucklow Ball at Belle Vue's Kent Suite. "Everybody there" I noted, while it was what people were wearing that George Scaife noted in his *TYU* report (October issue): "Full-length dresses were the in-thing this year" although "the girls wearing minis looked lovely as always." And it wasn't only the girls who caught George's eye: "there was David Orr in a KILT."

September Weekend and Autumnal Convention

The first of these regular national gatherings at Great Hucklow, September Weekend (27th-29th) involved “a ballroom dancing session” led by Carol Sellers, UYPLer and amateur champion, a “debate” (what about my diary doesn’t record), folk-dancing, folk-singing and the Saturday night social. Sunday worship was led by John Allerton. On arrival at Autumnal Convention (8th-10th November), I unexpectedly found myself in the chair for the whole meeting, the National President being absent. I recorded that “*new ideas emerge*” about the TYP, but I don’t say what they were. On the Saturday evening we joined Foy members for their bonfire at Flagg and on Sunday morning Bill Hayhurst led worship in the Old Chapel. There was a somewhat downbeat feel about Autumnal Convention, and this was the subject of an article, ‘*Impressions ‘68*’, by Geoff Kent in December’s *TYU*. He discerned a lack of “*enthusiasm...amongst the general membership*” of UYPL and a problem filling leadership positions as older members departed the scene. He cited Merseyside, Yorkshire and even Manchester Regions as having problems in this regard. His own now moribund South-East Region had experienced this a few years previously. While some Regions, such as West Lancs. and East Cheshire, were healthy with “*active branches*”, other areas, such as the West Midlands, had few young people. Geoff did not favour raising UYPL’s age limit as a way of solving this problem, as some suggested. Autumnal Convention had rejected the idea – “*thank goodness*” wrote Geoff, commenting that “*UYPL is still a teenage movement.*” Geoff noted regretfully the drop in *TYU*’s circulation, the decline in newsletters entered for the Current Trophy, and the preponderance of Individual Members – as opposed to members of branches – on National Committee. Of the TYP he wrote, “*One wonders what would have happened without the Two Year Plan since we seem to be in much the same state as a year ago.*” He asks, “*What has UYPL to offer young people today? What does Publi-Publi man tell new groups?*” That last question was hard to answer because Pip Walker had just resigned from that position after only seven months, which was itself a bad sign.

“A UYPLer to be proud of”

UYPL’s Social Service Committee may have been something of a disappointment, but one related project did bear rich fruit. This was the plan, first mooted at Autumnal Convention in 1965, for someone to go to India to help the Rev. Margaret Barr in her work at Kharang in the Khasi Hills. Manchester UYPLer John Hewerdine had answered the call and travelled overland to India in “*an old ambulance*” (called Veronica) which he “*bought...for £35.*” He had been refused funding by the General Assembly’s India Committee, who “*either didn’t like the idea of us having a bit of fun on the way or didn’t think we’d make it.*” John wrote an account of his progress - sitting at a typewriter “*in my little Khasi wooden hut*”- that appeared in *TYU* in December 1968. John described work he’d been doing at the Kharang Rural Centre: “*Most of my time has been spent trying to help Margaret with...making the centre self-supporting food-wise*”, with “*the problem of dry-season irrigation*”, and with installing “*suitable pumping equipment.*” He recounted how “*Last night we had almost five inches of rain*” which had necessitated “*going up on the roof of the orphanage trying to seal up all the places where water has been pouring in.*” A professional photographer, John wrote that “*his main aim...is to photograph Margaret Barr and the work she is doing.*” John’s links with the Unitarians of the Khasi Hills were to become life-long. *TYUs* comment that he is “*A UYPLer to be proud of*” were to prove even truer than was realised at the time.

1969

“Feelings of unease”

1969 opened with some popular regular events. First was Manchester Region’s January Weekend at Great Hucklow (31st Jan./2nd Feb.) organised by Brookfield Church, Gorton, UYPLer John Coles. Drama Festival followed, held at Stalybridge on the weekend of 21st/23rd March. There were six entries and the winners were Chorlton branch. Yorkshire Yarn 4, held 3rd/7th April at Lydgate Chapel, New Mill, was also a successful occasion. It coincided with a 25-mile sponsored walk in aid of the Great Hucklow Development Appeal. This was all positive, as was the news of two new branches announced in April’s *TYU*. One was at Ashton-in-Makerfield near Wigan and the other, consisting of UYPLers in London, called itself ‘Ally Pally’ after Alexandra Palace. But a more negative tone was struck by National President Peter Timiney in April’s *TYU*, where he wrote about “*a few feelings of unease.*” What he was talking about were such things as the resignations of three key officers (General Secretary, National Treasurer and Publi-Publi Secretary) during his year of office, the loss of three branches and the demise of the Social Service Subcommittee. “*Something is not happening at grass roots level,*” wrote Peter, “*show me that my faith in your ultimate success is not misguided.*”

AGM ’69 and the end of the Two Year Plan.

My diary records an enjoyable AGM weekend (2nd/4th May), my last as a member of National Committee, but the disappointing end to the TYP (as they saw it) cast a shadow for some. The rather sour report in June’s *TYU* said that “*it might be better for National Committee positions to remain unfilled when there is a lack of suitable candidates.*” A new National Committee was elected nonetheless, the last of the 1960s. Ken Howard became National President and the new President-Elect was Colin Horsfield. Some officers were re-elected but there were newcomers too: Wendy Dalton took over as National Secretary and John Clarke took on Publi-Publi. Gill Whittaker became Conference Secretary. There were three new ‘ordinary’ elected members: Noreen Miller, Malcolm Shuttleworth and Pat Head. Much of the AGM was spent picking over the bones of the TYP which, despite having added nine new branches to the League and revived a Region, was being seen by some in negative terms. This was to result in some strident criticism in June’s *TYU*. The AGM weekend itself included some more uplifting things, with folk-singing, Saturday night social and “*the usual good service in the Old Chapel*” on Sunday led by Peter Timiney.

Two verdicts on the Two Year Plan

In June ‘69’s *TYU* two UYPLers offered their views on how the TYP had turned out. David Bleasdale declared, in capital letters, that “*The Two Year Plan has failed.*” He thought that the original idea – “*To consolidate the League*” and to “*expand*” it “*by numbers and by the area it covered*” – had not been realised. He saw Bill Hayhurst’s original plan as “*business-like*” but thought that “*National Committee had no people sufficiently oriented in these principles.*” If it had, he wrote, “*then expansion would have played a much larger role than the consolidation.*” He also lamented the poor record of the Social Service Subcommittee which “*had not achieved anything.*” Another article on the subject came from David Warhurst, who felt, “*that there was something missing, something elusive and perhaps at the root of the Two Year Expansion Plan failure.*” He offered “*my recipe...to recapture that lost spirit.*” He listed a number of practical suggestions and then set out what he called “*the basic aims or purposes we have as Unitarian Youth.*” They were: 1. “*To enjoy fellowship in*

work, service, religion and socially with Young Unitarians and others of like mind.” 2. *“To aim for responsible freedom in religion and life.”* 3. *“To help yourselves and others to form a moral philosophy and basis for living.”* 4. *“To demonstrate by our actions and lives the greatest of all commandments – Love thy neighbour as thyself. Love is the greatest of all human values.”* David closed with this: *“At the next AGM, let’s not worry about Expansion. Worry about the worth, the vitality and the good of what we’ve already got, that’s what it’s all about.”*

The summer of ‘69

UYPL and Foy organised the 1969 IRF Conference which was held at Sharpness in Gloucestershire from 19th-26th July and, as usual, attracted people from liberal religious youth organisations in Europe and North America. Wendy Dalton wrote the report for October’s *TYU*, stating that *“the activities included the usual couple of talks...on a specific study subject.”* She doesn’t say what it was. There were also *“discussion groups and...the Annual Business Meeting”*, not to mention *“some very interesting services each organised by a different country”* and *“the usual late night dancing and singing...well into the early hours.”* There were excursions to, amongst other places, Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust, Gloucester Cathedral, Tintern Abbey, Bristol, and Berkeley Castle. The facilities at the conference centre enabled people to enjoy *“boating, swimming, football, archery...shooting and an assault course.”* I recorded one occurrence of interest in my diary: *“Watch the first manned landing on the Moon...by Neil Armstrong & Buzz Aldrin.”* As always at IRF Conferences, the last evening was ‘Stunt Night’, with skits performed by national delegations. The Conference itself was followed, as usual, by a choice of ‘Second Week’ activities, one of which was Youth Week, held once again in north Lancashire at Yealand Conyers. The others were a boat trip on the Thames led by Geoff Kent and a week in London based at the newly-opened Hibbert House in Camden Town. On 26th July Chesterfield branch held a *“Graveyard Hop and Barbecue”*, leading *TYU* to express the hope that *“the permanent residents were not too disturbed.”* The final UYPL event of the summer was the Hucklow Ball on 2nd August, attended (as I noted in my diary) by *“most UYPL personalities & many IRFers.”*

UYPL in the West Midlands

By the late 1960s there was a paucity of UYPL news from the West Midlands so it was good to see a report by the Rev. Douglas Webster in August ‘69’s *TYU* about the League’s contribution to the life of the group ministry there. UYPLers had been leading *“specially written and produced”* youth services which included *“music for guitar and folk song type hymns usually on a theme, sometimes with members acting out the narrative from some chosen book.”* At the special annual service of the West Midlands Group Ministry the *“UYPL took charge”* and a *“radical innovation”* was a discussion involving Roy Wilson of UYPL, one of the Group ministers, and the Group’s chairman. There were two hymns *“specially written for the service by Penny Laws.”* Doug also reported other ways in which UYPL were helping, such as with fund-raising, and concluded, *“The UYPL have certainly given a lead to the Group Churches...showing what can be done by even a few with enough enthusiasm.”*

A Presidential shock

In September UYPL got an unwelcome shock when National President Ken Howard announced that his work was taking him to Uganda for three years. With his year of office not five months gone this was quite a blow. In February ‘70’s *TYU* Ken

reported from Africa that he had been “wearing my Chalice tie and my UYPL badge” and explaining to the locals what they signified – although “They are still baffled.”

Autumn '69 and a row about a rally

September Weekend (26th/28th) was, according to August's *TYU*, to be organised by Colin Horsfield and Malcolm Shuttleworth on the theme of ‘Cartoons’, complete with “*Music Workshop, Discussions and HULLPY Service*”(whatever that was). October's new-look *TYU* had news of a poorly-attended Yorkshire Region ‘Carnival Rally’ at Hull (10th/12th October), which prompted angry complaints from Hull branch about lack of support. On Hallowe'en West Lancs. Region went on a night-hike up Pendle Hill, about which Shirley Walton and her brother, Eric, wrote a special song, including the chorus, “*We were going over Pendle Hill / To see if witches lived there still...*” The full lyrics appeared in the February '70 *TYU*. A well-attended rally at Lancaster in November (14th/16th) went rather better than the one at Hull. The latter was a contentious issue both at Autumnal Convention and in *TYU*, with Hull branch questioning the value of a League that could let it down so badly and also fail to publish “*policy discussions*” in *TYU*. In a letter to *TYU* (Feb. '70) Hull branch noted that “*Rallies held...two years ago were always attended by people from all over the country*” and wondered whether the poor attendance at theirs was symptomatic of the “*state of UYPL.*” *TYU* editor Dot Warhurst wrote a very full reply to Hull's complaints, including this response to the question of rallies: “*the lack of response to rallies is a reflection of the state of UYPL...Two years ago UYPL was rally-based*” but, she claimed, the costs involved for individuals led them to look more locally for “*satisfaction*”. On the question of publishing “*policy discussions*” Dot defended *TYU*'s record and added, rather bitterly, “*during the last three years we have wasted a great deal of time in fruitless discussions which never seem to produce results which can be seen.*”

UYPL branches 1967-69

The exact number of UYPL branches that existed at any one time is difficult to calculate. Amongst other things, although the formation of a new branch was often announced in *TYU*, this was rarely the case when one closed. A failing branch might just fade away unremarked and only be declared ‘closed’ when subs. went unpaid for a year or two and no-one had heard from it for a while. National Committee might then investigate and decide that the branch no longer existed. The Unitarian Youth Department tried to keep track of things and sometimes published its own directory but, in the absence of a relevant official list, I have attempted to work out how many UYPL branches existed at some point during the three years 1967 to 1969 inclusive. The figure I have come up with is (albeit approximately) 44, although the number at any one time will be less. The figures by Region are as follows: East Cheshire 4, East Midlands 3, Manchester 5, Merseyside 2, North East 3, Scotland 2, Sheffield 2, South East 4, South Wales 1, West Lancs. 14, West Midlands 1, Yorkshire 3.

A departure...and a return

In October 1969 *TYU* carried a full-page headed “*Valete*” It contained my photograph (taken at the Lancaster work-camp in June 1967) and an editorial by Dot Warhurst about my departure for Guyana in September, for what should have been two years working with Voluntary Service Overseas. Dot called me “*one of our most noteworthy past presidents*” who would be “*sadly missed in UYPL circles*” and continued, “*but we are proud that one of our members is doing such worthwhile*

work.” She said that “*Cliff will be remembered for his work for the UYPL as President during a year which thanks to Cliff’s wit was never dull!*” Dot referred to me as “*leader of the Brookfield Red Guards*” and recalled, “*How well I remember him arriving at the...Yorkshire Yarn...with thousands (or so it seemed) of youngsters shouting ‘Up the Red Guards’.*” When, in the tropical heat of Guyana, I read this glowing, generous and humbling encomium I remember thinking that parts of it sounded rather like an obituary, which it very nearly proved to be! Shortly afterwards, on Hallowe’en, I was involved in a road accident in Georgetown and suffered serious injuries – notably a fractured skull – which brought my time with VSO to an all too premature end. After some weeks of hospitalisation and convalescence in Trinidad I was flown back to Manchester in December. My first visitors after my return home, were UYPLers, including most of National Committee, but the ‘swinging Sixties’ were over.

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 6: the 1970s

UYPL's fifth decade opens

Although the Unitarian Youth Department Directory published at the beginning of 1970 listed only twenty-two UYPL branches, a figure which dropped to twenty in 1971/2, the League's new decade seemed to be starting much as the 1960s had ended. January Weekend was a well-attended, representative and enjoyable event, with members of the supposedly disgruntled Hull branch prominent and in good spirits. Activities included indoor and outdoor sports, a car rally, a talk by a fingerprint expert from Manchester police, a "disco-social", "a good service" (my diary) in the Old Chapel led by the Rev. Trevor Jones, and a folk-session in the Bretton 'Barrel' led by Pip Walker. Great Hucklow was the scene of a UYPL work-camp in March (6th/8th) when a group painted the interior walls of the Old Chapel and 'schoolroom', leading Mike Carter to write in April's *TYU* "No longer will anyone be able to sit during the sermon gazing at the plaster on the walls, wondering whether the patch on the left...looked like the map of America." Drama Festival, held in Aberdeen (13th/15th March), was also well in line with UYPL vibrancy, attracting four entries and an audience from both England and Scotland. I was one of a 44-strong coachload from Manchester. The winning entry was also from Manchester, that of Chorlton branch, with Stalybridge a close second, the host branch third and Altrincham fourth.

1970 AGM

Suggestions that all might not be as it should be come with Ian Smith's report of UYPL's 1970 AGM (8th/10th May) in June's *TYU*, with opening comments about finding a disappointing attendance on arrival and a "somewhat depressing atmosphere." He did brighten up later though, writing that "a new spirit fired the meeting" and that there was "a new air of expectancy", finally concluding that it had been "a most successful AGM." One major factor for Ian was a decision that UYPL's upper age-limit should revert to 30, of which he wrote, "this opened up a new lease of life to those... who thought their UYPL days were numbered." He called it "a shot in the arm for UYPLers." I disagreed, commenting in my diary, "What a laugh!" I saw it as a desperate and retrograde step more indicative of decline than of "a new lease of life".. As far as the new National Committee was concerned, the new National President was Colin Horsfield, succeeding Ken Howard, who was still absent in Uganda, and Ian Smith became President-Elect. Among other changes, Joan Partington was elected as National Secretary and Steve Barrett took over as editor of *TYU*. The social side of the weekend took its usual happy course and the Sunday morning service in the Old Chapel was led by outgoing National Secretary Wendy Dalton. Overall I enjoyed the weekend, finding it by no means untypical of the UYPL events to which I was accustomed, even if there were some negative indicators too.

YY5 to IRF, Youth Week in Wales and September Weekend

The year continued with some successful events. The fifth (and last) Yorkshire Yarn, held May 22nd/25th, brought UYPLers from far and wide to Lydgate Chapel, New Mill near Holmfirth, for a thoroughly enjoyable weekend. I travelled up from London, where I had recently moved to take up residence at Hibbert House in Camden Town. I travelled north again in June (12th/13th) for another UYPL work-camp at Great Hucklow, when we painted the ceiling of the Old Chapel, so completing its interior re-decoration. IRF's conference (25th July/1st August) was held at Engelberg in Switzerland, with 'second weeks' to follow, but I didn't go, noting only that some

UYPLers gathered at Hibbert House before setting off and afterwards that American SRLer Tom Goldsmith was “*back from IRF which, he says, was good*” (my diary, 16th August).

UYPL’s Youth Week in 1970 (August 22nd/29th) was a departure from the pattern of the 1960s in that it was a joint venture with the new Welsh Unitarian Youth Association and was held at Llanmadoc on the beautiful Gower peninsular. The Association had recently been formed, in part at least, because of UYPL’s weakness in Wales. Once home to some lively UYPL branches, by 1970 only one remained there - that at Aberdare. In *TYU* (August ’70), Paul David cited some reasons why “*our attempts to form UYPL branches here met with little success.*” Those reasons were: firstly, “*distance from most national UYPL activities*” which took place in the north of England whereas Unitarian churches in Wales were all in the south and south-east; secondly, “*language difficulties*”, so many Unitarians in Wales being Welsh-speaking; and thirdly, “*the fact that our membership is derived from a mainly younger age group*” than that in UYPL. Nevertheless, Paul wrote that “*We earnestly wish for a closer fellowship between national UYPL and ourselves.*” He saw the “*forthcoming Holiday Week in Llanmadoc as “but the first of such activities”* and hoped “*that the bonds of a common fellowship will overcome the superficial boundaries of nationality.*” I didn’t go to Llanmadoc myself but I noted in my diary (22nd August) that some UYPLers had gathered at Hibbert House, and were “*waiting for Dave Warhurst to collect them and take them off to Youth Week in South Wales.*”

UYPL’s summer concluded, as had become traditional, with the Hucklow Ball in the Kent Suite at Belle Vue, Manchester, with its “*fantastic array of...friends and acquaintances*” (my diary) and that fixture of the evening, “*Henry’s speech*”, Henry being Henry Tittle, long-time warden at Great Hucklow. However, discussions around that time indicated concern at the state of the League and “*the malaise into which UYPL has fallen*” (my diary, 4th September). Although September Weekend (25th/27th) was its usual enjoyable self, these discussions continued informally amidst the sport, drama, dancing and – as John Clarke put it in *TYU* – “*freaking out*”. John also recorded that the theme of the Sunday service, led by George Scaife, was “*love in its many aspects.*” Those discussions about the state of UYPL and what to do about it were to dominate Autumnal Convention a few weeks later.

Autumnal Convention ‘70

Concern at the state of UYPL came to a head at 1970’s Autumnal Convention at Great Hucklow (6th/8th November). In their report (*TYU*, December) Ginny Sever and Steve Barrett wrote of “*apathy*” and “*the feeling... that the movement was not only in decline but had reached its lowest ebb.*” They felt “*that something must be done if we...are to survive.*” Joan Partington suggested that UYPL needed a project, a cause beyond itself, on which to focus and suggested the World Development Movement, the General Assembly having recently set up its own World Development Action Committee (WDAC) with which UYPL could work. The idea that social action was the way in which UYPL could re-invigorate its religious commitment found favour at the meeting. Ginny and Steve’s report noted the general feeling that “*if we did not encourage greater religious participation and direct our energies to working within the community the Unitarian movement as a whole would suffer.*” And concern at the state of UYPL extended to concern at the state of the denomination. Ginny and Steve wrote, “*As it is there is on average, one church a year being closed down,*” so

identifying a major reason for UYPL's decline, UYPL being an organisation based in the local church. Ginny and Steve concluded that *"We have to come to terms with the present crisis and inject new enthusiasm into the movement...by organising projects that would not only be of benefit to ourselves but also to the community at large."* It was by focussing on *"problems of both world and national magnitude"* that UYPL would *"justify our existence as the dynamic sector of a liberal religious group."* After much discussion the meeting gave *"a directive to National Committee to investigate World Development as our possible project..."*

In my own report on the Convention for *The Inquirer* ('Something Stirring', 28th November 1970) I lamented the state of UYPL but saw hope in the discussions at Autumnal Convention, in which *"ideas came thick and fast, the overall gist being that UYPL must become a dynamic youth movement, deeply involved in the churches and in social action, putting its religion and concern for the world into practice."* I mentioned the meeting's proposed espousal of the World Development Movement but also mentioned other causes that UYPLers might get involved in, such as the National Council for Civil Liberties, Amnesty International, Family Service Units and the Conservation Corps. As a follow-up to Autumnal Convention, UYPL held a meeting at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church in Manchester on 19th December when the speakers were the Rev. John Allerton of the General Assembly's WDAC (a former UYPL National President) and a lady from the Wilmslow World Development Action Group named Norah Davies. I noted *"the very good turnout...of UYPL leadership and rank & file"* and noted of the discussion that *"My group debates the extent to which the Unitarian Church should be socially committed and...to what extent we should involve ourselves politically."* (diary entry, 19th December).

A few days later a group of four UYPLers at Hibbert House, *"address envelopes to all active Unitarian ministers in the country...UYPL has undertaken to distribute petition forms for the Anti-Apartheid Movement, to be signed by those opposing arms sales to South Africa .One is to be sent to each minister and church secretary...GA Council passed a resolution regretting the...proposed resumption of arms sales...but has since refused to finance the distribution of petition forms. Anti-Apartheid offered to pay...but UYPL felt that some branch of the Unitarian Church should stand by the resolution, so we decided to distribute the forms ourselves"* (diary entry, 22nd December 1970). Which is how four of us came to spend a busy evening writing envelopes at the Hibbert House kitchen table.

"Intelligent members of a progressive religion"

In February 1971, *TYU* continued the theme of social concern with articles on drugs – *'Goblin Supermarket or Pusher's Paradise'* by Gill Pike – and human diversity – *'A Concept of Race'* by Nicolas A. Sims. In his editorial, Steve Barrett wrote, *"We, as young Unitarians, are fortunate in that not only are we liberally minded but also intelligent members of a progressive religion. If we, a minority group, can create a better world society, with...a more even distribution of wealth and those amenities which make life enjoyable, then our lives have not been fruitless."* Steve saw *"our own congregations"* as the initial targets for UYPL's campaign and looked forward to the Annual Meetings of the General Assembly as a *"perfect opportunity"* to take it further. Steve continued, *"By various means we hope to stimulate discussion, shock the conservative elements and promote ideas."* UYPL's presentation at the 1971 GA Annual Meetings in Birmingham (16th/19th April) used drama to get the World

Development message across. A report appeared in *GA Zette*, the daily ‘newspaper’ of the Meetings, which gives an idea of what happened and why:

“Did you know that the moving of each ‘corpse’ during the Youth Meeting coincided with a death due to inadequate distribution of world resources?”

Preaching to the converted? We don’t think so. Are you converted if you are not acting? The need is for hearts and hands. Finance alone will not move individual governments to co-operate.

World Development Action Groups know the facts AND they are acting. We believe they can succeed. This is our ray of hope...let it be yours.”

Drama ‘71

After all this renewed enthusiasm Drama Festival proved to be a bit of a disappointment in 1971: *“a pretty pale shadow of what Drama Festivals have been in the past”* was my comment in my diary. It was held at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church, Manchester, with a 90-strong audience. There were only two entries, although both were well-received and favourably reviewed by Bill Hayhurst in April’s *TYU*. Commenting on the low number of plays, he *“hoped that this...all-time low will never be repeated”* and that *“other branches will discover the enjoyment that producing a play...can provide.”* The winning entry came from Altrincham, the runners-up were Chorlton.

AGM ‘71 and the fate of Barleycrofts

The report in June’s *TYU* of the 1971 UYPL AGM (14th/16th May) was by Ian Smith who commented unfavourably on the attendance: *“Bookings for the weekend were well below standard.”* He wanted to find a positive angle, though, and commented that *“this did not...hamper the spirit of the stalwart contingent who had...made the effort to attend.”* Nevertheless there was ongoing concern about UYPL’s condition, as evidenced by National President Colin Horsfield’s pre-AGM article in April’s *TYU*. He wrote that, during his year of office, *“Branches have reduced in number”* and that, despite having done *“everything possible”* to ensure *“the future success of the League”*, National Committee had been faced with *“critics round every corner.”* Colin called for UYPLers to volunteer and *“do some hard work for a change, so we don’t have to ask the same people time and time again.”* Despite this negative tone, when the AGM opened, *“the discussions...were lively and enjoyable”*, according to Ian’s *TYU* report. Perhaps the main issue at the AGM was the possible fate of Barleycrofts, a house that forms part of the Unitarian Holiday & Conference Centre (as it was then known) at Great Hucklow. Barleycrofts was known to some as *“the Lady with the Damp”* in contrast to the main Nightingale House! There was a possibility that it would be sold off, but UYPL was of the view that Barleycrofts should be retained and put to better use. The AGM adopted a resolution, proposed by Dot Hewerdine that Barleycrofts should be *“converted into homes for convalescents and retired ministers.”* This never actually happened, but the proposal was the start of a campaign, including fundraising, by UYPL, that eventually saw Barleycrofts saved for the Unitarian movement. The weekend’s guest speaker was the Rev. John Unsworth of Leicester who *“spoke at length on the subject of social service.”* Ian Smith commented favourably on this, concluding that *“participating...in social services”* was how Unitarians *“can...most effectively promote the ideals on which our movement was founded.”* The AGM saw Ian Smith succeed Colin Horsfield as National President. New officers elected to National Committee included Colin Partington (President-Elect), Kathryn Wilkinson (National Secretary) and Dot & John

Hewerdine (editors of *TYU*). Ian's report records that Colin led a "well attended" service in the Old Chapel on the Sunday. Ian's overall verdict was that the "weekend was notable for its togetherness, which the small numbers had created."

IRF '71

Whatever the concerns about attendance at the AGM, UYPL sent a strong contingent to the IRF Conference in West Germany (24th/31st August), held at a Naturfreundhaus in the countryside near Dortmund. The theme was concerned with questions of consciousness and how to expand it. The workshop/discussion group of which I was a member focussed on the use of alcohol and drugs like marijuana and LSD. It was facilitated by Canadian SRLer and ministry student Wayne Arnason. I noted in my diary that "We talk about experiences of ecstasy, with other people, with nature, in love, alone etc. and experiences on drugs." While that was all very interesting, I was less impressed by some other items on the programme. A lecture on transcendental meditation I called "a load of boring rubbish", while a "difficult session" about "biorhythms and the connection of biochemistry to consciousness" suffered from "inadequate translation". The most memorable act of worship was a "short service" taking "the form of Communion" that was held one evening at dinner. At one of two 'Stunt Nights' the British delegation re-enacted a pagan wedding ceremony which I had seen in London on Primrose Hill a few weeks earlier! At the business meetings I was one of two UYPLers elected to the IRF Executive Committee, the other being Ernest Baker (as Secretary). The 'second week' that I joined was in the still-divided city of Berlin, where we had a thoroughly enjoyable, very interesting and often moving time.

Youth Week and Saving Barleycrofts

Following the motion passed at the AGM in May, UYPL's Youth Week returned to Great Hucklow in 1971 (21st/28th August) and took the form of a "Sponsored Workcamp at Barleycrofts". This combined work on the house and grounds with raising money to put it in good order and keep it in Unitarian ownership. Great Hucklow's warden, Henry Tittle, wrote in October's *TYU*, "What can one say after such a week?...when...young people have spent their precious holiday...scrubbing walls and floors, clearing scrub, digging up tree stumps, carting stone and doing it all for free, for Hucklow and...for Barleycrofts." The issue of Barleycrofts, and of UYPL's involvement, had provoked much correspondence in *The Inquirer*, and the Youth Week participants made their own contribution to this. They wrote, "We are twenty young Unitarians...giving up a week of our holiday to clean up Barleycrofts. The workcamp has been organized by the Unitarian Young People's League to 'stop the rot' and...to show the Unitarian movement what this place means to us." The week over, the workcampers joined "the usual galaxy of UYPL personalities" (my diary) at the Hucklow Ball in Manchester, held at the Kent Suite, Belle Vue – for the last time, as it turned out. In his *Inquirer* editorial on 16th October, John Allerton commented on the matter of Barleycrofts, "thanks to the pressure exerted by the UYPL, there are now few Unitarians who would gladly see the property sold."

UYPL's commitment to saving Barleycrofts was part and parcel of its long-standing commitment to Great Hucklow and by November £300 had been raised. At the 1972 AGM Colin Partington, the new President-Elect, said of the League's fundraising activity that we hope "to restart our campaign with new fervour shortly." In December 1972's *TYU* the news was announced that Barleycroft's owners, the

Northern Sunday School Federation (NSSF) had decided not to sell the building and instead *“to convert Barleycrofts into accommodation for the Warden and staff.”* But this wasn't the end of the story. Even after receiving an expected *“improvement grant”* Unitarians would have to raise *“a considerable sum”* to complete the work. TYU reported that UYPL *“has set itself the objective of raising the money”* with a target of £5000. In addition, UYPL pledged to undertake *“voluntary work...in the form of sheer physical effort.”* TYU concluded, *“Two of our aims have been achieved. We have kept Barleycrofts within the Unitarian movement, and we shall have provided the Warden and Staff with adequate accommodation.”*

In June (1st/3rd) 1973 UYPL held a second sponsored workcamp at Barleycrofts, with *“forty young people”*, according to Welsh UYPLer Paul David's report in TYU (August '73), *“working on the...‘garden’ & car park”* (my diary). Paul, describing himself as coming from *“a nation of coalminers and foundry workers”* and therefore *“not given to idle flattery about work”*, was *“impressed at the effort and spirit of the volunteers.”* He wrote of the UYPLers *“fashioning a car park with their bare hands”*, *“removing tree trunks...along with an underground water storage tank”*, and *“scraping moss off weathered tiles”* with *“green and bleeding fingers”*. Having spent an afternoon *“tearing up old concrete paths”* myself, I noted the presence of *“a very encouraging number of youngsters from Bury, Birmingham & Wythenshawe”* alongside *“old stagers”* such as my 26-year-old self. The sponsorship raised about £170 for the UYPL Barleycrofts Appeal, which now had an increased target of £7000.

By May 1974, according to the Appeal treasurer, Ray Elder, the sum raised stood at £3083-84. Wythenshawe UYPLer Mike Hurst, writing in Manchester Region's *Mancunimag* (September '74), reported that some thirty-three UYPLers had been at Great Hucklow for another Barleycrofts weekend workcamp, again focussed on the grounds. By the Sunday afternoon (after a Harvest Festival service in the Old Chapel), wrote Mike, *“we could see Barleycrofts once again in all its glory.”* The 1975 AGM heard that the Barleycrofts Appeal had raised £6361-08 and in March 1977 TYU announced that the £7000 target had been achieved, having taken *“five years and eight months to complete.”* It had, said TYU, been *“an enormous task for an organisation the size of ours to undertake.”*

Autumnal Convention and the end of the Hucklow Ball

Autumnal Convention in 1971 (5th/7th November) was less fraught than 1970's and, as Richard Varley reported in December's TYU, *“attendance was up on last year”*. Nevertheless there was concern about *“the League's precarious financial position”*, with too much of *“our reserves...tied up in the stock of sales items”* and membership subscriptions slow in coming in. On the plus side, there was *“favourable comment”* on TYU and its new format and Manchester Region was praised for its *“very full and varied programme”* which included *“the help its members are giving to the over-60s.”* Barleycrofts was discussed, as was World Development Action and UYPL's presentation on the subject at the GA Meetings. Richard wrote of Autumnal Convention that it typified *“the way in which UYPLers join together in critical but constructive discussion in a friendly atmosphere.”* One difficult subject was the Hucklow Ball, which had been UYPL's grand annual social occasion since 1963. The 1971 Ball had lost money which the League could ill-afford and the upshot, as reported by Richard, was that *“next year's...will probably be an experiment with this...in mind.”* What this would mean was decided at the next National Committee

meeting on 11th December. There were to be no more Hucklow Balls at the Kent Suite and instead a “do-it-yourself” event would be held at a pub in Wythenshawe. Although the name ‘Hucklow Ball’ would be retained the supposed replacement – held only twice - never justified its continued use. The first such event, in December 1972, although I rated it “a good do” with “a good crowd there”, was not really a ‘Ball’. A year later, though, the event in December 1973 verged on the disastrous. As I reported in *TYU*, it was “poorly-attended” and “the room was unprepared, with no decorations to brighten up a rather dreary scene.” There was “no buffet laid on”, meaning that “the gallant Liz Hurst and others” had to get “something ready themselves.” I commented that it would now be better to “declare the Hucklow Ball dead and buried” which is effectively what happened. This once highly successful highlight in the UYPL calendar was at an end.

A UYPL view of GA Council

Not for the first time *TYU* offered a UYPL view of General Assembly Council in its December '71 issue. The author was UYPL's representative on Council, David Warhurst. He complained of “feeling like an over-used rubber stamp” with “a lot of time...taken up with approving...reports”, leaving “little time for other things.” However, he approved of a move to get rid of direct elections to Council by congregations “whose members don't know half the candidates from Adam” and instead have District Associations “and other bodies” choose their own representatives. David reflected that UYPL was “privileged to have the right of representation” on GA Council “and we have a duty to use that right responsibly and to the full.” In April 1973., however, *TYU* “noted with concern” that both UYPL and Foy were to lose their independent representation on GA Council. Instead there would be one person who “has to represent both organisations”, which UYPL National Committee called “a retrograde step”. Although the representative chosen - David Warhurst - happened to be a member of both UYPL and Foy, this might not always be the case and “complications could arise in the future.”

“Female negotiators”

Like a number of UYPL branches, Altrincham's had an annual December tradition of carol singing around such venues as pubs, clubs and seasonal events. Theirs always raised gratifying amounts of money for the Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow Fund. Reflecting on their 1971 campaign, David Shaw revealed their secret in a piece for *Mancunimag* (April/May '72): “the evening was a great success due to Altrincham's method of using female financial negotiators.” In 1974, when £155 was raised, *TYU* reported that at each pub visited, “the girls went round with the collecting tins, as females seem to be more experienced at wheedling money out of male pockets.” A further twist during the 1977 campaign was revealed by Gwyneth Elthorpe in *TYU* (March '78). As they went round one male member of the group was dressed as Santa but female collectors were still the most successful. They found pub customers to be “most generous and they willingly contribute to a good cause if a kiss or even a smile is offered in return.” She continued with the revelation that “Fifty pence was the best price for this year's Christmas kiss, although Santa was even cheaper with his favours.” Ending up that year at the cricket and hockey club dinner dance, the carol singers performed “for over three hundred people” and raised over a hundred pounds for the SACH Fund.

Drama Festival '72

Held on 11th March at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church, the 1972 Drama Festival was a big improvement on the previous year's, with five entries. Dot Warhurst, who wrote a comprehensive report for April's *TYU*, called it "*An inspiring Festival*" with "*a high standard*", praising "*Mike Hurst and his team*" for their organisation. Another reporter, Kay Smith, wrote in Manchester Region's *Mancunimag* that she had been "*dazzled by the number of young people involved*", seeing "*the enthusiasm of all the participants*" as an indicator that "*UYPL must have a future.*" The winning entry was Chorlton's, the runners up were Altrincham, with Dukinfield third, Wythenshawe fourth and Denton fifth. Dot took it upon herself to award "*verbal trophies*" for the best individual performances, including Best Lead Actor (Philip Skelton), Best Lead Actress (Elaine Taylor) and so on. There was even a Best Stuntman (Robert Roper)!

The 1972 AGM

Held on 12th/14th May UYPL's AGM weekend brought "*forty-five ardent UYPLers*" to Great Hucklow. Only seven branches sent representatives, the rest of the attenders being Individual Members. *TYU*'s reporter (for the June issue) was Dave Copley. There wasn't much of importance to report other than a significant change to the voting system proposed by David Warhurst. In future voting would be by individuals rather than branches and proxy voting would be allowed. The elections to National Committee were notable for the relatively large number of candidates. The new National President was Colin Partington and new faces included Mike Hurst (President-Elect), Tom Grimshaw (National Secretary), Liz Walsh (Conference Secretary) and Dave Copley (Publi-Publi Secretary). In an effort to improve the age (if not the gender) balance on National Committee, three younger members were also elected, namely Kim Smith, Ross Gowan and Derek Copley. On Sunday morning the outgoing National President, Ian Smith, led worship in the Old Chapel, with Steve Barrett giving the address – on '*Loneliness*'.

"Bright changes" in Manchester; IRF & Youth Week '72

In the July/August '72 issue of *Mancunimag* Ian Smith wrote that "*bright changes in our UYPL policy*" had resulted in changes with regard to the Manchester area: "*Pendleton UYPL has re-formed and will be uniting with Manchester and East Cheshire branches in the Greater Manchester Region.*" He also reported that a Regional camp "*in a cowfield in Great Hucklow*" had been unlucky with the weather. The campers, taking refuge in the Queen Anne, had met "*some early IRFers*" as they arrived for their Conference which ran from 22nd-29th July. Technically the Sub-Conference as the main Conference was in the United States that year, liberal religious youth gathered at Hucklow from the UK, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and West Germany, plus one American. The organising committee consisted of the Rev. Graham Murphy (Study Leader), Marion Baker, George Davidson, David Warhurst and myself. The study side included a talk on "*pollution, over-population etc. by a chap who has worked for the UN*", another about the effects of impersonal institutions on families, and "*a truly excellent session of encounter group dynamics – i.e. games*" (my diary). Amongst the usual discussion, business, fun and frolics there was a visit to the caverns in Castleton and an outing to Chester and Jodrell Bank. The British organised a worship service. I rated the Conference as "*very successful*". What of the American Conference? My comment, after hearing an account by a UYPLer (Mike Carter) who went, was: "*the main conference sounds to have been pretty freaky.*" Nevertheless, I had been re-elected (in my absence) to the Executive Committee. UYPL's Youth Week (29th July/5th August) was in South

Wales at Cwmwrdu and was led by Ian Smith and Chris Parker. Only eleven attended, dwindling to four by the week's end.

Autumnal Convention '72 – UYPL and homosexuality

After an unremarkable September Weekend, Autumnal Convention (3rd/5th November) proved to be one of UYPL's best and most significant events. At the time Unitarians were much concerned with the issue of homosexuality and how, as a liberal religious community we should respond to the challenges it presented. A motion passed at the AGM had already suggested "*that we should support the lowering of the age of consent for practicing homosexuals from 21 to 18*", hence the choice of subject for Autumnal Convention. At the Golders Green church I had already been involved with Integroup, which promoted 'gay – straight integration', so I went to Autumnal with particular interest. About twenty-five UYPLers attended, most of whom knew little about the subject and harboured some traditional prejudices. The weekend challenged these and proved to be an eye-opener for many. We had two "*excellent and intelligent speakers*", according to Robert Roper's report in *Mancunimag* (Jan./Feb. '73), one from the Albany Trust and the National Federation of Homophile Organisations, and the other from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Gay Liberation Front. Robert wrote that they tried "*to show us how unreasonable prejudices against homosexuality were*". As a result, thought Robert, "*even those...who were strongly prejudiced found they were looking at the subject in a somewhat different way.*" After discussion in small groups, Robert wrote, "*they all came to the same conclusion. That homosexuals were unfairly prejudiced against, and the main reason...is that the general public have not been informed enough.*" A plenary session agreed the following: "*The meeting resolves to try and educate UYPL on...homosexuality, and to press at GA '73 for full consideration of the subject at the GA Meetings in 1974.*" I was much encouraged by all this and wrote of the two speakers – Anthony Gray and Stephen Etherington – that "*Both these guys impress everyone very much.*", adding that "*It is to be hoped that UYPL can maintain the impetus for its new theme*" (my diary). In her report of the weekend in *TYU* (December '72), Dot Hewerdine wrote that "*It was generally felt that many problems exist for young people growing up in today's freer society which only a change in attitudes can eliminate.*" Changes in attitudes "*would automatically result*" in changes in the law. Of the weekend Dot concluded, "*We discussed quite openly our own personal prejudices...and ended by feeling closer to our fellow conventioners and more understanding of...sexual problems we may not have experienced ourselves.*" Robert Roper's summing up was that "*All of us learnt a great deal about homosexuals and...about ourselves and our prejudices. This conference was most worthwhile.*" And indeed it was. It was UYPL at its best.

What was the result of that resolution? At the 1973 GA Meetings a UYPL motion "*calling for a GA study of the homosexual rights question*" (my diary) together with a friendly amendment calling for a commission to report back in 1974, "*was carried*" after "*fast and furious*" discussion (*TYU* June '73). The report was duly published in good time for the 1974 GA Meetings and both congregations and individuals were urged to study it and submit the results of their deliberations.. *TYU* (Dec. '74/Jan. '75) stated that, "*In general the report was well-received. It called upon the churches to lead the way in promoting more liberal and tolerant attitudes.*" The article described the progress of the Unitarian movement's debate on homosexuality since at least 1971, and made special mention of the pioneering Integroup venture, begun in

London at that time by the Unitarians of Lewisham and Golders Green. Unitarians were ahead of the game on this issue and UYPL was instrumental in furthering it.

Manchester Region and January Weekend

Manchester Region's January Weekend at Great Hucklow had been a successful feature of the national UYPL calendar since the 1960s and although it had gone unreported in *TYU* since 1970 – and I had not attended since then – it did take place in 1971 and '72. In 1973 there was a change of emphasis with the weekend *“aimed at providing an exciting and stimulating event for the younger membership in the Manchester area2 (TYU, April '73).* This proved less than an unqualified success. *TYU* continued that, although those present *“enjoyed the weekend enormously”*, there were only fifteen of them. As *TYU* explained, *“Unfortunately...the younger end could not afford the cost of a Hucklow weekend.”* It added that *“it is doubtful whether Manchester region could afford to run another January Weekend”*, and they never did. Instead a *“camping weekend at another time of year”* had been suggested as an alternative. That September (14th/16th) twenty-one Manchester Region UYPLers went camping at Beddgelert in Snowdonia.

Drama Festival '73

Drama Festival was one UYPL tradition that continued and in 1973 it was held at Dukinfield on 24th February. It was very thoroughly reviewed by Dot and John Hewardine in April's *TYU*. The winning entry was from Altrincham (*“a light-hearted, colourful performance”*) and second were Dukinfield (*“enjoyable and relaxing”*) while the third entry was Denton's (*“the group obviously got as much out of the performance as did we”*). Among the actors singled out for special mention were Denise Gaskell and Derek Copley (Altrincham), Bronwyn Pugh and Stephen Wilde (Dukinfield), and Brian Ormrod (Denton). The comperes were Colin Partington and Richard Varley who resembled *“two Northern comics of wider fame”*, and evening entertainment featured *“some very professional singing...by a trio from Lancaster UYPL.”*

UYPL's image, raison d'être and international dimension

The April '73 *TYU* was under interim editorship in the persons of Colin Partington and Richard Varley. In their editorial they made the point that *TYU “is essentially a magazine BY Young Unitarians, not necessarily FOR Young Unitarians”*, meaning that it *“presents an image of the thoughts and feelings of Young Unitarians and with it an optimism or otherwise for the future of the movement.”* *TYU* would support the League's efforts to correct *“the image of UYPL as a group of...irresponsible young people.”* I'm not sure that Colin and Richard helped these efforts when they said, unfairly I think, that *“A few years ago this image was, in the main correct.”* That issue of *TYU* also trailed a Unitarian Youth Department conference on UYPL and Foy and why they had declined. The article asked who UYPL served, who should it serve and why. It asked if UYPL was any longer *“an organisation of branches”* or had it rather become *“a group of individuals dispersed throughout the country.”* And the article asked if *“UYPL played a great enough part in the Unitarian movement as a whole.”* What, it asked, is UYPL's purpose – *“to exchange experiences? To foster young Unitarians? To give young Unitarians a sense of identity? “ To be “a campaigning movement” or to be “a group of friends?”* That issue of *TYU* also touched on UYPL's (and Foy's) international dimension in the form of IRF, whose forthcoming annual Conference was to be at Vars in France. Quoting from an article

in the UYD's *Student Newsletter* (which I edited), IRF was described as "*a federation of independent liberal religious youth organisations which aims to promote closer union between young religious liberals everywhere, so they can share their experience, examine social and religious issues, and come to understand each other's culture and beliefs.*"

AGM '73 – a League in decline

Held 4th/6th May UYPL's AGM was reported by Pat Head in June's *TYU*. She painted a sorry picture, with a relatively deserted Great Hucklow and only twenty-four people booked for the weekend. Although she said that discussions at the AGM "*were both stimulating and thorough,*" only three branches had representatives there. It was reported that UYPL now had only seven branches altogether, with a combined total of "*approximately 110 members.*" There were also "*about 40 Individual Members.*" On the positive side, and rather surprisingly, the outgoing National Treasurer, Ray Elder of Dundee, reported an "*encouraging*" financial situation, and that fundraising for Barleycrofts was going well. Mike Hurst became National President, Robert Roper became President-Elect, Richard Varley returned to National Committee as Secretary (a post he had held in the '60s) and Ross Gowans was elected Treasurer. Susan Underwood and David Shaw took over at *TYU*, Jean Mason became Conference Secretary, and the post of Publi-Publi Secretary was jointly undertaken by Gill and John Brown. Pat Head and Harry Wallace were also elected to the Committee. On Sunday morning in the Old Chapel, outgoing President Colin Partington "*conducted a moving and thought-provoking service.*" Pat tried to end her report as positively as she could, writing "*UYPL is a long way from being laid to rest while there are still members who care...about its past glories, its present condition and its future potential.*" News of UYPL's state prompted one former UYPLer, the Rev. John Midgley, to comment (*TYU*, August '73) that it was "*not a good reflection of a denomination containing 300 churches*" and that if UYPL "*is the future of the Unitarian movement then the future is bleak.*" Describing himself as "*a deep believer in the League*", he lamented the shift from branch to individual membership, seeing it as a departure from UYPL's rootedness in the local church. He also lamented the lack of UYPLers "*taking the noble path*" into ministry – although it should be said that four of the ministry students at Unitarian College, Manchester, at the time were UYPLers (including me)!

Youth Weeks afloat in the 1970s

Youth Week had been a regular feature of the UYPL calendar since 1959 but by 1973 it's days might have seemed numbered. That year attendance was even lower than it had been in 1972. But the holiday took a new form that was to prove popular with Youth Week devotees and seems to have helped it continue into the 1980s. This was the idea of taking to the canals in narrow-boats. In August '73 a fifty-five foot craft called 'Hornbeam' took seven UYPLers on a 'voyage' from Middlewich to Llangollen on the Shropshire Union Canal. They ran aground a lot but had a thoroughly good time. I can find no record of a Youth Week in 1974, although Altrincham UYPL "*and friends*" did go for a cruise on the river Mersey one August evening, as reported in *TYU* (Oct./Nov. '74) by David Shaw. In 1975, though, Youth Week (2nd/9th August) was back on the Shropshire Union Canal. In August 1976 twenty-one UYPLers took two narrow-boats from Rugby to Coventry on the "*Oxford, Union and Ashby canals*", with veteran UYPLer and archaeologist John Clarke conducting the company round the battlefield of Bosworth, while the "*Bolton lads*"

caught three trout, so adding *“a new height...to the cuisine”* (TYU Oct./Nov. '76). In August 1977 two narrow-boats (*“a canvas-topped camper”* and *“a luxury cruiser with all mod. cons.”*) took twenty-four UYPLers on the Shropshire Union. Writing in the Oct./Nov. TYU, David Ogden commented on the canals – *“a world of their own where there is a unique type of comradeship.”* He praised organisers Susan & David Shaw, with special mentions for *“captain”* John Clarke and catering supremo John Roper. *“Everyone had enjoyed it”* was his verdict. In August 1978 Youth Week was back on land at Cwmrdu in Wales and included a disco at Llanmadoc with young Welsh Unitarians. Diane Ogden wrote (TYU, November '78) that *“we enjoyed the warm hospitality of our Welsh friends, sharing with them not only the raucous music...but also the...tranquil...words and music at the epilogue in the...charming chapel.”* Water still featured with a boat trip to Caldey Island and swimming at Tenby. Diane concluded, *“For most...it had been our first experience of a UYPL...Youth Week but it certainly won't be our last.”* In 1979 Youth Week was back on the *“unmapped territories of the Oxford canal”*, according to Sheffield Unity UYPLers Caroline Hill and Liz Beddall in TYU (Oct./Nov. '79). *“The boat was comfortable, the food superb”* but one problem was the *“blocked toilet”*, another the water running out because of the *“constant showers”* people were taking, which caused John Clarke to complain about *“the extreme cleanliness of the crew.”* Caroline and Liz's verdict on this last UYPL Youth Week of the 1970s: *“we...have not had such a good holiday for a long time.”*

September Weekend '73

After the dispiriting AGM, September Weekend (28th/30th) came as a pleasant contrast, with some sixty UYPLers gathering at Great Hucklow. It was, like all September Weekends, primarily a social occasion, with a Scavenger Hunt *“round the local countryside”*, indoor games (it rained) and a Saturday night social. This included a drag competition featuring ambivalent lovelies, complete with *“lip-sticks, tights and well-padded bras.”* Photos appeared with the report in the Dec./Jan. TYU. There was also folk-dancing, courtesy of Trevor Jones and his fiddle, and *“the thumping sounds of Colin Horsfield's disco.”* In contrast, Colin Partington conducted the epilogue and Sunday morning worship in the Old Chapel was led by Richard Varley. TYU concluded that *“everybody was much encouraged by what they saw and experienced.”* My conclusion: *“a very enjoyable weekend”* (diary entry).

A Round-Table Conference

Replacing UYPL's Autumnal Convention in 1973 this REYD-organised conference at Great Hucklow (2nd/4th November) brought together *“leading figures from UYPL & Foy and other interested parties”* (diary entry). The subject was *“the successes and failures of Unitarian youth activities and ideas for the future.”* Of the discussions I commented, *“the small groups were good the plenary sessions bad.”* This wasn't just my opinion. Writing in TYU, John Allerton said that *“On Saturday afternoon the self-directed conference had directed itself into a mess.”* There were suggestions of a new umbrella youth organisation, but nothing came of it. At the Sunday morning service one of UYPL's founders, the Rev. Arthur Vallance, in a reflection on his many years in the Unitarian movement, commented that *“about ten years ago, church youth work suddenly got immeasurably harder”*, as UYPL was now finding.

Drama Festival '74

UYPL's 40th anniversary year got under weigh with Drama Festival (25th February) at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church. *TYU* afterwards reported (June/July '74) that "although a number of groups...had started rehearsals" only two branches actually entered productions. The winning entry – Tom Stoppard's 'The Real Inspector Hound' - was Chorlton's, in which I performed even though I wasn't there, having pre-recorded my small part as a radio newscaster. The producer was Ursula Skelton and *TYU* called it "an epic" that made "The Forsyte Saga' look like 'Andy Pandy'. The other entry was Altrincham's "Chaucerian performance" of Margaret Wood's 'The Double Dealers' complete with "merry medieval music".

GA Annual Meetings

The General Assembly's 1974 Annual Meetings were held in London (18th/22nd April) and, as usual a number of UYPLers were there, including *GA Zette* editor John Hewardine and League President-Elect Robert Roper, who wrote the report for *TYU* (June/July '74)). The Youth Meeting saw "the youngsters of Enfield & Barnet, Sheffield and Wythenshawe" perform a dramatic presentation called 'Every Branch Should Have One', meaning a minister who could offer a youth group "assistance and guidance" and help them "express themselves...by organising a few events." The 150-strong audience were, Robert reported, captivated by the cast's "uninhibited enthusiasm." The purpose was "to promote action by the ministers and members of congregations" in support of young people and youth groups which "would join a worthwhile UYPL." The meeting was also intended to show that "UYPL is still alive and not drowning amongst everyone's sorrows." Robert concluded that, "It is up to those of us...in UYPL to live up to our responsibilities and show that it is worthwhile to belong to UYPL."

Forty years of UYPL

Writing in the April/May '74 *TYU*, Richard Varley reflected on UYPL past and present, acknowledging that the League was now having one of its "leaner times". He was still positive about it, though, seeing it as of benefit both to young Unitarians and to the movement as a whole. On UYPL's distinctive nature and what made it what it was, Richard wrote: "It is because the young people who comprise its membership run the organisation...there is no question of older people running the League...It is the young people themselves organising, debating and making the decisions that are required." He mentioned some of the problems that UYPL faced: "It has never been a particularly large organisation" and had only ever thrived "in pockets around the country;" and it had to cater for a range of ages and had to cope with the increasing mobility of people in their teens and twenties as they "move around the country...for education and employment." He wrote of the influence that ten years in UYPL had had on him: "I can safely say that UYPL has made its mark upon my character...One learns much about human relationships, about diplomacy, about organising...events, meetings, discussions and so on." Of the 'U' in UYPL, Richard said that "It plays an important role in developing the characters of young people in varied ways." He saw it as a cause for concern that "so many of our churches are devoid...of youth activity" and saw "an active youth organisation" as necessary for the Unitarian movement's health. This was why Unitarians should encourage their young people and support UYPL. *TYU* also printed a survey of UYPL branches in 1974, with nine listed - six in Greater Manchester, one in Bradford and two in Scotland. Of branch activities, apart from the usual youth club activities, we are told that one Altrincham UYPLer, a student nurse named Gwyneth Elthorpe, had given lectures in first aid to the "younger

members”, while the Dukinfield branch “*are keen theatre-goers*” and Chorlton branch conducted youth services on a monthly basis. In that same issue of *TYU*, President-Elect Robert Roper looked at UYPL’s prospects. Contrasting it to other youth organisations he wrote, “*Not only does it create social attractions...it has a family feeling*” such as that “*found in Unitarian churches*” and which derives from “*our religious and social attitudes.*” The League’s distinctive nature taught “*independence, positive thinking and learning from mistakes*” and its welcoming open-mindedness encouraged newcomers and emphasised the commitment to the “*building up of fellowship*”. He recognised UYPL’s diminished state, attributing it “*in part to the enticement of outside attractions not present 40 years ago.*” This was why the League had to emphasise its unique nature, fertilize its “*roots which are its branches*” and “*create a better bond between UYPL and the Unitarian Church*” by encouraging young people to be more involved with congregational events and activities. Robert closed on a positive note: “*Today’s older members have not regretted being in UYPL, tomorrow’s youngsters will not either.*”

AGM 1974 – UYPL at 40

In contrast to the previous year, the AGM weekend (2nd/5th May) was well-attended with “*a healthy number of UYPLers from all over the country*” gathering at Great Hucklow, according to the report in the June/July *TYU*. It also said that a new branch at Bury was represented at the meeting. National President Mike Hurst was in the chair, and there was “*encouraging news of other active...Unitarian youth groups*” and “*strong Sunday Schools*”. However, a much-debated motion from Manchester Region about the structure of National Committee told a different story. It was passed and the result was that: “*National Committee shall consist of the officers of the League, one Individual Member, and one representative from each fully paid up branch of UYPL, which is not otherwise represented on the committee in any fashion whatsoever.*” This resolution was symptomatic of decline as such an idea would have been totally impractical in the days when UYPL had even twenty branches, never mind the thirty and forty plus of the 1960s. Another resolution, proposed by David Warhurst “*encouraged UYPL to support international fellowship in Unitarian circles*” and in particular urged UYPLers to become “*Friends of the International Religious Fellowship*” and to support its activities. A third resolution “*urged National Committee to follow up on “the findings of the November Round Table Conference” and to support the setting up of a “joint UYPL/Foy working committee” to look into Unitarian “facilities and activities available for youth.*” The AGM also sent greetings to Foy who had celebrated their own fiftieth anniversary at their Easter Conference. The meeting saw Robert Roper installed as National President and Alan Laver chosen as President-Elect. The main purpose of the weekend, though, was to celebrate UYPL’s fortieth anniversary, and this took place on the Saturday evening, by which time the number present was “*a happy 90*” and “*the past 40 years were represented as past Presidents...and friends of UYPL converged on Great Hucklow.*” At least ten former National Presidents were there, according to the list I noted in my diary: Arthur Vallance, Margaret Smith Hewett, Ivan Knowlson, Joe Fairhurst, Neville Kenyon, John Allerton, Bill Hayhurst, Cliff Reed, Ian Smith and Colin Partington. Of the celebrations I wrote in my diary that “*the wine flows free (until it runs out), Trevor Jones organizes dancing & leads a sing-song & a merry time is had by most.*” The next morning we were all in the Old Chapel for the anniversary service. The preacher was Arthur Vallance and a report of his sermon appeared in *TYU*. Arthur reflected on his 47 years in the ministry and on UYPL’s record, saying

that although the League never quite achieved its early goal of having 150 branches, *“it has turned out some splendid church leaders and given some vision to no end of young people.”* He attributed Unitarianism’s decline to its neglect of youth but he was hopeful for UYPL nevertheless, despite its recent problems: *“I believe the tide has turned, and with resolution...you will go ahead and give more life to our churches.”* In particular he commended Raymond Hodgkinson’s idea of a balanced programme for UYPL, with a blend of *“worship, learning, service and recreation”* resulting in *“good and happy UYPL activities.”* Arthur asked, *“How can we fill our churches?”* His answer, *“We can do it through friendship, as the UYPL knows.”* It had been a good weekend on the whole, but in my diary I noted afterwards that, *“Neville & Betty Kenyon seem a little disappointed at the aimlessness and disorder of the AGM.”*

IRF ‘74

Held at Nunspeet in the Netherlands (27th July/3rd August) the IRF Conference, as reported in *TYU* (October/November) involved experiments in communal living along with a variety of workshops, activities and discussions *“on...topics from religion in IRF to a woman’s role in society.”* There was cycling and walking for the energetic while others engaged in *“non-verbal communication and expression through dance.”* The report also mentions *“worship services, chant sessions and American Indian ceremonies.”* The business meeting was told of IRF’s *“dire financial situation”* and at Stunt Night the British *“revealed their dramatic talents”* and *“song-writing talents.”* A UYPLer, Christine Peatfield became IRF’s Secretary.

A new Songbook

UYPL’s second Songbook was published in 1974. It was, perhaps, already a bit dated. Some songs from the first, 1961, Songbook were included alongside others that were sung later in the ‘60s – made popular then by singers who were already fading from the UYPL scene by the early ‘70s.

An environmental service

UYPLers led a service on the theme, *‘Man and his Environment’* at Manchester’s Cross Street Chapel on 8th September as reported in *TYU* (Oct./Nov. ’74). Arranged and conducted by National President Robert Roper, it included the story of a pioneer environmentalist named Elzeard Bouffier who planted *“thousands of trees in the desert regions.”* Robert was assisted by other Altrincham UYPLers. *TYU* reported that *“Quite a number of people attended”* and that *“the service was...of interest to all and an excellent way of UYPL showing itself.”*

September Weekend ‘74

Held, as usual, at Great Hucklow (27th/29th) September Weekend involved films, a ‘Wide Game’ in and around Castleton, singing, *“mad games”*, a quiz and racing with wooden horses. Sunday worship was led by the Rev. Arthur Vallance *“in his usual top form”*. It was thus very much in the long-standing recreational tradition of September Weekend. The *TYU* reporter (Oct./Nov. ’74) thanked *“National Committee for...the excellent entertainments of a good weekend.”*

TYU and ‘The Slave Trade’

As an indication of UYPL’s more serious interests, the Oct./ Nov. ’74 *TYU* carried an article, presumably by the editors, on slavery, the slave trade, and people who worked

for the abolition of both. – including a number of Unitarians, like Josiah Wedgwood and the MPs William Smith and William Roscoe.

Autumnal Convention '74

Held at Great Hucklow on 1st/3rd November, Autumnal Convention was mainly concerned with the results of the Round-Table Conference of a year earlier. A Foy/UYPL working party had met three times *“to work out how each organisation could benefit from the other’s existence”* and its report was discussed in small groups. The report doesn’t seem to have revealed anything very startling, saying what everyone already knew about the distinctive natures of Foy and UYPL, and pointing out that both *“are low in...membership and heavily committed to maintaining and attempting to develop their current organisations.”* The idea of a *“new structure”* as an umbrella to bring the two together met with little enthusiasm and, in the event, was quietly forgotten. As *TYU* put it (Dec./Jan. '74/'75), *“Do UYPLers really want Foy, and are members of the Foy Society all that bothered about being associated with UYPL?”* Nevertheless, Foy members joined the UYPLers on the Saturday evening for a bonfire, fireworks and *“cocoa and parkin”*. Besides the Foy/UYPL report, the Convention also looked at *TYU*, the Barleycrofts Appeal, Youth Week and the future conduct of September Weekend. The *TYU* report called the Convention *“worthwhile”* but said that *“differences of opinion linger”* about the running of September Weekend and *“the validity of the UYPL/Foy working party.”*

Ten Years in UYPL

Richard Varley was the only person to serve two distinct terms as UYPL National Secretary, one in the '60s and one in the '70s. Early in 1975, at Stand Unitarian Chapel, he spoke about his ten years in the League. He related his first encounter with UYPL at a Manchester Region carol service in Cross Street Chapel in 1964. He recalled going home from that *“with the feeling that I had discovered a group of young people...I could be interested in joining.”* In January 1965 he joined the UYPL branch at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church. He wrote about UYPL’s *“changing face”* over his ten years as a member, with *“new groups...formed”* while *“many have become extinct”* and others had continued *“although their membership has almost completely changed.”* Perhaps Richard’s most significant reflection was about the many lasting friendships he had formed in UYPL. He said of them that *“I find a unique quality in a lack of any underlying or dormant bitterness or jealousy.”* Rather there was *“warmth in mutual trust and understanding”* and this encouraged the *“co-operation and working together”* that *“a voluntary organisation like UYPL needs if it is to serve the Unitarian movement.”* Richard’s reflections were reported in *TYU* (April/May '75), the editors of which, Susan Underwood and David Shaw, paid well-deserved tribute to Richard’s work for UYPL. They wrote, *“we have been impressed by his smooth efficiency and particular style of saying the right thing at the right time”* and they thanked him *“on behalf of UYPLers everywhere for helping to run the League.”*

1975: the early months

A poorly attended National Committee meeting on 5th January coincided with a Foy Society weekend at Unitarian College, Manchester, and a further effort to bring UYPL and Foy closer together. In this respect, at least, it wasn’t a great success. Robert Roper reported in *TYU* that discussions on Northern Ireland and the Health service may have left participants with *“a better understanding of the problems”* but

led only to “*vague and indecisive*” conclusions. Trevor Jones entertained with “*UYPL songs old and new*” at the wine and cheese party, but *TYU*’s editors wrote: “*It was disappointing that only a handful of UYPLers accepted the Foy Society’s invitation to attend.*” They commented that “*despite all...our efforts to publicise Saturday’s events we found it strangely difficult to create any enthusiasm*” among UYPLers.

Despite the League’s reduced state, the UYPL tradition of the work-camp as a way of serving the Unitarian movement was continued at Wythenshawe Unitarian Church on 14th/16th March. The church had big problems with vandalism and break-ins, they had recently lost their minister, and they were suffering from low morale. The work-camp was aimed at helping to improve this situation and involved “*washing down paintwork and cleaning windows, floors, ceilings, toilets and the kitchen*” (*TYU* April/May ’75). In her report, Theresa Cullen says of the workforce that besides the host branch there were seven UYPLers from Bradford, three from Chorlton and one from Dundee. Sadly, the work-camp wasn’t enough to save either the UYPL branch at Wythenshawe or the church itself, which closed the following year. In 1975, though, the UYPL branch was still operating and was one of seven reported to exist in the April/May *TYU*. The thirty-two-year-old Altrincham branch was wrestling with the familiar problem of leading members departing to college and university, as was Dundee. Bradford’s Broadway Avenue branch were busy rehearsing for the Drama Festival and their Easter pantomime, while the new Bury branch “*thrives happily*”. Chorlton branch met in their new UYPL room and Dukinfield enjoyed “*a host of various activities*” and held a monthly sponsored swim.

A sad piece of news was the death, on 6th April, of the Rev. Peter Short. He had been suffering from stomach cancer. Peter was a former UYPLer, serving on National Committee as Publi-Publi Secretary and, afterwards, as Associate Members Secretary. As minister at Dukinfield he gave great encouragement to the UYPL branch and denominationally he had served as Chair of the Religious Education & Youth Committee. He was Assistant Secretary of Unitarian College, Manchester. In the June/July *TYU* David Warhurst called Peter “*a warm, loving and understanding person.*” Of the funeral in Dukinfield I noted in my diary that “*the chapel is packed*” and that the Rev. John Midgley, another former UYPLer, “*takes the service beautifully and bravely.*” It was a very emotional occasion.

At the GA Annual Meetings in Liverpool (7th/11th April), UYPL ran the Youth Meeting, with Susan Underwood and David Shaw prominent as organisers and among the participants. There was a ‘game show’ (‘*Call My Squit*’) and a ‘debate’ on the motion ‘*Beauty is better than brains*’, which was defeated. This light-hearted evening went down well, according to Robert Roper’s report in the June/July *TYU*, evincing such comments as “*Thoroughly enjoyable*”, “*Full of wit*” and “*Excellent entertainment.*” The Meeting showed UYPL’s fun-side as well as its inventiveness, leading former UYPLer Ernest Baker to remark, “*A good P.R. job was that.*”

Drama Festival was held at Broadway Avenue, Bradford, on 12th April and was fully reported by John Roper in *TYU* (June/July). There were three entries, with Wythenshawe branch (“*The cast lived the parts as well as acted them*”) carrying off the trophy. Second were Bury (“*very good...considering that the group were young*”), with Bradford third (“*very lively and entertaining*”).

AGM '75

Held at Great Hucklow on the weekend of May 2nd/4th UYPL's AGM heard the final report from outgoing National Secretary Richard Varley, who said that the year 1974/5 "*had been full of activities*" and told the meeting that "*we must be seen to be a body of doers*" not just of "*talkers*". Richard was "*thanked wholeheartedly...for being a most efficient secretary and an ardent supporter of the League*" (TYU, June/July '75). UYPL's age-range came up for discussion with a proposal to lower the bottom end to ten, so as to better bridge the gap between Sunday School and the League, but this was defeated, along with an amendment to abolish the age limit altogether. In elections notable for the number of candidates, the new President-Elect was Susan Underwood, the new National Secretary was Gwyneth Elthorpe and others elected included Yvonne Paterson (National Treasurer), Stuart Ashworth (Publi-Publi Secretary), Theresa Cullen and Lesley Allerton. Alan Laver duly succeeded Robert Roper as National President. Robert led worship in the Old Chapel on Sunday morning with "*a most interesting and enlightening service...upon the theme of friendship.*"

IRF – a message from The Netherlands and Conference '75

The Summer issue of IRF's magazine, *Forward Together* was, for financial reasons incorporated into the June/July issue of TYU. It included an article by IRF's Dutch President, Lucie Meijer. For many years the IRF experience had given the liberal religious commitment of UYPLers an international dimension. Lucie had this to say about it: "*Going to an IRF conference is learning to know people from abroad....it is not only learning about their...customs, but also becoming aware of your own habits, attitudes and values. It is a challenge to respect other people's feelings, way of life, and to think of your own way as one possibility out of many...We are creating and developing an international religious community with all those who wish to participate.*" 1975's IRF Conference was held in the United States, in "*the beautiful Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts*" according to Christine Hayhurst's report in the October/November TYU. With IRFers from North America, Europe and Japan, Christine wrote, "*We were young men and women from different educational, social and cultural backgrounds drawn together...to explore in a community situation the...theme of 'Personhood: Breaking Sexual Barriers'.*" It was all pretty intense but Christine found "*the learning experience...enriching and extremely worthwhile.*" She did wonder, though, whether some people had "*bared their souls*" without receiving "*the professional help, support and advice they needed.*"

September Weekend '75

Held 26th/28th September this stalwart of the UYPL calendar began for some UYPLers (from Altrincham and Bury) with cycling all the way to Great Hucklow. UYPL's resident archaeologist, John Clarke, gave an illustrated talk on "*Roman Britain with a special emphasis on Hadrian's Wall*" and also showed slides of the recent Youth Week afloat. A wet walk to Castleton, an 'Ancient Briton' themed fancy-dress competition and a social evening completed Saturday's programme. Sunday morning worship in the Old Chapel was led by Celia Downs, assisted by Alan Laver and Gwyneth Elthorpe. An afternoon walk to the Glider Field rounded off the weekend.

Autumnal Convention '75 & the GA Youth Meeting '76

According to the *TYU* report (December/January issue), “*about thirty UYPLers attended*” Autumnal Convention at Great Hucklow on the weekend of October 31st/November 2nd. Two of the main subjects discussed were IRF and worship. Christine Hayhurst spoke about “*the activities of the International Religious Fellowship*” as it was felt that younger UYPLers needed the introduction. As the 1977 IRF Conference was to be in the UK “*a good deal of time was spent in discussing possibilities for a venue.*” The 1976 Conference was to be in West Germany from 24th-31st July on the theme ‘*People at Play*’. A report of this by Eric Sharp appeared in *TYU* (October/November ’76). Autumnal Convention also welcomed three members of the General Assembly’s Worship Committee which “*aimed at stimulating the methods of worship within our churches.*” Eileen Kielty led discussion and “*suggested that those present devised their own...service to use the following morning at the Old Chapel.*” The theme chosen was ‘*Growing Older*’, leading one young UYPLer (Cathie Jones) to define “*‘old’ as ‘anything above 18!’*” On Sunday morning the “*service went off without a hitch and turned out to be...an interesting experience for the regular congregation.*” Worship was also the theme of the GA Youth Meeting in Edinburgh the following April. UYPL occupied the first half when a group consisting of Theresa Cullen, Stephen Wilde, John Fernley, Eric Sharp and Celia Downs presented a programme of readings and songs from the Lindsey Press publication, ‘*Songs for Living*’. Eric Sharp wrote in *TYU* (June/July ’76) that “*What we produced was not meant to be purely entertainment, and I hope we succeeded in showing that young people can enjoy worship by using songs, prayers and readings which have meaning for them.*” The second half featured the Welsh youth choir *Cor Y Flam*, who Eric pronounced “*superb*”.

Drama Festival ‘76

The most remarkable thing about the 1976 Drama Festival, held at Stalybridge on 24th April, was the number of entries. Out of the seven UYPL branches then in existence no less than six entered plays. *TYU*’s very full report by John Roper commented, “*Six very good entries they were too.*” The winning entry was Dukinfield’s, of which John wrote, “*their timing and movement were...good and the sight of the bikini was a refreshing sight.*” Altrincham came second with a ghost story. John wrote, “*a good play, and well acted*” in which “*the ghosts worked well together.*” The adjudicator put Chorlton in third place although John had reservations about “*the interplay between the characters.*” The other entries were from Stalybridge, Bury and Bradford. John Roper’s overall comment was that “*the main thing about drama festival is that the cast of the play should enjoy themselves as much as, if not more than, the audience*” and that this was true of all six casts on this occasion. The adjudicator, Mrs. C. Hetherington, was also impressed: “*standards were high and the plays well-presented,*” which had made judging difficult.

AGM ‘76

Perhaps the most significant thing to happen at the 1976 UYPL AGM was the installation of Susan Underwood as National President, something she didn’t make much of in her report in the June/July *TYU*. What is notable was that Susan was the first woman to hold the office since Florence Stark in 1960/61, although seven women had led the League as President in the 1950s and a further four would do so in the 1970s and ‘80s. Gwyneth Elthorpe, as National Secretary, reviewed the past year’s “*successes and disappointments*”, declaring that the former outnumbered the latter. *TYU*, although “*technically insolvent*”, had done a good job under the editorship of

Susan Underwood and David Shaw. They were, incidentally, to marry soon afterwards on 8th August. There were reported (by Richard and Lynne Varley) to be thirty Individual Members of UYPL and thirty-five Associate Members. Eric Sharp, then working at the General Assembly's Religious Education & Youth Department, reported that it had run *“three successful Weekend Meetings for Young Unitarians...which had very good attendances.”* A motion to remove UYPL's lower age limit was carried but one to remove the upper limit was defeated, opposition coming particularly from older members. With the Barleycrofts Appeal approaching its target, it was agreed that a new appeal should follow with the aim of raising *“£1000 in 1000 days”* for the Send-A-Child-to-Hucklow Fund, which runs country holidays for deprived inner-city children. UYPLers were encouraged to *“give physical help on the weeks as well”*, which, in fact, many had done over the years. The elections saw David Shaw become President-Elect. The Saturday-evening social included, amongst other things, *“Scottish sword-dancing”* performed by Yvonne Paterson. Alan Laver, as outgoing National President, led *“a most inspiring and thought-provoking service”* in the Old Chapel on Sunday morning. A Dutch auction, a walk and a 'wide game' at the Glider Field brought *“a very successful weekend full of ideas for the future”* to an end. Susan wrote in *TYU* that *“I begin my year as President in what looks to be a swing towards prosperity for UYPL.”*

September Weekend '76: “Hucklow would just not be Hucklow...”

Held, rather confusingly, on October 1st/3rd, September Weekend – described by David Shaw (*TYU* October/November) as *“a purely social weekend”* – saw *“about forty UYPLers gathered together from all the English branches.”* David commented that *“it was a grand sight to see...new faces”*, with special mention of members from the new Rochdale branch. This group had only affiliated on 5th September and had, according to its Secretary, David Ogden, benefited from *“a sudden surge of enthusiasm”* provided by their new minister, the Rev. Arthur Latham and his *“three teenage offspring.”* Apart from usual youth club activities, the new branch *“hoped to do a little social work...helping old people, going to the Salvation Army Shelter,”* and giving *“a little service”* in an old people's home on a Sunday evening. At September Weekend, though, they joined in such activities as a re-enactment of the American War of Independence *“on a steep hillside”*, *“brain-teasing games”* and the then popular horse-racing contest (with wooden horses), which was won by Gwyneth Elthorpe. Later, *“music and dancing continued into the night”* although *“all was quiet in time for the dawn chorus.”* Sunday morning worship got particular attention in David Shaw's report. It was led by the Rev. Arthur Vallance, *“one of the Founder Members of UYPL,”* but *“the surprise in store...was a choir of six singing ‘Hosanna’ and ‘Tomorrow is a Highway’, with Eric Sharp on his guitar.”* David Shaw reflected that, *“To me Hucklow would just not be Hucklow without the morning service at the Old Chapel,”* a sentiment with which generations of UYPLers would surely concur.

Autumnal Convention

After the relative success of September Weekend, Autumnal Convention was a considerable disappointment in terms of numbers. Indeed, it very nearly didn't happen at all, so few were the bookings at only twelve. However, it did go ahead (5th/7th November), with *“the entire conference sat around one table in the Queen Anne”* according to David Shaw's report in *TYU* (June/July '77). On a visit to Castleton they *“huddled into one small café...and shared a boat down the Speedwell mine.”* Back at Great Hucklow they had three speakers, two from other religious traditions, namely

Christian Science and Reform Judaism, and one Unitarian. This was the Rev. John Midgley, who spoke about Comparative Religion, which he taught at Unitarian College, Manchester. David's verdict was that *"we all gained a great deal about the sincere beliefs of other people."*

January '77: a panto and a revival

Dukinfield's UYPLers were dramatically inclined and they took part in their chapel's pantomime, *'Jack and the Beanstalk'*, early in the New Year. Reporting in *TYU* (March issue) David Shaw singles out a UYPLer for special mention: *"Surely the star...was Stephen Wilde as the Dame...in his variety of costumes and wigs...he showed us all that Dukinfield Old Chapel has a Danny La Rue of its own."* Later in January (28th/30th), neighbouring Stalybridge was the scene of a revival, namely of January Weekend. Unlike its discontinued predecessor at Great Hucklow, this was more of an old-style UYPL rally, with the *"twenty-two UYPLers...from the Manchester area"* sleeping on the school-room floor in sleeping bags. They went for a walk up Hobson Moor in the snow, held a four-team *'Unitarian Challenge'*, and danced to the music of *"Colin Horsfield's electronic extravaganza"* on Saturday evening. According to David Shaw in the March *TYU*, *"a few attended the service"* at nearby Mossley on Sunday morning, when weekend organiser, the Rev. Ian Smith, led worship and the UYPLers *"were made most welcome by the local congregation."* David declared it *"a most successful weekend."*

General Assembly Meetings '77: a satirical review

Held in London on 12th/14th April, the *TYU* report was by David Shaw (June/July issue). National President Susan Underwood Shaw led the UYPL delegation, which also included Stephen Wilde and Cathie Jones. The UYPLers main involvement, along with some Foy members, was at the Youth Meeting. David quotes the report of this in *GAZette*: *"The Youth Meeting reached heights not equalled in recent years...it amused, it entertained and it lampooned...It...gave us a marvellously disrespectful survey of Unitariana. Many establishment figures found themselves caricatured in fine style...Even the GA Council came in for some stick – although the portrayal of this august assembly as somnolent and inactive was surely flattering..."* David (although he was in it) called it *"a success"* and in my diary I said it was *"excellent"*. Funny it may have been but, as David wrote, it showed *"that there are some young people connected with the Movement"* who are interested in its *"general welfare"*.

The first Rochdale Rendezvous

The new Rochdale branch was soon making its mark in UYPL, running a very successful rally, called the Rochdale Rendezvous, on 15th/17th April 1977. According to David Ogden's report in the June/July *TYU*, thirty-two UYPLers from five branches spent the weekend based at the Unitarian Church - and sleeping on the floor. A Saturday morning walk in *"beautiful weather"* showed that *"there was... countryside round Rochdale"*, and this was followed by football in the park, service preparation, *"the silliest of games"* and an evening disco, for which a sixth branch joined the company. With hymns and readings chosen by UYPLers, the Sunday morning service was on the theme of *"tolerance in all its forms"* and *"the address was brilliantly written and delivered by the President, Susan [Underwood] Shaw."* David Ogden declared the weekend *"a great success and a good public relations job for UYPL."*

Drama Festival '77

A busy opening to 1977 continued with Drama Festival, held on 23rd April at Dukinfield and reported in the June/July *TYU* by David Shaw. David had high praise for organiser Stephen Wilde and technical assistant Roy Buckle. Three plays were entered, a fourth having been withdrawn at the last minute. Dukinfield's "*amusing and lively production*" was followed by Rochdale whose "*enthusiasm and liveliness spilt over into the audience,*" and Stalybridge, who gave a "*brilliant, gripping performance.*" The adjudicator was Dawn Buckle, "*who remembered many UYPL Drama Festivals past,*" having been a UYPLer herself. Dukinfield were declared the winners, with Stalybridge second. The festival's best actor and actress were named as Michael Salt (Rochdale) and Anne Horbury (Stalybridge). David Shaw wrote that he "*enjoyed the day very much indeed.*"

UYPL AGM '77

After such a busy spring it is surprising to note that the AGM, held at Great Hucklow had attracted only twelve bookings and the total number attending was "*only... twenty at the height of the weekend,*" according to the *TYU* report (June/July issue) by Susan Underwood Shaw, who also chaired the AGM. Although some successful events had been held during the year, others had been disappointingly attended. *TYU*'s year was said, by David Shaw, to have been "*pleasing*" but the reports of the other officers were not very good and only six branches were said to be active. The cost of weekends at Great Hucklow was identified as a problem, particularly for younger members, and church-based rallies and The Barn at Flagg were seen as more affordable alternatives. David Shaw succeeded Susan as National President, and the elections produced a new-look National Committee of Stuart Ashworth (President-Elect), Cathie Jones (National Secretary), Robert Roper (National Treasurer), Steve Barrett (Editor of *TYU*), Keith Stephenson (Publi-Publi Sec.), David Ogden (Conference Sec.) and Carole Chapman (Individual Member). In an address to begin his Presidential year, David Shaw said that, despite the poor attendance, "*The meeting itself proved to be most encouraging...Discussions were lively and realistic from a group of dedicated UYPLers.*" He talked about UYPL as "*a means of offering deep fellowship with people from other parts of the country*" and called for "*a special effort for others to experience and enjoy the special spirit that we within UYPL have come to take for granted.*" The address was published in the June/July *TYU*. AGM worship in the Old Chapel was led by outgoing President Susan Underwood Shaw, who wrote of it: "*My address was on national and international friendship, as I felt this was appropriate with us being the host nation for the IRF Conference this year.*"

New branches

The number of UYPL branches had hovered around six for some time, new additions being offset by closures. When National Committee met on 9th July it was announced that the addition of three new branches – at Padiham, Mossley and Sheffield Unity – had increased the number to nine. Padiham were planning to enter a float in a local festival, Mossley had raised £20-00 in a sponsored swim for Christian Aid, and Sheffield Unity had held "*art and cooking evenings and...tried their hand at bowling and boating.*"

IRF '77: seriously funny

The Woodhall Centre, Wetherby, in Yorkshire was the scene of a notable IRF Conference from 23rd-30th July. Organised by UYPL and the Foy Society, the theme

was *'You can tell I'm serious because I'm laughing'* and the study leaders were former UYPLers, the Revs. John Allerton and Ernest Baker. It was reported by David Shaw in the August/September *TYU*. One aspect of the programme consisted of satire, jokes, skits and slapstick humour. This, in the context of a religious conference attracted the unprecedented interest of the local and national media. But there was another side to the Conference – the consideration of what David Shaw called, *"the mind-boggling question, 'Having found that laughter can express sincerity are we not being serious by discouraging laughter from religious ceremonial?'"* Different national groups presented acts of worship and individuals explained *"their own personal interpretation of religion."* John Clarke and Carole Chapman led a conducted tour of historic York on the 'day out' and there was also a visit to Knaresborough. The last evening meant the traditional Stunt Night which, wrote David, *"offers each nation the opportunity of providing their own entertainment"* for the benefit of everybody at the Conference. Afterwards, *"we assembled outside, sang, chanted and expressed our thoughts and appreciation."* Countries represented were the UK, Canada, West Germany, The Netherlands, Japan, Switzerland, the United States and Hungary – the latter by two Unitarian girls who owed their attendance to the efforts of East-West Contacts persons, Susan and David Shaw. The Conference was summed up by David, whose first IRF Conference it was, in this way: *"The business was interesting, the study theme fascinating, enlightening and an experience of a lifetime. IRF is a fellowship which offers the opportunity for people of different nations and cultures to meet and exchange ideas and friendship."*

'£1000 in 1000 Days'

Having 'saved Barleycrofts', UYPL was now out to raise *'£1000 in 1000 Days'* for the Send-A-Child-to-Hucklow Fund. As part of this effort about twenty UYPLers took part in a 35-mile sponsored walk from Manchester to Great Hucklow on 17th September 1977. Among those taking part were the Rev. Trevor Jones and daughter Cathie. David Shaw recorded (Oct./Nov. *TYU*) that the walkers (including himself) arrived at Great Hucklow *"amid cheering crowds (well, a few people near the front door)."* The walk was expected to raise £40. This particular appeal was also successful and closed on 26th December 1979 when the organiser, Susan Underwood Shaw announced, *"Today I am pleased to say that we have reached our target, completing the sum by the thousandth day, Boxing Day 1979."* Besides *"numerous individual fundraising activities and contributions,"* other efforts had included a Grand Draw and a *"sponsored paint"*, which saw UYPLers decorating Great Hucklow's Old Chapel yet again. This took place on the weekend of 13th/15th July 1979, when *"27 people attended. Dave Riley got the paint and Stuart the food"* and *"After many hitches and a lot of hard work most of the Chapel was painted by Saturday night and was finished on Sunday morning"* (*TYU* Oct./Nov. '79).

September Weekend '77

Despite doubts about the cost of Great Hucklow for UYPL weekends, the 1977 September Weekend was successfully held there on Sept. 30th/Oct. 2nd with *"about fifty"* people present. The report in the October/November *TYU* was by first-timers Caroline & Judith Hill and Elizabeth Bedall. The weather was bad and although Castleton was *"cold and windy"* and the caves closed, the girls declared the visit there *"on the whole enjoyable"*. There were indoor games, a fancy-dress competition, a disco, a pot-luck supper and the traditional 'midnight hike' before watching *"the fire die down to glowing embers."* The Sunday morning service *"proved a most reflective*

experience” and in the afternoon “UYPL re-enacted their version of University Challenge.” The girls “thought the weekend was a great success.

January Weekend ‘78

Billed as a ‘Grand Reunion’, the revived January Weekend (20th/22nd January) returned to Great Hucklow in 1978. In his report for the February/March *TYU*, David Ogden wrote that although it was planned as a reunion weekend “*you would never have guessed*”, meaning that no UYPLers of yesteryear were there, other than “*a photograph of John Clarke when he was young.*” Nevertheless David wrote that, “*What we did have was the chance to see old friends again and meet new ones.*” A couple of weeks earlier the number booked had been 39 so attendance was probably over 40. There was a “*two-tier*” treasure hunt (some in cars, some on foot), a visit to Buxton, games, a Barn Dance (accompanied by fiddler Trevor Jones), singing and a pot-luck supper. This was followed by a seemingly confused ‘midnight hike’ – “*someone had moved Foolow.*” The Sunday morning service in the Old Chapel “*was thought-provoking and very relaxing.*” Something called “*Gwyneth’s Games*” brought the weekend to a close.

Problems with Great Hucklow

As the previous three items show, UYPL’s long, close and supportive relationship with Great Hucklow seemed as strong as ever in the late ‘70s, despite the problem that younger members were having in affording a weekend there.. It came as unwelcome news, therefore, when David Shaw – as UYPL representative on the Homes Management Committee – revealed that, because of financial pressures, the League’s discount was to be cut by half to 5%. When National Committee discussed this at its January 7th 1978 meeting it took the drastic step of agreeing that “*it would be wrong to continue using Hucklow at its present rate.*” Reporting all this in the February/March *TYU*, David wrote the following, with some bitterness, about the Management Committee’s decision: “*my first request on behalf of the League to maintain the UYPL discount at 10% and my second, to gain permission to attach a plaque to Barleycrofts to inform everyone when it was renovated and by whom, have both been squashed.*”

Drama Festival ‘78

No report of this appeared in *TYU* owing (it was said) to the editor’s illness. However, it was scheduled to be held at Rochdale on 18th March and National Committee heard beforehand from Drama Festival and Conference Secretary David Ogden, that planning “*was now well under way and...that the tickets were now available.*” Nothing more can be said other than that it was reported to have been successful at the AGM and had even “*produced a profit.*”

AGM ‘78

In 1978, for the first time since the 1930s, UYPL’s AGM was not held at Great Hucklow, no doubt because of the National Committee decision mentioned above. Instead it took place at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, on 13th May. Susan Underwood Shaw, in her report for the June/July *TYU*, says that attendance was “*at least 30...including many new faces from new branches*” – one of which, at Chowbent Chapel, Atherton, was admitted to membership there and then. Susan felt that this was “*an encouraging start to the meeting and hopefully for the year ahead.*” The League was reported to have eleven branches (one had closed), thirty-two

Individual Members and forty-two Associate Members. Treasurer Robert Roper reported that the League was *“in a good financial position.”* The elections produced some changes on National Committee: Gwyneth Elthorpe became both President-Elect and the new joint editor of TYU with Robert Roper, who was succeeded as National Treasurer by Susan Underwood Shaw. Publicity & Publications was taken over by Phil Brooks. Outgoing President David Shaw told the meeting that *“it had been a delight over the past year to represent the League.”* The Saturday evening social was held at Altrincham (with old UYPL films and fish’n’chips), as was the Sunday morning service – led by David Shaw on the theme, *“Every Little Counts”*.

Rallies in ‘78

Accommodation at the AGM weekend followed the tradition of UYPL rallies, consisting of sleeping bags on Altrincham’s church hall floor. 1978 saw two more church-based weekend rallies. Sheffield Unity branch hosted one in July, which Phil Brooks pronounced *“a complete success”*, and Rochdale branch hosted their second ‘Rendezvous’ rally on 17th/19th November. They were joined by UYPLers from Bolton, Atherton, Sheffield and Manchester. The TYU (Feb. ’79) report, by Gillian Ridehaugh recorded that *“Sunday brought the problem of finding someone to help with the morning service but we were grateful to those who took part and the congregation appeared to enjoy it.”* Said to have been *“enjoyed by all”*, the weekend also made money. In the April ’79 TYU Diane Ogden reported that *“profits...from the weekend helped to pay for a Christmas party which we held for the family service unit children.”* September Weekend (29th Sept./1st Oct.) wasn’t held at Great Hucklow, but neither was it at a church. Instead it was at Highfield House, Ilkley, Yorkshire, and Cathie Jones reported to National Committee on 25th November that *“the weekend was enjoyed by everyone”* although with room for only twenty-eight *“the accommodation was too small and the food was not very good.”*

IRF ‘78

Very unusually the 1978 IRF Conference was combined with that of its ‘adult’ counterpart, the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). The theme was *‘The Limits of Toleration Today’*. Held at Manchester College, Oxford, the Conference saw IRF somewhat overwhelmed. There were some sixty to seventy IRFers there, from *“Europe (East and West), North America and Japan”*, but, as David Ogden wrote in November’s TYU, he *“felt totally lost among 400 people, feeling I did not know any of them.”* David may have been speaking for UYPLers and other IRFers when he wrote, *“By Wednesday morning...my limits of toleration had been reached.”* IRF exuberance, it seems, was borne down by IARF’s more serious and cerebral deliberations. The ‘second week’ activities were more like IRF, with a visit to The Netherlands – where the international service was held in Leiden – and then a river voyage up the Rhine.

1979 – January Weekend

The last year of the 1970s opened with a *“very enjoyable”* New Year gathering in Sheffield, but the first major UYPL event was January Weekend (26th/28th), held at a snowy Great Hucklow. Responding to this experience David Ogden commented that *“it was like being home”* (TYU April). The snow notwithstanding, there were daytime walks to the Glider Field and Peter’s Rock along with a ‘midnight hike’. Indoors there was a barn dance (to Trevor Jones’s fiddle), singing and a disco. One old tradition was revived when *“Cathie Jones had the honour of being the first UYPLer in the*

horse trough since September 1976.” Sunday worship was led by the Rev. Arthur Vallance, “*who asked us once again to paint the church*” (which they did in July) while “*the back row swayed to ‘Sing Hosanna’*. David’s verdict, “*The weekend was excellent...by far the best organised... for a long time.*” UYPL’s year had got off to a good start.

Drama Festival ‘79

The nearly six-month absence of *TYU* means that what little information there is about the 1979 Drama Festival must be pieced together from earlier and later issues. On 3rd March, National Committee heard of the forthcoming Drama Festival that “*There are definitely four entries*” (Atherton, Rochdale, Hinckley and Altrincham) “*but Sheffield may yet be persuaded.*” It was to be held at Chowbent Chapel, Atherton, with a “*meal and disco on Saturday night*” and with “*sleeping accommodation...available.*” In December’s *TYU* Atherton branch reported that, “*helped tremendously by Bolton*” they had “*staged the Drama Festival way back in March and after a few hazards...it all went quite well and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.*”

AGM ‘79

Although there is no *TYU* report of the 1979 AGM, pre-AGM issues report that it was to be held at Owen’s Park, Manchester, on Saturday 7th April during the General Assembly Annual Meetings. There was to be a Youth Evening later. Accommodation for UYPLers was at Altrincham Unitarian Church on Saturday night. The GA Anniversary service was at Owen’s Park on the Sunday, and presumably this replaced the UYPL service. Little can be said of the AGM other than that Gwyneth Elthorpe succeeded Stuart Ashworth as National President, Cathie Jones became President-Elect and Dave Riley was elected National Secretary. Later issues of *TYU* indicate that the editorship had passed to the Oldham branch, with Diane Ogden as contact person. The National Committee report in the October/November *TYU* says that Diane was also “*Assistant Nat. Sec.*”, a post that hadn’t existed since the 1950s and only briefly then. Someone called John – no surname given – is said in that issue to be Individual Members Secretary, although he “*is in a situation where he knows nothing about the job.*”

IRF ‘79

The IRF Conference, held at Passwang in Switzerland’s Jura mountains, wasn’t reported (by Howard Hague) in *TYU* until the October/November issue. Howard wrote that “*the British actually had the largest delegation, with fourteen adults and five children.*” This included both UYPLers and Foy members. Total attendance was “*sixty or so*” from six countries. The Conference theme was ‘*Traditions*’, which was very appropriate for a week that included the celebration of Switzerland’s National Day, August 1st. The ‘day out’ was to Solothurn with its “*medieval buildings and some fine churches.*” The sight of the IRFers picnicking “*on the grass outside the town walls*” was reported to have amused “*the passers-by*”. The last evening was, according to IRF tradition, Stunt Night, when the British impersonated the Swiss cows and their ubiquitous cow-bells.

The end of the 1970s

The final issues of *TYU* in 1979 – October/November and December/January – tell us something of UYPL activities at the close of what had been a difficult decade for

UYPL – even though there was still some new growth and much enthusiasm. Fundraising for the ‘£1000 in 1000 Days’ appeal in aid of the Send-A-Child-to-Hucklow Fund continued during the year and reached its target on Boxing Day. Sheffield Unity branch hosted a weekend rally in June, attended by 22 UYPLers, of whom “15...were from Atherton or Bolton.” Two were from Rochdale branch, who reported that “We are taking the FSU children out locally on August 12th” (FSU – Family Service Unit). Altrincham had “been gardening in the Chapel grounds.” Youth Week, as described earlier, was on the canals.

September Weekend (12th/14th October!) was held at Windmill House, Alvechurch, Worcestershire, with seventeen attending “from Atherton, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Sheffield.” Activities included a five-mile midnight hike (with ghost story), a ‘wide game’ (said by *TYU* reporter Phil Radcliffe to involve rushing up “mountains”!), archery, horse-riding, an assault course and a treasure hunt. There was dancing (“any style”) on Saturday night, including a barn dance to Trevor Jones’s fiddle-playing. Phil closed by expressing the hope that another UYPL weekend there would attract young people from “the South and the Midlands” as well as from the North.

The non-appearance of some issues of *TYU* during the year was attributed to several causes when David Ogden attempted to explain it in the December/January number. He apologised “for the uncontrollable delays in bringing you the magazine.”

The last **National Committee** meeting of the 1970s was held at Manchester’s Cross Street Chapel on 22nd September, with National President Gwyneth Elthorpe Roper in the chair. The meeting heard good news from Rochdale, who were “increasing in number and...hoping to introduce new younger members to national UYPL.” Sheffield Unity reported that they were beginning to suffer from the familiar problem of members departing for college and university. This was surely one of the reasons for UYPL’s long-term decline as higher education became ever more widely available for young people, taking them away from their home churches and UYPL branches. It is worth noting who was present at that meeting besides Gwyneth. *TYU* lists the following: John Clarke, Phil Brooks, Alan Gregory, Cathie Jones, David Shaw, Cathy Archer, Gary Davies, Phil Ratcliffe, Diane Ogden, Susan Underwood Shaw, Caroline Hill, Liz Beddall and Stuart Ashworth. David Ogden, Dave Riley and Celia Downs (of REYD) sent apologies.

That Youth May Serve: A Chronicle of the UYPL 7: the 1980s

The decade opens

The new decade picked up much as the previous one closed – with UYPLers enjoying themselves despite the League’s diminished state. One small group (from Atherton, Bolton and Sheffield) saw the New Year in at The Barn, Flagg, and enjoyed themselves despite running out of fuel and having to send out a search party to find more. Their adventures were recorded in the April/May *TYU*, as were the events of January Weekend (25th/27th). Cath Archer’s report describes a familiar UYPL Great Hucklow gathering, complete with walks in the local countryside, a ‘wide game’, a barn dance “*courtesy of Trevor Jones (who else?)*”, singing – “*we sang all the usual UYPL songs*” – and “*we had a disco*”. Sunday morning worship in the Old Chapel was led by Cathie Jones with Dave Ogden and Cath Archer reading and the Rev. Arthur Vallance preaching. Organised by Conference Secretary Alan Gregory, the weekend was declared “*great*” by Cath, who also tells us that twenty UYPLers were there.

UYPL and the Youth Committee

A more serious Hucklow gathering followed on 9th February, when representatives of UYPL and the General Assembly’s Youth Committee met to see how the two bodies could work together. In fact there was some overlap between the two delegations. The chair was former UYPLer David Warhurst. The Youth Committee team, headed by Celia Downs, included a further three UYPLers – Susan Underwood Shaw, David Shaw and Cath Archer. Its other member was Howard Hague of the Foy Society. And UYPL was represented by ten of its members – Cathie Jones, Stuart Ashworth, Phil Brooks, Diane Ogden, David Ogden, Alan Gregory, Gary Davies, Sandra Gregory, Caroline Hill and Alan Bethell – plus Associate Member Gavin Mason. The report of the meeting in the April/May *TYU* records that, “*Subjects... discussed included the aims of the UYPL*” along with “*The way in which the UYPL could encourage young people at the top of the Junior Weekend range (approx. 13-15 years) to join the UYPL and how to cater for them. This last point was discussed in great depth...*” Junior Weekends were the responsibility of the Youth Committee. *TYU* reported that, “*On the whole the meeting turned out to be most useful.*” Besides giving the UYPLers “*a greater knowledge of the Youth Committee*” it also served to highlight “*many of the UYPL’s problems*” and to identify “*the challenge of incorporating more young people...into the UYPL.*” A jointly organised weekend for 14-17 year-olds was proposed as a way of furthering this shared objective.

UYPL and the Unitarian movement: a debate

UYPL’s relationship with the wider denomination was the subject of a significant debate on 23rd February. Held at Horwich Unitarian Church, the debate was sponsored by Bolton & District Unitarian Religious Education and Youth Council and the motion was that, “*The UYPL makes no contribution to Unitarianism at large.*” The debate was reported in the April/May 1980 *TYU* by Greg Ward, the Chair of Bolton’s Halliwell Road Free Church, who wrote that, “*The challenge was accepted by the UYPL in quantity of numbers, quality of debate and enthusiasm of young speakers.*” Greg tells us that there were “*fifty-five people in attendance of which over forty were youth.*” They came from Altrincham, Bury, Hinckley, Sheffield, Atherton, Bolton and Rochdale, where the UYPL had organised a weekend rally to coincide with the debate. Apparently, “*about twenty people were expected to attend, but the bookings kept flooding in and the number doubled.*” The debate itself was chaired by the Rev.

George Buckley and the *“The motion was forcefully proposed by the Rev. Austin Fitzpatrick.”* How much devil’s advocacy was involved here I don’t know, Austin having once been a keen UYPLer himself. The motion was *“most enthusiastically opposed by Cathie Jones”*, UYPL’s President-Elect. Greg Ward’s report says that the debate *“ranged from the wider implications of the UYPL’s contribution to the national scene to what was claimed to be the parochialism of the local churches.”* *“The spiritual needs of the Unitarian movement”* came under consideration, as did the *“financial problems”* of *“smaller non-fashionable churches.”* The question was asked about continuity between UYPL membership and making *“a worthwhile contribution to individual churches”*, but Greg says that, *“No answer was forthcoming.”* He also criticised both sides – UYPL and the churches - for *“lack of communication”*. No mention is made of a vote on the motion, but the preponderance of UYPLers at the meeting suggests it would have been a foregone conclusion. It also indicates that UYPLers were more interested in the debate than their elders. Greg Ward concluded that *“all...who attended will go away with something to think about. The UYPL with knowledge that some congregations are asking for help in bridging...the generation gap and the more mature attenders...with the knowledge that the UYPL is still alive and kicking.”* He also added this barbed comment, *“but at the moment not contributing much to the Bolton scene.”* All seems to have ended amicably enough, though, with *“free pasty, peas, tea and buns”*. The UYPLers then departed for Rochdale for charades and a disco *“which carried on into the early hours.”* Next morning they were all in church for *“a most entertaining service.”*

Deflecting criticism

UYPLers had often been accused of hedonism and bad behaviour, usually unfairly, sometimes producing a defence. David Ogden felt the need to write one in the April/May ’80 *TYU*. Time spent in pubs often featured in these criticisms, usually because *TYU* reports of UYPL events mentioned it. David said of one such article that it *“seems to have given the impression that UYPLers spend all of their time in public houses.”* He attributed such own-goals by UYPLers to the *“naivety of editors and authors”* who *“exaggerated in a joking fashion”* what was but one aspect of the League event they were reporting. David did not deny that while, like *“most people”*, UYPLers do drink, *“we only...do so in moderation and responsibly.”* He continued, *“There are always alternatives to alcohol in UYPL.”* He instanced the recent rally at Rochdale *“where an alcohol-free weekend was offered”*, although UYPLers might also have *“soft drinks in a public house where we might go to get warm and sing.”* David – and UYPL - came in for some praise from his dad and former UYPLer, Bob Ogden, in the same issue of *TYU*. He wrote, *“My son went through the stages – branch level, weekends away, Youth Week, European IRF, next America. I have seen his confidence grow, thanks to UYPL.”* He was also pleased to note that daughter Diane was taking the same path and wrote *“Encourage your offspring to join (and I mean work) in UYPL.”*

GA Meetings Youth Presentation

In 1980 the Annual Meetings of the General Assembly were held at Hatfield Polytechnic from 8th-11th April, with the Youth Presentation on the 10th. As no issues of *TYU* seem to have appeared for over a year after the April/May issue, any record of this and a number of other events must be gleaned from other sources. I was at Hatfield and made the following diary entry about the Youth Presentation. It *“includes slides, talks, films and sketches on Unitarian youth organisations and*

activities. The IRF and UYPL sections bring back some fond memories. There follows the end of GA social, at which Trevor Jones, as always, leads dancing & singing."

Drama Festival & the 1980 AGM

With no *TYU* reports little can be said of these. Drama Festival was held at Bury Unitarian Church on 12th April and the winning branch was Hinckley. The 1980 AGM was held at Great Hucklow on the weekend of 25th/27th April. Cathie Jones succeeded Stuart Ashworth as National President and Phil Brooks became President-Elect. Others elected included Diane Ogden (National Secretary), Richard Ashworth (National Treasurer) and Alan Gregory (Conference Secretary).

Nostalgia Weekend & Youth Week

A hand-written notebook has survived relating to plans for a UYPL 'Nostalgia Weekend' at Great Hucklow on 19th/21st June 1980. The notebook seems to have belonged to the anonymous organiser and says that "*The weekend is aimed at all those who have memories of happy 'Young Unitarian' events. The weekend will consist of pure nostalgia as guests meet long-lost friends and view...photographs, etc. On the Saturday evening there will be a buffet dance*" when it was hoped the company would be joined by others who were "*unable to attend the full weekend.*" A "*dance band*" was promised, as was a licensed bar ("*from 7 until 12*") courtesy of Eric and Doreen Cornwell, who had run the 'Queen Anne' in Great Hucklow since the early '60s and were well-known to generations of UYPLers. Advance bookings numbered fifty-seven, including some well-known UYPLers from that and earlier times. Six were booked in for the Children's Tea. The only other UYPL event of 1980 of which there is mention was Youth Week. This was billed in the April/May *TYU* as another narrow-boat holiday on the canals from 13th-20th September, starting at Middlewich.

***TYU* re-appears**

When *TYU* finally re-appeared in 1981 with the 'Summer issue' the editor was Cathie Jones. In her editorial she apologised "*on behalf of UYPL for the absence of some TYU issues for 1980/81. This was due to unforeseen circumstances...*" This issue did its best to bring things up to date with reports of Drama Festival, the GA Annual Meetings and the UYPL AGM.

Drama Festival '81

Held at Bolton Bank Street Unitarian Church on the weekend of 3rd/5th April, the *TYU* report was signed by 'Atherton UYPL'. It paid tribute to the "*nothing less than heroic efforts*" of Festival organiser, the Rev. Austin Fitzpatrick. There were four entries. "*First on came Bury*" with "*an excellent production of a play completely written and produced by John Allerton,*" their minister. Described as "*subtle comedy*" set "*at the Pearly Gates*", it "*deservedly won the Festival.*" Next on were Rochdale with "*a very polished performance of a complicated play*" that featured the "*use of a cleaning lady as a props mistress.*" Third to appear were Atherton in a play adapted by Cathy Archer and produced by Cathie Jones of Chorlton. Described as "*hilarious*", it was about preparations for a fashion show. All the characters were women and "*the cast on the day were, nevertheless, all females of a kind,*" whatever that means! Last on stage were Hinckley with a play about "*a group of cleaning ladies who wanted to perform a classical play.*" There were individual awards for Best Actor (Peter Colgan of Atherton) and Best Actress (Joanne Adams of Hinckley).

GA Meetings '81

Held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne from 13th-16th April, the 1981 General Assembly Annual Meetings were reported in *TYU* by UYPL delegate Cathie Jones. A big issue for UYPL was a motion to reverse a decision not to appoint a new officer for the Religious Education & Youth Department (REYD). Adopted the previous year, this decision – *“passed by a narrow majority”* - had meant that, *“For the past year the post of REYD Secretary has been non-existent and the UYPL has certainly experienced the consequences.”* Cathie wrote that, *“In the past the REYD Secretary has taken on the role of encouraging and educating our youth”* and that the reinstatement of the post *“should be a priority...the battle must still continue.”* Cathie also reported on the satirical Youth Presentation: *“a collection of songs, readings and sketches”* which got the audience laughing at *“the bones of contention at this year’s GA Meetings.”* The scriptwriter was the Rev. Frank Clabburn, a noted wit. Frank also wrote hymns and a *“beautiful”* one of his was sung as *“the tone quietened down.”* Later that evening, as my diary records, there was *“a fine sing-song...mainly led by Trevor Jones...other singers include Cathie Jones.”*

AGM '81

Held at Great Hucklow on 8th/10th May and reported in *TYU* by Diane Ogden, the 1981 AGM was not as well attended as she would have liked: *“the number of bookings was low and...those of us attending were a little dubious about the lack of support.”* But on the bright side, *“as always with UYPL events, those who attended did so with enthusiasm and a large degree of madness!”* The coincidence of three birthdays demonstrated that *“UYPL knew how to celebrate”* and on Friday night *“dancing continued...well into the early hours.”* The AGM itself saw yet another UYPL appeal launched, as proposed by Phil Brooks. It was for £500 to renovate *“the extension at Hucklow”* and David Shaw was appointed Appeal treasurer. The idea was to facilitate self-catering weekends for UYPL and other groups. The new National Committee was: Phil Brooks (National President), Cathy Archer (President-Elect), Cathie Jones (Vice-President & *TYU* Editor), Diane Ogden (National Secretary), Rick Ashworth (National Treasurer), Gary Davies (Conference Secretary) Alan Gregory (Publi-Publi Secretary), Caroline Hill (Individual Members' Secretary), David Ogden (International Secretary). Richard Varley was Associate Members' Secretary while Gavin & Jean Mason took on the printing and distribution of *TYU*. Saturday night meant *“an excellent UYPL social”*, a barn dance with Trevor Jones (*“surprise, surprise”*), a sing-song, games, more dancing and then *“To finish the night off, a few of us with great stamina...decided to walk round the little triangle.”* On Sunday morning, Cathie Jones led worship in the Old Chapel on the theme of *‘Feelings’*. Diane wrote that *“Cathie completely expressed her feelings about the League – her optimism and her concern.”* The readers were John Clarke and Phil Bluer while Andrew Gilbert gave *“a creditable performance on the organ.”* Diane was somewhat shaken by what she called (rightly or wrongly) *“the smallest turn-out at a UYPL AGM ever”* but hoped that *“in the year ahead there is more cause for optimism than concern.”* Nevertheless, it had been *“another enjoyable weekend...at Hucklow.”*

National Committee on themselves

The Summer issue of *TYU* featured personal contributions by National Committee members on themselves and how they saw their roles. President-Elect Cathy Archer

wondered if she would be a suitable successor to Cathie Jones and Phil Brooks, both of whom had been *“involved with UYPL virtually since birth!”* However, against this supposed inexperience was her time at Essex Hall (Unitarian Headquarters), from 1979 to 1980, as Assistant Religious Education & Youth Secretary. National Secretary Diane Ogden wrote of her office, *“the main role is...communication...with active members of the League; with Associate Members; with the churches and with the movement in general.”* To do this she mentions using the *“Nat. Seccy Bulletin”*, an organ of communication of which there are no extant copies as far as I know. The message from National Treasurer Richard Ashworth was simple: *“My main task is to keep people’s expenses within budget...and to endeavour to coax branches to pay their subscriptions before the end of the year.”* The new Conference Secretary, Gary Davies, merely thanked his predecessor, Alan Gregory, and asked UYPLers *“to contact me with any points, problems and information...you would...like to give or know.”* Alan, who was now Publi-Publi Secretary, was the most expansive in what he had to say. He wrote, *“UYPL is going through a difficult period. It seems that nobody realises who we are and what we really care about.”* This *“made it more important than ever before to communicate with the denomination, to try and inform people of what we are about, our aims and ambitions.”* Alan saw it as his job to *“strive...to make the name of UYPL strong again and become a voice in the Unitarian movement.”* He continued, *“The UYPL care about the future of the Unitarian movement and are always eager and willing to show that the...League is very much alive and kicking.”* He concluded with rousing words of dedication: *“I totally believe that UYPL is a winner and I will do everything in my power to put UYPL on its feet again.”*

UYPL branches in 1981

Alan Gregory’s positive and optimistic words must be set beside the fact that in that Summer issue of *TYU*, reports from the branches number only seven, one of which was not, strictly speaking, big enough to be a branch. Altrincham were playing *“an ever increasing role in the life of the Chapel”* with one of its members being the congregation’s Secretary. They were also running a younger group which *“we feel has an encouraging future.”* The branch at Chowbent Chapel, Atherton, were also *“introducing new members of the younger age range”* as well as being keen supporters of all UYPL events. Bury had triumphed at Drama Festival and enjoyed a range of sports, along with the music of XTC, Joy Division and the Jam. Chorlton’s three members included two members of National Committee and had a close relationship with Atherton. Sheffield Unity, although *“most of us still manage to attend all the national events,”* said they were suffering the familiar problem of losing out to *“educational commitments.”* Rochdale seem to have been the most active branch with *“discussions, debates, quizzes and...visiting speakers”* along with active support for the local Family Service Unit. They had hosted a UYPL *“social weekend”* and reported that *“we continue to grow in numbers.”* Hinckley mentioned a canal holiday, a Christmas panto, and celebrating Hallowe’en and Bonfire Night, but a separate report in the same issue was about their production of *‘The Sound of Music’* in May. The occasion was the silver wedding of two chapel members whose favourite musical it was. In her report for *TYU* Joanne Adams wrote that the UYPLers had *“got together some Austrian gear, painted their faces, plaited their hair and practiced yodelling.”* Casting was a problem as *“Hinckley are short of males”* and *“Our Von Trapp line-up left much to be desired.”* They lacked *“a captain and Maria headed a line of girls.”* Nevertheless they sang all the songs, even though *‘Do-re-me complete*

with dancing” left “heel marks...on the polished floor”. It was “a happy evening”, especially for “two members of the audience.” Hinckley were busy again in July (24th/26th) hosting their “first branch weekend...for 20 years”, according to Gary Davies in the Autumn *TYU*. He reports that “approximately 21 people” were at the rally, including UYPLers from Bolton, Atherton and Sheffield. There was a “subdued disco” then “ghost stories” on Friday evening. On Saturday there was a treasure hunt round Hinckley, a walk round the battlefield of Bosworth, a “sports evening” and then another disco. Sunday morning worship was led by Joanne Adams on the theme of “friendship and youth” after which the UYPLers “mingled with the congregation.” Gary called it a “splendid weekend”. The “reasonable profit” made went to the Hucklow refurbishment appeal. Hinckley branch had held a coffee morning for the same cause, raising £32-00, and were planning “a Beetle Drive and a Fashion Show.”

UYPL top of the League

TYU didn’t often carry sports news but the Summer ’81 issue was an exception. It reported that Chorlton UYPL football team – which had been founded in 1969 – had crowned their most successful season ever by winning the City of Manchester League with a most impressive record of P. 22, W. 19, D. 2, L. 1, F. 109, A. 33. The report was by UYPLer Kim Smith, who had “clocked up a record 270 appearances for the club.” By 1981 the team included quite a few non-UYPLers, but Kim recalled the “Halcyon days” when “many a notable UYPLer...donned the famous shirt – Gavin Mason, Ian Smith, Bill Hayhurst, John Brown, Phil Gadsby to name but a few.” Kim noted modestly that “Chorlton UYPL have created a tremendous reputation, not only for their excellent football, but for their gentlemanly conduct on and off the field; a tradition passed on over the years.”

IRF ‘81

Held in July and reported in *TYU* by David Ogden, the 1981 IRF Conference was held in The Netherlands on the theme of ‘Communication’. Some participants looked at “personal communication” others (including David) looked at “mass communication”, which involved a visit to the television studios at Hilversum. The ‘day out’ saw about sixty IRFers take to bicycles for a forty-mile ride. An interesting feature of this was the provision of tandems which enabled the sight-impaired to enjoy the day too. A Japanese group, “Tomo no Tsudoi”, were received into membership at the business meeting, “the first...from outside Europe or North America”. David said of worship that “a different person” led “the service every day” and that “we saw several different styles.” Although David called the week “wonderful” he also said that “the food was poor and it rained too often.” David, who was UYPL’s International Secretary and Secretary of IRF, had just spent a year in Germany, based in Frankfurt, where he had “found an excellent substitute for UYPL in FJD – Freireligiose Jugendbund Deutschlands.”

A Summer Weekend and Youth Week

The Barn at Flagg was the scene of a UYPL weekend on 10th/12th July. Organiser Gary Davies reported it in the Autumn *TYU*. A “faith-restoring” twenty-two people attended from “Bury, Atherton, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and...Castleford” enjoying such attractions as a walk to Monyash and a steam rally. It being The Barn, accommodation was basic: People “slept on bunks, floors – hung from walls and crawled into corners.” Youth Week followed in September (5th-12th) and was held in South Wales, based at Cwmrdu which, John Clarke noted in his *TYU* report (Winter

issue), is *“much more spacious than Flagg.”* Ten people are named by John as having been there and the organiser was Cathie Jones. They went on walks, visited places of interest such as Tenby, Aberystwyth and Caldey Island (for the monastery, the seals and the seabirds) and went swimming at Pendine Sands. *“A good time was had by all.”* September Weekend was planned for 9th/11th October (!) at Great Hucklow but no report of it appeared in *TYU*.

‘Youth – their future & ours’

This was the theme of a conference at Great Hucklow on 13th/15th November 1981. Howard Hague, a member of the Foy Society and President of IRF, wrote in *TYU* (Spring ’82) that *“About 40 people...came together to discuss the future of activities for young people in the Unitarian denomination.”* They included members of both UYPL and Foy and the newly-appointed REYD Co-ordinator, the Rev. Trevor Jones. The Rev. Eric Wild, himself a UYPLer in his youth, made some controversial points in speaking about *“the value or otherwise of youth work”* and Howard suspected him of being an *“agent provocateur”*. Small groups discussed *“particular aspects of youth work, such as the needs of young people, the problems of leadership”* and the best ways *“to publicise the activities of a youth group.”* Howard thought that the weekend (which also included a barn dance and worship in the Old Chapel) *“was thoroughly rewarding and most enjoyable.”* In summing up what he felt the conference had agreed about Unitarian youth provision, Howard wrote: *“We have tended to be too pessimistic”* neglecting to recognise that *“there are active young people in our movement...with a good deal of enthusiasm and commitment.”* There was an *“essential”* need for *“the UYPL, the Foy Society and IRF...to work together and to maintain good channels of communication.”* There were also barriers to be broken down within the wider Unitarian movement.

January Weekend ‘82

Held at Great Hucklow on January 29th/31st, the weekend attracted thirty-two UYPLers, mostly accommodated in the self-catering unit but *“a few older members...slept in Nightingale House.”* Activities followed a familiar recreational pattern – games, singing, a walk, cheese & wine, a barn dance, disco and a social *“intermittently punctuated by a talent spot”* – with worship in the Old Chapel on Sunday morning. Led by Cath Archer and Diane Ogden, the service was about *‘Sharing’* and *“pointed out the world’s unfair distribution of wealth.”* In her report for the Spring *TYU*, Cathie Jones wrote that *“January Weekend produced a friendly community atmosphere much needed in the present climate of depression in our everyday lives.”*

Drama Festival

The 1982 UYPL Drama Festival was combined with a weekend rally at Rochdale Unitarian Church, with the drama itself on Saturday, 27th March. On the Friday evening, though, there was a debate on the motion, *“This house believes that nuclear disarmament is a good thing.”* The proposer (whose name was Clarice) showed a film *“condemning the just war”* according to David Ogden’s report in the Summer *TYU*. *“Few debates are as one-sided as our discussion”*, wrote David, although some alternative views were put forward, and the motion was carried. When it came to the Drama Festival proper, five branches presented plays. Of Hinckley, who were on first, David wrote that, *“The girls delighted us with a play set in a nudist camp.”* Stand Chapel, Whitefield, were on next with a farce *“about a baby and a plumber*

and a nurse.” Of Rochdale’s entry – performed with the help of “*rising talent*” from Todmorden and Oldham – David wrote “*we were great*”. Atherton’s winning entry was a play “*about a TV panel show along the lines of... ‘Question Time’ and their minister, the Rev. David Usher took part. His “convincing” portrayal of an Australian gained particular praise from the adjudicator, who seems not to have known David’s nationality! Bury’s entry, written by their minister, John Allerton, was football-themed. Individual awards for best actress and best actor went to Gill Brooks of Atherton and Graeme Salt of Rochdale. A party followed in the evening and Sunday morning worship, led by Diane Ogden, returned to the theme of nuclear disarmament.*

GA Meetings ‘82

The 1982 Annual Meetings, were held in Lampeter from 2nd-5th April, immediately after the outbreak of the Falklands War. In the Spring *TYU* Cathie Jones had written that “*Six UYPLers will be attending...we intend to stay at Cwmrdu*” and that “*Our main function will be to liaise with Eric Jones on the Youth Presentation.*” The Rev. Eric Jones was minister at Aberdare. No subsequent report appeared in *TYU* but I wrote in my diary on 3rd April: “*adjourn to the Youth Presentation, which consists of some traditional Welsh folk-dancing, some Welsh jokes, a superb reading of Dylan Thomas, and the usual satirical presentation by the UYPL, Frank Clabburn and others. Trevor Jones leads a brief sing-song to close.*”

Hucklow Appeal

The successful conclusion of the appeal launched at the 1981 AGM to raise £500 for improvements and refurbishment at Great Hucklow’s self-catering block was reported in the Summer ’82 issue of *TYU*. Diane Ogden wrote that, “*The target was reached with a month to spare and what’s more we exceeded this target.*” The amount raised was £571. Diane gave a breakdown of how money had been raised, including a sponsored bike ride (£66), jumble sales and carol singing (£90), Atherton’s sponsored disco (£97), a sponsored book-clean (£42), the Christmas Ball at UCM and guess-the-baby’s-weight competition (£54), a weekend at Flagg (£28-50) and donations from “*various other sources.*”

AGM ‘82

A small company, described as “*stalwarts of the UYPL*” by Stuart Ashworth in the Summer *TYU*, gathered at Great Hucklow for the League’s 1982 AGM on the weekend of 7th/9th May. Apparently “*about thirteen of us stayed for the whole weekend*” with “*various people*” staying either Friday or Saturday night. Cath Archer and David Ogden did the catering. The AGM itself, chaired by Phil Brooks, was pleased to welcome “*Cathy from Somerset*”, UYPLers from that neck of the woods being a very great rarity. Stuart says little of the proceedings other than that National Treasurer Richard Ashworth was congratulated “*on keeping us solvent*” and that the branches “*varied from the extremely active*” to the “*quiescent*”. Changes on National Committee saw Cath Archer succeed Phil Brooks as National President with Diane Ogden becoming President-Elect. Other changes saw Joanne Adams elected National Secretary and Tony Harland taking over as Publi-Publi Secretary. Editorship of *TYU* was committed to Rochdale UYPL (along with their satellites Todmorden and Oldham) with Graeme Salt as contact. Incoming President Cath Archer launched a new appeal for £600 to support the travel of the denomination’s Youth Organiser, Trevor Jones, who was planning a national tour of Unitarian churches on his motorbike. The AGM heard that the UYPL programme for the year 1982/83 would

comprise eleven events including weekends at Great Hucklow and Flagg, the IRF Conference at Pontefract, Youth Week at Cwmrdu, a Christmas Ball, Drama Festival and the next AGM. There was the usual dance and sing-song on the Saturday evening and outgoing President Phil Brooks led Sunday morning worship in the Old Chapel.

New branches

Despite UYPL's diminished state it was still capable of generating new branches. Two were announced in the Summer '82 *TYU*. One was at Broadway Avenue, Bradford, a chapel that had had a succession of UYPL branches down the decades. Three of its members, "*Jane, Karen and Warren*" reported an "*interesting and constructive*" first meeting, "*even if at times there were a few frayed tempers.*" An initial programme was agreed "*after deep contemplation*", including such subjects as "*first-aid, healing and make-up*", with keep-fit activities, a quiz and "*simulated job interviews*" to follow. Thanks for support and encouragement were given to Diane Ogden, Graeme Salt and the Rev. John Jewsbury. The second new branch was unusual both in its nature and its location. Its base was a District rather than an individual church and it was located in the Western Union, an area with precious little UYPL history. Five UYPLers from the North-West had travelled down to the new branch's inaugural work weekend at Taunton, spent cleaning the chapel and tidying the graveyard. Support for the new branch had come from GA President Eleanor Dixon, Rod Dixon and the Rev. Trevor Jones. The two branches were welcomed by the new National President, Cath Archer, in a letter she wrote in that Summer issue of *TYU*. In introducing herself she said she had been a UYPLer for "*nearly four years*" and that it was her intention "*to increase the membership of National UYPL*" and "*to encourage youth activity as a whole in the denomination*" with the help of Trevor Jones "*the newly-appointed Youth and RE Co-ordinator.*"

The Summer of '82

The Summer and Autumn issues of *TYU* carry reports and mention of some UYPL activities held that summer. They include a "*superb*" Atherton branch weekend at Flagg that featured walks, games of rounders, swimming at Matlock Baths and visits to Riber Castle and the grounds of Chatsworth. A UYPL Summer Weekend at Flagg in July (16th/18th) was notable for being "*HOT*" according to Gary Davies's report. Attendance was "*about 20*" and they too played rounders and visited Chatsworth. Other summer events mentioned were an August Bank Holiday Foy/UYPL weekend arranged by David & Chasey Usher, a Hucklow Reunion Weekend attended by about thirty people, and a work weekend at Lydgate Chapel on 24th/26th September. This was a Bradford branch initiative and also involved "*a group... from Manchester*". Working to "*clean up the graveyard*", at one stage "*some bones were dug up*" but when – after a "*Saturday night...packed with fun*" – the UYPLers bedded down, they "*didn't have any ghosts coming to haunt us.*"

IRF '82

The 1982 IRF Conference was held in Yorkshire at Ackworth School near Pontefract from 24th-31st July. It was reported in the Autumn *TYU* by Eleanor Crosskey. Attendance was "*about fifty*" with people coming from Switzerland, the United States, The Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom. The theme was '*Phantasy and Imagination*' and the study-leader was the Rev. David Usher, assisted by the Rev. Trevor Jones. There were, amongst things, "*workshops and discussions*", "*role-playing games*", "*creativity sessions*", a

performance by a mime company, and the film 'Superman' – followed by consideration of its *"fantasies...and its theological and psychological implications."* The 'day out' took in a ride on the North York Moors Railway and a visit to the seaside at Whitby where there was lunch at the Unitarian chapel and a fish-and-chips tea in a wet car park. There was a range of recreational activities during the week, including, with the help of Trevor Jones and his fiddle, *"a couple of nights of dancing and singing."* Worship was held each evening, *"ranging from a service held outside and based on communal singing to one taken by Sandra Johnston (Northern Ireland) and Junya Suzuki (Japan) for which the theme was peace."* The Second Week comprised a tour of Scotland and North-East England.

September Weekend

Held at Great Hucklow in October (8th/10th), September Weekend borrowed from IRF its theme of *'Fantasy and Imagination'*. It was reported in the Autumn '82 *TYU* by Diane Ogden, who said that its *"semi-structured"* format *"seems popular."* Attendance was *"about thirty"*. Diane reported that *"A large number of the activities...involved mime"* and that *"these sessions went far better than the organisers thought possible."* There were also a walk, a 'wide game', a *"fancy dress parade"*, an *"American auction"*, and a sing-song. Sunday morning worship in the Old Chapel *"comprised a selection of songs and short readings"* which *"everyone seemed to find enjoyable."* A *"leisurely stroll"* brought the weekend to a close. It had been a self-catering event with David Ogden in charge of food and a rota of helpers ensuring that everyone was allowed *"to take part in nearly all of the weekend."*

A Christmas party

Although no report of it appeared in the increasingly sporadic *TYU*, the last UYPL event of the year was to be (according to the Autumn '82 issue) a Christmas party on 11th December. The venue was to be Rochdale Football Club with tickets available from Diane Ogden and Cath Archer. I assume that this took place as another one was announced for the same venue in *TYU* the following year, with David Ogden selling tickets.

LRY disbanded

Since the 1950s UYPL's counterparts in North America had been Liberal Religious Youth (LRY), founded in 1954, and Student Religious Liberals (SRL) founded in 1956. Like UYPL, they both belonged to IRF which provided a meeting point for the three organisations. LRY and SRL were both affiliated with the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and its successor (from 1961) the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). In fact LRY had anticipated the formation of the UUA by bringing together the youth movements of the AUA and the Universalist Church of America several years earlier. Both LRY and SRL were, like UYPL, self-governing organisations – *"of youth, by youth, for youth"* - with LRY catering for a younger, church-based, mainly teenage, 'clientele' and SRL drawing its members from among college students. SRL had come to an end in 1976 but LRY continued on its own distinctive path, taking an increasingly radical stance on various controversial issues. At the local level this resulted in some LRY groups leaving or being expelled from their churches. This situation finally led to such serious differences with the UUA that, amid much controversy, LRY was disbanded in 1982. A new organisation – Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) - was formed to replace it.

An unreported year: UYPL's last National Committee

When Tony Harland wrote in the Winter '83 *TYU* that "*its been some time since the last TYU but I'm glad to inform you that we're back on the road,*" he was referring to the fact that no issues of *TYU* had appeared in 1983 until that one. With no other sources available this means that most of UYPL's penultimate year of existence can scarcely be recorded at all. No reports are extant for January Weekend (scheduled for 28th/30th), Drama Festival or the AGM. There was a youth presentation at the GA Annual Meetings in Oxford (8th/11th April) but all I have about it is what I wrote in my diary. I said that it was "*a sketch about nuclear war, and some thoughts on the priorities of church life.*" From Tony Harland's editorial and a 'letter' by Diane Ogden distributed with the same issue, it is possible to work out who was on the National Committee elected at the 1983 AGM. It was to be the last, so I will give it in full: Diane Ogden (National President), Cath Archer (Vice-President), Richard Crompton (National Secretary), Gary Davies (National Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Daniel Nuttall (Conference Secretary), Tony Harland (*TYU* Editor), Appeal Treasurer (Alan Bethell), David Ogden (*TYU* Distribution Secretary, with Atherton UYPL doing the distributing). Stuart Ashworth became International Secretary. John Clarke was to continue as Associate Members Secretary. Ominously there was no mention of a President-Elect.

The President's Letter

The 'letter' by Diane Ogden that was circulated in the autumn of 1983 is virtually the only source of information for most of the year. It is here that we learn of a significant change that must have been made to UYPL's constitution at the AGM. Diane referred to the "*changed membership basis*" from branch-based to a wholly individual membership. The increased mobility of young people, due primarily to them going away to study, had detached them from their UYPL branches so that it now made more sense for each person to be a member of the League in their own right. This was, of course, a shift away from a structure that had been fundamental since the League's foundation. The Regions had withered away in the 1970s and now the branches had gone too. The AGM had also revised the age-range for full membership "*from any to 16-30*". All members would now pay an annual subscription of £4-00, which included *TYU*. The change explains the new post of Membership Secretary, which replaced that of Individual Members Secretary. Yet another appeal had been launched, implying that the one for Trevor Jones's motorbike tour had been successfully completed. The new one, launched by Diane, was for £500 to refurbish a room at Unitarian College, Manchester, something which several congregations were also doing. David Ogden had already "*completed two marathons*" in aid of this and the next fundraiser was to be the planned Christmas Party at Rochdale Football Club on 10th December. In January's *TYU* there is this note on the event: "*The Christmas Ball was rather good...but could have done with more people.*" In the same issue Diane reported that the new appeal "*is well off the ground*", with money also coming in from "*preaching fees*" and "*carol singing*". But Diane also revealed her deep anxiety about the state and future of UYPL. She wrote, "*There is nothing more disheartening than putting time, energy and hard work into something to see it flop through lack of support. I have tried to stress this over the last two years. This is YOUR UYPL, and it has come to the make or break stage.*" She paid tribute to the GA's Youth Department from which UYPL was receiving "*more support than ever,*" but added, "*it is only fair that we show we appreciate this by supporting the Nat.*"

Comm. and the events they organise.” Looking ahead, she closed with words that, with hindsight, are both ironic and poignant: *“Let’s make this year a good one for UYPL.”* But the League’s next event actually suggested that it might be.

‘Fall-In’: UYPL examines racism

‘Fall-in’ was the name given to what was also called September Weekend and Autumn Weekend, its dates being 21st/23rd October 1983. Arranged with help from GA Youth Organiser Trevor Jones, *‘Fall-In’* was, in the event, to be both UYPL’s last weekend at Great Hucklow and one of its most successful for some time. It was reported by Gary Davies in the January ’84 *TYU*, and seemed to represent a very positive response to Diane Ogden’s appeal for more support. It also saw UYPL looking more like a national organisation than it had done for years. As Gary wrote, *“43 people were present throughout the weekend, one of the best turn-outs for the last few gatherings. People came from as far away as Southampton, Somerset and Cardiff.”* There were *“quite a few new faces”* alongside more familiar ones. Gary had this to report about the programme for the Saturday morning: *“We were introduced to Rev. Cliff Reed who was invited to the weekend, along with his wife, Paulette, and children, to give a...session on racism.”* As Gary described it, *“With the help of audio-visual aids, Cliff brought home to most of us that racism is a real, everyday problem by putting forward the minority and black population’s views of their treatment by white people.”* Gary summarised the session in this way: *“It was a very interesting and eye-opening session for which UYPL thank Cliff.”* My own note, written in my diary, is as follows: *“I show ‘The Enemy Within’ and then get everyone to do related activities aimed at getting them to examine racism in themselves and in society, and to consider what they might do about it. The session seems to go well.”* The afternoon was taken up with horse-riding around Edale for some and canoeing on the river at Matlock Bath for others. With Trevor Jones there, the evening’s social took a familiar turn. As Gary wrote, *“Trevor tuned up the fiddle and we had a barn-dance and sing-song.”* Next morning everyone was in the Old Chapel. Gary wrote, *“Sunday morning’s service was given by Cliff with the theme of ‘The State of the World.’* My title was actually, *‘One World: A New Order’*, and I was assisted with readings and so on by Nancy Cake, Mary Knopf, Diane Ogden and John Clarke. On Sunday afternoon there was a walk and people played ‘Frisbee’. Gary’s verdict on the weekend was as follows: *“This was a promising start to the newly-inspired UYPL. Let’s hope we can improve membership and maintain the level of enthusiasm shown on this weekend.”* *TYU*’s editor, Tony Harland, added his own comment in the January *TYU*: *“September Weekend was an absolute success with a large number of people attending. I am sure everyone had an enjoyable time.”* I must say that it seemed to me at the time that UYPLers would never again gather for a weekend at Great Hucklow and never again fill the Old Chapel for a service worthy of any that they had held there in fifty years.

1984

Despite the optimism that marked the *‘Fall-In’* weekend, Tony Harland’s editorial in the January *TYU* struck a distinctly gloomy note, as was perhaps prophetic at the opening of this ill-omened year. He wrote angrily that despite 300 copies of the previous issue being distributed, *“not one person has written or sent me an article...No one entered the competition, no crosswords, no jokes, pictures or anything which could have been used has been sent to me.”* Those receiving *TYU*

were either *“just not reading it”* or *“People are no longer interested in UYPL.”* He said that *TYU “has all the financial support to see it through the year”* but that *“it’s a make or break for TYU, if no articles are received before the deadline it could be the END.”* And seeing as no further issues are extant, it looks as if it was. And yet this last-ever *TYU* was actually rather good, with photos, reports and articles on a range of subjects.

A programme of events

At the beginning of 1984 it might have looked as if UYPL would continue to function normally through the year, but there was a bad start – January Weekend, scheduled for 27th/29th, *“was cancelled due to snow”* and *“No further date has been set.”* A “Sports Weekend” was planned at Rochdale on March 30th/April 1st and National Committee was due to meet in Bolton on 3rd March, but there is no record of what happened at these. In his article on *‘Membership’* in January *TYU*, Gary Davies wrote that *“Events which relied on the branch to function, such as Drama Festival, are cancelled until a time when it...can be...operated properly.”* So that great UYPL tradition, dating back to 1947, was now at an end. The January *TYU* also had an article on BIRF (British IRF), which included both UYPLers and Foy members, describing it as a *“semi-abstract quasi-organisation.”* The article mentions a BIRF weekend that took place the previous November and gives the dates of two that had been planned for *“May Day Weekend”* (4th/7th) and for 21st/23rd September, but whether or not these took place I don’t know. Planned events that definitely never took place were Youth Week and Autumn Weekend. This only leaves the AGM weekend, scheduled for 18th/20th May. What happened to that I will come to in due course.

Membership

In the January ’84 *TYU* Membership Secretary Gary Davies elaborated on the changes to UYPL membership that Diane Ogden had referred to in her ‘letter’ that accompanied the previous issue. Referring in particular to the shift from branch membership to individual membership he wrote, *“As the general situation of employment and education changed, it was noted that a considerable number of people were moving away from their origins to work or colleges in different parts of the country, and very few were able to stay in close contact with their branches or affiliate to a branch in their new situation.”* To this Gary attributed the *“reduction in numbers at regional and national level”* and the problems affecting *“communication between members.”* The new system, in which *“each individual...is directly a member of the National UYPL”*, receives *“everything that is produced for or by UYPL”* (including a quarterly *TYU*), and *“is entitled to attend all UYPL events,”* will, said Gary, *“cater for everyone, no matter where in the country or world...they are.”* If this system had been operating since the AGM then it seems to have got off to a slow start with only 23 people signed up according to that issue of *TYU*, but Gary could still write *“word is travelling around and membership fees are coming in.”* There had been nearly double that number at the *‘Fall-In’* weekend, which must have been encouraging at the time. Nevertheless, even allowing for the possibility that there were more UYPLers around than had signed up thus far, the numbers were very low. The question must have been whether UYPL retained the critical mass needed for it to survive.

Approaching hoofbeats...

In an undated letter to UYPL members the National Secretary, Richard Crompton, brought some sad news from a meeting of National Committee. He wrote that because of *“the increasing difficulty of the League to maintain its activities and support”* and *“the lack of response to the recent re-organisation to Individual Membership,”* National Committee would recommend to the AGM in May that UYPL be suspended *“for a period of one year”* with the *“whole situation”* to be reviewed at a Spring Weekend in 1985. They still envisaged that four events would take place in 1984/85, but these were to be organised by the GA’s REYD rather than by UYPL itself. In fact it seemed to be accepted that UYPL was on its death bed. Writing of this *“sad development”*, Richard said that UYPL’s Fiftieth Anniversary would be an *“appropriate”* time *“to recognise that it had played its part”* and to act decisively *“before it founders entirely.”* He held out some hope for the future but also indicated why he thought UYPL had come to this point. Richard wrote, *It may well be that the UYPL will revive in a different form but the social and church situation that it served no longer exists.”* It was, in short, an idea whose time had gone. But Richard still looked forward to the *“important milestone”* of UYPL’s Fiftieth Anniversary, to be celebrated after the AGM on 19th May, and hoped that UYPLers past and present would come along.

AGM '84: UYPL at 50

The fiftieth and last AGM of the Unitarian Young People’s League was held at Stand Unitarian Chapel, Whitefield, Manchester, on 19th May 1984. It was reported in *The Inquirer* of 7th July by David Warhurst. He wrote that *“The news that UYPL was on the brink of suspending operations had generated a good attendance of UYPLers from earlier years. Some were hopeful of encouraging UYPL to soldier on...pending that elusive revival we all longed for so much.”* However, the message from National President Diane Ogden and denominational Youth Officer Trevor Jones was that despite receiving *“the full support of the Youth Committee of the General Assembly”* UYPL had not been able to turn things round. David reported that, *“There was a growing realisation that UYPL...is not the kind of organisation that today’s young Unitarians want or need.”* Someone made the point that hope for the future lay in the *“large numbers of young people who are keenly involved in the Youth Committee’s Junior, Inter and Senior Weekends at Great Hucklow...out of this something will emerge...which will be the right format for the 1980s and 1990s rather than the 1930s.”* David’s report continues that just because UYPL *“was not the right organisation”* for the ‘80s and ‘90s, this did not *“diminish the value of what has gone before...UYPL was the right organisation for the past 50 years.”* David’s report stated that UYPL *“has been of profound importance both to the Unitarian movement and to the thousands of individuals who have been members of it...We should look back with gratitude to 50 years of great achievement.”* Bearing all this in mind it was thought best *“to bring UYPL to a joyful and honourable close”* rather than prolong it *“beyond its useful life.”* Although a formal winding-up meeting would be needed the following year (of which I have no record), all activities were suspended with immediate effect. The final act of this melancholy AGM was the passing of a *“warm vote of thanks”* to UYPL’s last National President, Diane Ogden and her fellow National Committee members *“for shouldering the burden and heartache of this difficult year.”*

The report says that *“Steps were taken to ensure the safe preservation of UYPL’s archives”*, but as I write this in 2021 they are effectively lost, having been sent first to

Unitarian Headquarters at Essex Hall, from there to Dr. Williams's Library and from there to a storage facility somewhere. The only archives that I have had to work from are what I have managed to gather myself, and I am grateful to all those who have sent me material.

The Wake

The AGM itself over, wrote David in his report, "*The rest of the day's events were conducted in a much happier vein*", with tea, "*an entertaining selection of UYPL and IRF films*" and then the "*Fiftieth Anniversary Party.*" By this time "*numbers had swelled to over 60,*" representing "*many generations of UYPLers*" and "*at least 22 congregations.*" There were games and country dancing (to Trevor Jones's fiddle accompaniment), "*a delicious pease and pasty supper*" and "*apple-pie and ice-cream*" (provided by the Stand congregation). One of the latter, Mary Lloyd, had made "*two magnificent Fiftieth Birthday Cakes*" which were duly "*unveiled*" and then cut by Diane Ogden. Diane also read out a letter of greeting from the Rev. John Kielty, one of UYPL's founding figures. There was then a "*UYPL-style sing-song*" led by Trevor Jones. A toast to UYPL – "*the highpoint of a memorable evening*" according to David Warhurst – brought things to a close. It was proposed by Alan Curren, UYPL's National President in 1959/60, and reported by David as follows: "*In a most entertaining speech...with more serious comment about UYPL's contribution to the movement, Alan managed to capture something of UYPL's unique character. Perhaps this could be summed up as its strong independence of mind as a self-run youth organisation, coupled with a lively and fun-loving, almost irreverent approach to its activities...Whilst this had often resulted in arguments with older church members...UYPL had nevertheless survived against all odds for 50 years – worth celebrating.*" Alan itemised "*three important things*" that UYPL had done:

1. "*The creation of lasting, firm friendships.*"
2. "*Helping individual members and branches.*"
3. "*Support and encouragement to the Unitarian movement.*"

Alan observed that "*Nothing stands still, times have changed and nothing lasts for ever. Something different is needed...I hope that whatever emerges will inherit something of UYPL's independence and spirit.*" He closed with these words, to which I can only say 'Amen':

"We give thanks and remember with great affection all that UYPL has been, has meant, has given to us and to the Unitarian Movement. The Movement is poorer for its passing. We are the richer for its having been."

Some perspectives on the end

Why, after fifty years, did UYPL fail at last? Trevor Jones, writing in *The Inquirer* (23rd November 1985) said baldly that "*The UYPL is dead through lack of leaders.*" One former National President, Cathie Jones Maszterlerz, writing on 19th March 2020, gave me this perspective: "*Looking back on why UYPL ended: I suspect that it was just changes in society – young people wanting different things and needs met in different ways. I don't think that it's a coincidence that its timing came at the same time as the demise of youth provision generally along with the cultural introduction of the 'me' society.*"

Another former National President, the Rev. David Shaw, gave me his ideas at some length in 2019. Recalling his years in the League he wrote "*My decade with UYPL*

was so much the 1970s”, and that in spite of it being a very active time travelling around the country and “running many events”, “I recall...a feeling of carrying on from ‘your generation’ and it always felt it [UYPL] had declined.” He pointed out one of the difficulties that UYPL faced in maintaining continuity – that a ‘generation’ of young people can last as little as five years and that this “makes a big difference whilst travelling through teenage/young adult years.” This problem had got worse as increasing numbers of young people moved away to study or to work. Nevertheless David recalled the sense of “connection” that had come “from going round chapels, meeting ‘the youth’ and encouraging new branches.” As the ‘70s drew to a close David had felt that it was time for “the next generation” to take over, mentioning specifically Cathie Jones, David Ogden and Diane Ogden. As to why UYPL faded, David felt one reason to be that fewer “chapel-rooted” young people were coming into UYPL and that “fewer of the few” were “willing to be committed.” Among his other thoughts were these. “UYPL was proud to be autonomous” which meant that “when it self-declared its end nobody else actually did anything about it.” Also, “As a generation of the ‘70s are we somewhat to blame for re-running what we had inherited, so by the 1980s it was much the same structure, activities and expectations as the 1960s.” He summed up by saying that UYPL “ended...because of fewer people and sometimes (a bit like a congregation) the appearance can be that all is OK but suddenly the numbers become lower than critical and it falls off the cliff.” But David paid tribute to UYPL for producing people who are “very much the national organisers today.” And David himself was one of a good number of UYPLers who entered the Unitarian ministry. He also gave UYPL credit for something with which many former UYPLers will concur. David writes, “I learnt so much from UYPL about organisation, i.e. how to lead, agendas, minutes, writing reports, handling issues, etc. I was never taught anything like that studying to be a teacher.” Expressing “how valuable it was” to draw on “my UYPL experience” David concludes that “It served me well.”

There is perhaps one factor in UYPL’s ‘decline and fall’ which was more important than all the others and that was the decline of the Unitarian movement itself. UYPL was made up of church-based branches and yet throughout much of its existence Unitarian churches had been closing. UYPL was losing its roots so it was inevitable that it would suffer the consequences. Of the something like 145 congregations that had produced UYPL branches during the League’s fifty years of existence, 70 (I make it) have now closed. The situation may not have been as bad in 1984 as it has since become, but it was bad enough. The loss of critical mass that David Shaw refers to as a reason for UYPL’s demise was reflective of what was beginning to threaten its parent denomination too.



Appendix I: UYPL National Presidents

1. 1934-35 H. Stewart Carter*
2. 1935-36 Arthur W. Vallance*
3. 1936-37 John Kielty*
4. 1937-38 Henry Harris Cheetham*
5. 1938-39 Marion Rowlands
6. 1939-40 Eric Shirvell Price*
7. 1940-41 H. John MacLachlan*
8. 1941-42 Joan M. Hartley
9. 1942-43 Leonard Mason*
10. 1943-44 James Keir Murren*
11. 1944-45 Franklyn Johnson
12. 1945-46 Ron Fenner
13. 1946-47 E. Basil Short*
14. 1947-48 Ian L. Toseland*
15. 1948-49 Kathleen Twining
16. 1949-50 H. Margaret Smith
17. 1950-51 Dorothy Smith
18. 1951-52 Edith Lee
19. 1952-53 Geoff Waywell
20. 1953-54 Nora Jackson
21. 1954-55 Alice Crombie
22. 1955-56 Barbara Johnson
23. 1956-57 Shirley E. Roberts
24. 1957-58 Ivan Knowlson
25. 1958-59 Joe Fairhurst
26. 1959-60 Alan Curren
27. 1960-61 Florence Stark
28. 1961-62 Len Smith*
29. 1962-63 Martin Davies
30. 1963-64 Neville Kenyon
31. 1964-65 John D. Allerton*
32. 1965-66 Michael Savage
33. 1966-67 Bill Hayhurst
34. 1967-68 Cliff Reed*
35. 1968-69 Peter Timiney
36. 1969-70 Ken Howard
37. 1970-71 Colin Horsfield
38. 1971-72 Ian M. Smith*
39. 1972-73 Colin Partington
40. 1973-74 Mike Hurst
41. 1974-75 Robert Roper
42. 1975-76 Alan Laver
43. 1976-77 Susan Underwood Shaw
44. 1977-78 David Shaw*
45. 1978-79 Stuart Ashworth
46. 1979-80 Gwyneth Elthorpe Roper
47. 1980-81 Cathie Jones
48. 1981-82 Phil Brooks
49. 1982-83 Cath Archer
50. 1983-84 Diane Ogden

* Indicates a minister or future minister

Appendix II: UYPL General/National Secretaries

1. 1934-37 Henry Harris Cheetham*
2. 1937-39 Barbara Hall
3. 1939-42 James Keir Murren*
4. 1942-46 E. Basil Short*
5. 1946-52 Franklyn Johnson
6. 1952-53 Raymond Hodkinson
7. 1953-58 Geoff Waywell
8. 1958-61 Martin Davies
9. 1961-62 Norman Bailey
10. 1962-64 Dick Turpin
11. 1964-66 Ernest Baker*
12. 1966-67 Kathy Myers
13. 1967-69 Richard Varley
14. 1969-70 Wendy Dalton
15. 1970-71 Joan Partington
16. 1971-72 Kathryn Wilkinson
17. 1972-73 Tom Grimshaw
18. 1973-75 Richard Varley
19. 1975-77 Gwyneth Elthorpe
20. 1977-79 Cathie Jones
21. 1979-80 Dave Riley
22. 1980-82 Diane Ogden
23. 1982-83 Joanne Adams
24. 1983-84 Richard Crompton

*Indicates a minister or future minister

Appendix III: UYPL National Treasurers

- 1934-36 Ernest A. Rowlands
1936-37
1937-38 Tom Spedding
1938-41 Alan Hartley
1941-42 Miss N. Ratcliffe
1942-43
1943-44
1944-48 Nellie Ashton
1948-51 Henry Tittle
1951-54 Alice Crombie
1954-57 Roy Buckle
1957-59 Margaret Winterbottom
1959-63 Martin West
1963-66 Harold Code
1966-68 Gavin Mason
1968-73 Ray Elder
1973-75 Ross Gowans
1975-76 Yvonne Paterson
1976-77 Stephen Wilde
1977-78 Robert Roper
1978-79 Susan Underwood Shaw
1979-80 David Ogden
1980-81 Stuart Ashworth
1981-83 Richard Ashworth
1983-84 Gary Davies

Appendix IV: UYPL branches 1934-84

italics indicate that the parent congregation no longer exists.

* indicates uncertainty about status

1. Aberdare
2. Aberdeen
3. *Accrington*
4. Altrincham
5. Ansdell
6. *Ashton-under-Lyne*
7. *Astley*
8. Atherton Chowbent Chapel
9. *Bedfield*
10. *Birkenhead*
11. Birmingham Kingswood
12. *Birmingham Moseley*
13. *Birmingham Oldbury*
14. *Birmingham Waverley Road*
15. *Bolton Bank Street*
16. *Bolton Halliwell Road*
17. Bolton Unity Church
18. Bolton Walmsley Chapel
19. *Bolton-on-Dearne*
20. *Bootle*
21. *Bradford Broadway Avenue*
22. Brighton
23. Bristol Lewins Mead (now Brunswick Square)
with *Clifton & the Domestic Mission*
24. Bury
25. *Buxton*
26. Cefn Coed
27. Cheltenham
28. Chesterfield
29. Chorley
30. *Coalville**
31. *Colne*
32. *Congleton*
33. Coventry
34. Croydon
35. Denton
36. *Dewsbury*
37. Doncaster
38. *Dudley*
39. Dukinfield
40. Dundee
41. Edinburgh
42. Glasgow
43. Great Hucklow
44. Hale Barns
45. *Halifax*
46. Hinckley
47. *Hindley*
48. Horwich
49. *Huddersfield*
50. Hull
51. *Hunslet*
52. Hyde Flowery Field
53. Hyde Gee Cross
54. Ilford
55. Ipswich
56. Kendal
57. *Kidderminster*
58. Knutsford
59. *Lancaster*
60. Leeds Mill Hill
61. Leicester Great Meeting
62. *Leigh*
63. *Leigh & Astley*
64. Liverpool Gateacre
65. *Liverpool Mill Street*
66. *Liverpool Hamilton Road*
67. Liverpool Toxteth
68. Liverpool Ullet Road
69. Llandysul
70. London [Alexandra Palace]
71. *London Bethnal Green*
72. London Brixton
73. London Kensington
74. London Golders Green
75. *London Highgate*
76. *London Kilburn*
77. *London Leytonstone*
78. London Newington Green
79. *London Peckham*
80. London Richmond & *Wandsworth*
81. *London Stamford Street*
82. *London Woolwich*
83. Macclesfield
84. Maidstone*
85. *Malton*
86. *Manchester Blackley*
87. *Manchester Bradford*
88. Manchester Chorlton
89. *Manchester Failsworth*
90. Manchester Gorton
91. *Manchester Longsight*
92. *Manchester Mill Street*
93. *Manchester Platt Chapel*
94. *Manchester Oldham Road*
95. *Manchester Renshaw Street*
96. *Manchester Wythenshawe*
97. Mansfield
98. *Mexborough*
99. *Middlesbrough*
100. Monton
101. Mossley

102. *Mottram*
103. New Mill Lydgate Chapel
104. Newcastle-upon-Tyne
105. *Newchurch*
106. Nottage
107. Nottingham
108. Oldham
109. Padiham
110. *Pendleton*
111. *Pontypridd*
112. Portsmouth
113. *Preston*
114. *Pudsey*
115. Rawtenstall
116. Rochdale
117. *Rotherham*
118. *Sale*
119. *Sheffield Attercliffe*
120. Sheffield Stannington
121. *Sheffield Unity Church*
122. Sheffield Upper Chapel
123. Shelf Pepper Hill Chapel
124. *South Shields*
125. Stalybridge
126. *Stockport*
127. Stockton-on-Tees
128. *Swinton*
129. Taunton*
130. *Todmorden*
131. Trebanos
132. Trowbridge
133. Urmston
134. Wakefield
135. *Wallasey*
136. *Walsall*
137. Warrington
138. Warwick
139. *West Bromwich*
140. *West Kirby*
141. Western Union
142. Whitefield Stand Chapel
143. Wigan Park Lane
144. *Wolverhampton*
145. York

N.B. This list may not be entirely accurate or complete but it is based on the best information currently in my possession.