



The Riverside Trio – gig



Our jazz evening with the Riverside Jazz Trio was a great success. As usual there were many people in the audience who had never been inside the Meeting House before – we hope they come back. As well as great music the Friends group who sponsored the evening made £224.89 for funds to support the Meeting House.

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PETER WATKINS



SOME GLORIOUS REALM

Poetry Book Launch

Suffolk poet Peter Watkins will be launching his third collection of poetry '*Some Glorious Realm*' at the Unitarian Meeting House on Saturday 25th April 2.30 - 4.00 p.m. He will be in conversation with poet Ian Griffiths and will be reading a selection from the new collection. All Unitarians and friends are warmly invited. No need to book. Just come! Donations are invited in aid of the Ipswich based arts in mental health charity Inside Out Community.

What Karly Did

What I have learned from my organ recipient

I am, I tell myself, a constitutionally pessimistic person. Sometimes I wonder if it is due to being born under-cooked, some two-and-a-half months early; or else maybe spending months listening to Thomas Ligotti every night as I fell asleep was a bad idea. I'm like a Catholic with all the guilt but none of the belief in grace and eternal redemption.

Since Karly, the teenage student I donated one of my kidneys to, died a few weeks back I've been rather quiet on here. In the face of the fundamental unfairness of the world I've shrunk back in confused bitterness. Teaching students sitting their GCSE English resits who are often jaded to the point that they don't even bother to keep up the pretence that they're putting any effort into their studying, I've often thought of Karly who sat revising dutifully day after day in the study hub despite being so clearly exhausted and in pain. She did her best. I did my best. She died anyway.

The world owes us nothing and as much as we humans desperately cling to the idea of deservingness, there's no great cosmic calculator that can weight up how much each of us deserves or does not deserve. And yet Karly didn't get to see adulthood (she'd only just turned eighteen), didn't get to live a life outside of hospital visits and pain. Her parents now are without a child, after having been given a glimpse of hope, indifferently taken away by the vicissitudes of biology.

And yet I don't regret donating my organ to Karly. She got to live the last half-a-year of her life without being on daily dialysis. She found it hard to sleep with the noise of the dialysis machine, so not having to undergo that daily was //not nothing//.

I'm going to her funeral next month. Everyone Everyone has been asked to wear pink since it was Karly's favourite colour. I spent a nice afternoon with my partner going through

charity shops looking for pink clothes that fit me. I've been in need of projects.

At the funeral Karly's mum wants to give me a letter Karly wrote for me before her health took a turn for the worse, before she had to go back into the ICU, before she slipped into a coma. I know it is going to be filled with grace, hope and thankfulness. My friend JD, who was Karly's geography teacher and also came forward to offer one of her kidneys, spent more time talking to Karly than I did. She has never used the word 'stoic' to describe her, but Karly's ability to appreciate small wins really impressed itself upon her. While Karly's parents understandably wanted her to live a long life, Karly seemed able to focus on what was immediately ahead of her and, indeed, count her blessings.

If Karly could do it considering the amount of health issues she had to suffer through, I can damn well buck up and stop moping so much! I don't think it should be the bedrock of one's politics, but in terms of life and how to live it, Blake was broadly right:

*"Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."
So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:*

*"Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."*

I can be very much like that cynical and mopey pebble, but I am trying to be more like that good-hearted and optimistic clod of clay.

RIP Karly (2008–2026)

Brave Futures – letter of thanks

Dear Ipswich Unitarians,

You may remember we wrote to you last year to thank you very much for thinking of Brave Futures and raising £1,600 from the many fundraising activities you did while we were your chosen charity to support, for which we were very grateful.

I put a note in my diary to follow that letter up with a case study of a young person who, since coming for sessions at Brave Futures, feels much more positive about her future – we'll call her B. When B first came to us, her anger was explosive – she was constantly arguing with others, which left her feeling emotional. She would burst into tears and was unable to communicate how she was feeling. B was experiencing nightmares every night and, exhausted and unable to cope at school, had attempted suicide in 2023.

B had erratic mood swings, friends struggled to keep up with her ever changing moods and she struggled with anxiety, experiencing panic attacks two to three times a week, one so bad that an ambulance had to be called.

Since attending sessions, however, many of B's symptoms have subsided, she has a better understanding of herself and has improved self esteem and confidence. She now understands healthy relationships and the sessions addressed her feelings of guilt and self-blame. Although B has a challenging year ahead, as she will sit her GCSEs, her practitioner feels she is equipped with the right tools and mindset to be able to cope with everything life throws at her. B feels that life is finally manageable and that the trauma she experienced no longer dominates her every waking moment.

The money you raised has funded a child's journey, like that of B, offering the consistent expert support they need to reclaim their childhood. Once again, from all of us, and the children's support at Brave Futures – thank you, we couldn't do our work without you.

Sally Burch - Engagement and Community Coordinator

GREENHOUSE GALLERY



22 ST NICHOLAS STREET,
IPSWICH, IP1 1TJ

'Birds and Beauty'



Exhibition

**8 APRIL – 2
MAY 2026**

10AM – 4PM
TUESDAY – SATURDAY

WORK BY
**ANTONIA
HOCKTON**

P.V: 10 APRIL 5-7PM
MEET THE ARTIST: SATURDAY
25 APRIL 11AM-1PM

Antonia Hockton will be displaying her work in the Greenhouse Gallery, close to our Meeting House. You are also welcome to come to the private viewing on Friday 10th April from 5 to 7pm.

Services in April

5th - Dr Lizzie Kingston Harrison. Easter Sunday

12th - Andrew Benedict.

19th - John Quill.

26th - Dr Lizzie Kingston Harrison.

Anniversary Service and congregational lunch – all welcome

Birthdays in April

We wish a very happy celebration to everyone who has a birthday this month, including –
Kate Gray on 5th; Morag Blue on 6th; Cliff Reed on 12th; David Forsdike on 19th; Sheila Seal on 21st and Rosemary Hamilton on 26th.

Letter from Liz Slade – Chief Officer for the General Assembly

As we prepare to gather Unitarians from across the country (and beyond) at our General Assembly [annual meeting later this week](#), the world is reminding us how needed this kind of gathering is.

Ideas of religious tolerance that have become expected in recent decades are being called into question, from the outcry in some quarters to the public Muslim prayers being held in London's Trafalgar Square for Eid, to the horrific arson attack on ambulances owned by the Jewish community, and the repeated police disruption of a Quaker place of worship. On 5th March, the Metropolitan Police [raided](#) the Westminster Quaker Meeting House for the second time in a year, arresting young people who were planning non-violent direct action.

This of course follows a previous raid last March. After a slow and confused start after last year's raid – it felt like people were slow to comprehend that the *Quakers* of all people would have their door broken in by the police – there was widespread public outcry, both from religious groups and from many people who despite not being people of faith, saw that a line had been crossed.

This time, the response has been much more muted. I don't know the reasons why. Perhaps this last year seeing the proscription and then [possible de-proscription](#) of Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation and the following arrests of hundreds of peaceful protestors has inured people to the limits of the right to protest. Perhaps it's that rather than street protest being planned, this year's meeting was apparently to plan a symbolic act of mass shoplifting. Perhaps the never-ending waves of shocking news cycles have left us exhausted. Perhaps, like last time, it will take a little while for the responses to be heard. (Last time, the London Unitarian District

passed an emergency motion the following day to show solidarity with the Quakers, despite some people in the district meeting not quite believing that the raid had happened as there hadn't been anything on the news. It was reported the next day on the front page of the Sunday Times, yet wasn't reported in Radio 4's Sunday morning religion programme. It took two weeks for [Churches Together in England](#) to issue an open letter to the Met in response.)

Reflecting on that initial raid last year, I felt strongly how the history of dissenting faith groups such as the Quakers and Unitarians was suddenly brought right back to the present. Our original 'dissent' was from the codified rules of religion brought in by the Church of England in the 1660s. Those whose faith meant they followed their conscience rather than a man-made rule-book lost their rights and their livelihoods. Even after rules were softened after the 'Glorious Revolution' in the 1680s, these non-conformists were not permitted to gather as more than a handful of people, and [Unitarians weren't given full legal rights to worship freely until 1813](#).

These things until recently were talked about in terms of our courageous forebears, but it's clear that these patterns are still relevant – those acting in line with their conscience will not be tolerated. Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for the Quakers said this week: "What's so outrageous about the way that policing is affecting Quakers at the moment is that these actions that are rooted in love are somehow being criminalised by the state". I'm sure our forebears felt the same.

On the wall in New Unity's Newington Green Meeting House, there is a plaque honouring former attendee [Mary Wollstonecraft](#), the 18th century feminist writer, that includes her line "**All the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience**".

I contemplated it on my visit there last Sunday (Mothering Sunday being traditionally a time for visiting one's 'mother church'; now that I live an hour's drive from New Unity rather than a ten

minute walk, I sadly don't get there very often). After the service, I walked up Barbauld Road, named after another phenomenal woman from that congregation, the writer [Anna Laetitia Barbauld](#), and then turned the corner to see that a local pub was being refurbished to reopen as the '[Mary Wollstonecraft Freehouse](#)'.

It gave me hope and perspective that these free-thinking women would be honoured in the physical infrastructure of their neighbourhood 250 years after they were here themselves. Time is a stretchy thing. [Our conversation for International Women's Day with Rev Joy Croft](#), reflecting on *Growing Together*, a report on feminist theology that she and five colleagues created in 1985 showed just how little has changed in those forty years – while life is simultaneously wildly different. I suspect if Wollstonecraft and Barbauld visited us today they would feel much the same. Rights they didn't dream of are commonplace (at least in Britain), yet we still live among entrenched patriarchal norms, as the news cycles make all too clear.

If current affairs tell us anything, it's that we can't assume a continual linear path of progress. Rights that are won can also be lost.

The dissent of the 1660s of refusing to conform to new religious rules may not seem very relevant to most people's lives today. People in Britain have freedom to express their faith, and the Church of England that our forebears were dissenting from has much less power than it did then, and only a tiny proportion of the population are active participants in Anglican worship. But the principle of standing up for what our conscience dictates to be truthful and loving can still land us in hot water.

Two centuries ago, when Unitarians were given full civil rights, there was a move towards the mainstream. Hidden simple meeting houses were replaced with huge, visible, confident neogothic churches. Unitarians held office and shaped Victorian Britain from seats of power,

not just from the edges. 20th Century Unitarians saw their values of freedom, reason and tolerance become so mainstream that they hardly differentiated us from the increasingly secular culture. As we head into the mid 21st century, it may be that our edge-dwelling roots become more important again.

Certainly, the [two motions](#) that have arisen from our membership this year – one on making public statements, and one on the right to protest – suggest that Unitarians are feeling this need to stand up and speak out rather than tolerate the “sacred rights of humanity” being “violated by blind obedience”.

As we gather at our Unitarian annual meeting, regrouping as a family of clergy, congregations, and societies, we are ourselves in a time of significant change as we adapt to the shifting needs and expectations of a free and inquiring faith. It's clear that the role we can play in offering a space of community that stands up for love, truth, and freedom of conscience is deeply important to this moment.

Ipswich Umbrella Repair Hub

Ipswich Umbrella in partnership with The Repair Shed. This is a new initiative for Ipswich where people can bring broken items for mending and repair.

Repairs: we aim to offer repairs of: electrical goods (including PAT testing), mechanical items, furniture, clothing and textiles, leatherwork, basic jewellery, and a sharpening service.

Repairs available depend on repairers available on the day.

Come along and have a chat!

Dates – 18th April; 16th May; 20th June; 18th July; 15th August; 19th September; 17th October; 21st November; 19th December – all Saturdays and open from 10am to 12 noon.

Book Group

We next meet on Thursday 7th May at 8pm to discuss 'Prophet' by Helen MacDonald and Sin Blaché. All are welcome to join us.



If you're interested in what is happening in Ipswich, visit the Ancient House in the Buttermarket on the 4th April to find out ...

The Wolsey 550 Project is consulting on a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Ipswich, linked to our City of Culture Bid. They are taking over the Ancient House on Saturday 4th April 10am - 4pm to get the survey out to the community in Ipswich - an opportunity to see inside this wonderful building and talk to the team.

The aim is to produce a 10-year Culture and Heritage Strategy that is shaped by the diverse lived experiences of Ipswich's communities — owned and delivered by the whole town, for the whole town.

Do take this opportunity to engage with the project — and include the Unitarian Meeting House in the plans.

Constable 250 is here!

Our first exhibition, Constable: Cast of Characters begins on the 28 March, where you can explore the people who inspired and supported John Constable. The exhibition will also be exploring the Regency period that Constable lived in, including family items and select pieces from our costume collections.

At Christchurch mansion.

Sad News

As we go to print, we have just learned that our friend Jenny Pile died this week — on 24th March, which was her birthday. She will be sorely missed. We hope to include more in the next issue. Her funeral will be open for family only.



Another photo of our Meeting House taken by members of the U3A Photographic Group.

Thought for the month

Work is not always required. There is such a thing as sacred idleness.

George MacDonald.

Disclaimer

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community.

Contacts

Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa Forsdike before the deadline of Friday 24th April, ideally by email to tessa@tessajordan.co.uk
To contact our Secretary, ring 07980 641620 (or email tessa@tessajordan.co.uk /ipswichunitarian@gmail.com) or ring our Treasurer Robert Waller on 01473 610723.