



Undeb y Mamau ~ Mothers' Union Report

February, March and April 2026

February – Salvation Army

We were very pleased to welcome to our February meeting Lieutenant Jamie Jones and Howard Drummer from the Salvation Army. Jamie is based in Carmarthen and Howard had recently taken on a new role, joining us to hear the presentation. Firstly Jamie asked what we knew of the Salvation Army with responses ranging from working on the streets with the homeless, selling Warcry, emergency response, working with the youth, providing courses for people to get on in life and working with women's and men's refuges.

We learnt that William and Catherine Booth started the Salvation Army in the 1860s, when there was a lot of poverty and nowhere for those of a lower class to seek help. William became apprentice to a pawnbroker from the age of 13 and saw the unfairness of society. He moved to London in 1849 and worked in a pawnbroker's shop at Walworth. Here he met Catherine Mumford, to become Catherine Booth in 1855. Catherine eventually became a preacher, both believing in equal rights for women. They both wanted to find a permanent solution to poverty.

William had a profound pity for the outcast and a hatred of dirt, squalor, and suffering. In London in 1864 William went to London and continued his preaching in tents and in the open air. William famously preached outside the Blind Beggar Pub in London. He founded at Whitechapel the Christian Mission, which became (in 1878) the Salvation Army. Booth modelled its "Orders and Regulations" on those of the British army. The operations of the Army were extended in 1880 to the United States, in 1881 to Australia, and later to the European continent, to India, to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and elsewhere—General Booth himself being an untiring traveller, organiser, and speaker.

In 1890 General Booth published *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*. He proposed to remedy pauperism and vice by means of: homes for the homeless; training centres to prepare emigrants for oversea colonies; rescue homes for fallen women; homes for released prisoners; legal aid for the poor; and practical help for the alcoholic. There was vast public support for the program; money was liberally subscribed and a large part of the scheme was carried out.

By the time William died on 20 August 1912 the Salvation Army was working in 50 countries – 35,000 attended his funeral. We learnt that its work continues now in 134 countries around the world. William and Catherine's children were among the first group of people to go out to spread the word in the new countries.

When talking about working with the homeless, he asked us what we would do to help them and yes we are all wary of giving money, but we can give food and a hot drink. Perhaps, though, it's as important to listen to them, give them the time of day and not treat them as if they are not there. It can be very lonely and dangerous living on the streets, but a kind word and a little help can go a long way in giving the homeless back some of their self-respect.

On 24th February several members met in church to take part in the MU Wave of Prayer. We are a World-wide organisation and every Branch takes part in these prayers as they make their way around the world during the year.

March – Dydd Gŵyl Dewi

In celebration of our Patron Saint, St David's Day, on 13th March MU members and friends gathered in the fellowship area of the Church to enjoy Bara Brith and Welsh Cakes with a very welcome cup of tea. We were pleased to have Rhian Morgan with us to tell us a little about her life.

Rhian was born in the Swansea Valley - her mother was a midwife and her father was a primary school headmaster. She was baptised in the Baptist chapel, just a short walk away. She can remember singing for her uncle Harry for the prize of a chocolate bar, making her realise there was something to be made from this. Her father was a leading light in amateur dramatics.

When they moved in the 1970s they were living the dream, with goats and growing tomatoes to sell to the pub. The Good Life sitcom was obviously their inspiration. The goats were well fed with scraps, but preferred clothes, nibbling them from the washing line.

Leaving secondary school with a scholarship to study drama in Aberystwyth, Rhian was the first in her family to go to university. It was a time of political unrest in Wales, Mrs Thatcher had done the u turn on providing a fourth channel, Gwynfor Evans was challenging her actions and there were people climbing television masts and daubing signs. Leaving university in 1982 was well timed, S4C had become a reality at last and all who had any sense were heading for the screen.

However, Rhian took a different pathway. A job for two years and an equity card to go with it, she started her acting career with Cwmni Theatr Cymru. An Equity card was a must. You couldn't get a job without a card and you couldn't get a card without, yes, you've guessed, first having a job.

She was glad to sign the contract, which took her all around Wales, but which came to an abrupt and unexpected end. 'Don't put your daughter on the stage Mrs Worthington' - the company folded in the middle of a pantomime – the panto was truly happening on and off the stage, as the company manager, unbeknown to them, had been spending without checking the balances.

What was she to do now? This was 1984 and a letter arrived at the stage door. The envelope was stamped with the BBC logo - salvation! A letter from Pobl y Cwm (PYC). Sabrina leaving and they need a new character in the post. And even though Rhian was seen in a play by Merfyn Owen, the producer on the Gwynedd theatre stage, she was offered a part in one of the BBC's most iconic series.

PYC was 2 episodes a week. They would film in the summer and autumn but by the end of the 80s it was went from 2 to 5. They would start at 8 in the morning, record scene by scene and the episode would go out that night at a quarter to seven. The biggest fear was that if they hadn't recorded a couple of scenes by 6 o'clock, some scenes would have to go live! It was touch and go sometimes.

PYC had begun in a moderate way, but soon they were rehearsing at weekends and On Air five times a week. Sometimes the script would be too short. On days like these, you would be sitting in your make up chair at 8am and see from the corner of your eye, a script editor sidling up towards you...with extra lines for you to learn, instantly. As the drama went out nightly, these lines would be timely 'topical injects' but they all called them 'tropical insects' as they had a habit of creeping up from nowhere and biting you.

Leaving Cwmderi wasn't easy, but in 1992 after the break up with her screen husband Dic Deryn, Carol left Wales for Canada. Rhian joined the cast of a satirical sketch show called 'X Ray', writing and rehearsing sketches in the week and recording on Thursday with the show going out on a Friday night.

An unexpected phone call out of the blue set Rhian off in a different direction - to the New Theatre. Having climbed the stairs to a room at the top of the building, she saw a man standing in the middle of the room, in a denim shirt and jeans. He turned round to face her and shook her hand, 'Hi I'm Tony Hopkins'. He had just finished the blockbuster film 'Silence of the Lambs' and Rhian had been summoned there to audition for the role of his niece in an adaptation of Chekhov's 'Uncle

Vanya'. Having delivered her lines, she asked the PA when they would let her know and Anthony Hopkins turned round and said 'Oh yes sorry. I forgot. You've got the part'. The name of the play was 'August'.

Drama has followed Rhian in every aspect of her life. She was baptised by Bishop Carl when she was forty and has been to church since then. It was in 2019 that God decided to intervene. Rhian had become a worship leader a few years before, following a simple six week course with two friends from St Teilo's, and really as a matter of conscience - a sense of duty as they wanted the Welsh service to continue.

She had prepared her reflection on the story of Peter and his encounter with the centurian Cornelius from the book of Acts. There was a tiny congregation of 3 people present. She remembers, emphasising that Peter had not finished what he had prepared to say and adding that we never know where or when the Holy Spirit will come. And at that moment, she could not speak. There were tears flowing down her face but she was held back from doing anything, her feet felt off the ground and she could not go forwards or backwards. She said it was like having a juggernaut placed in her path. This continued as the year progressed, needing to always have plenty of tissues to hand, but by the following March, she asked for help. Speaking to a friend, she was told 'I feel you may be called to ordained ministry. Later, she met with Archdeacon Dorrien in the vicarage in St Clears, who encouraged her with the words - 'well, let's not beat about the bush, you've been called, a shock isn't it?'

It was such a pleasure to hear Rhian's story and to be entertained that night by John James playing 'Finlandia', Wendy Bowen Beynon singing a beautiful song for us and a poem 'Hiraeth' by Andrew Challis was read by Eluned James (printed later in this edition). We all joined together to sing some of our favourite hymns.

March 25th - Lady Day

On 25th March eight members enjoyed lunch in The Falcon, along with other Branches in the Carmarthen area, to celebrate Lady Day, or the Annunciation. We were joined by the daughter of Brenda Evans, our Diocesan secretary, who is a priest with a church in London. She gave her opinion of Mary, who despite being afraid, had allowed God, through the Holy Spirit, to use her to bear His son and then suffer at the base of the cross at Calvary. It was a very thought-provoking address.

April - Blood Bank Wales

29 members and friends welcomed Professor Donna Mead OBE back to our April meeting. She had previously spoken to us about Betsi Cadwaladr and was pleased to update us that a play, Daughter of Bala, had secured a slot at the Edinburgh Festival. This time she had come to tell us about the Wales Blood Bank and had brought with her Alan Prosser, Director of the Service. Donna had just retired and Alan has been in post seven and a half years and has worked in the NHS since 1991.

In September it will be the 80th Anniversary of the Blood Bank Service, two years before the NHS started, when Society, Military and Government realised the importance of blood transfusions. Blood was kept in bottles then. In May it will be the 10th Anniversary of it becoming a National service here in Wales - saving money, as England had charged for each bag. The 250 blood collection venues need to be within 10 miles of a community. Donation does not take long, but only 3% of the population donate. One donation can save three lives. Blood is quickly taken to the laboratory for processing into Platelets which will keep for seven days; Red cells which can keep for 35 days and Plasma, which can be frozen and kept for 3 years. Safety is paramount and all stages are highly regulated. There are 100,000 donations every year, but more would be welcome. Plasma can be donated every 3 weeks as the blood is returned to the body, otherwise it is 12 weeks for men and 16 for women. There were personal stories including one of a young man who had a needle phobia and was terrified but wanted to save a life.

The Service also collects stem cells, from all over the world, and is responsible for the registry of donors. The stem cell collection just needs a swab inside the cheek. They had a stand at the 2024 Eisteddfod and despite the heavy rain had 123 volunteers. This part of the service is based at the Velindre Cancer Centre in Cardiff. We watched a touching film of a donor and recipient, their thoughts and finally meeting after the compulsory two-year gap. Donors are life givers with no reward.



← See the award given to Rosie, Kate Jones' daughter just recently after having made her 100th platelet donation.

During the Covid troubles the service was responsible for the storage and distribution of 5.3 million doses of the vaccine. Due to restrictions imposed at this time donors had to travel further and staff would arrive in an empty room and have to set up everything.

The Welsh Blood Service cannot afford to stand still. Rules have changed with donations now be accepted from same sex couples. The infrastructure of the Blood Service building is being improved with replacement and renovation. Drones are planned to convey blood between north and south Wales which will be faster than current methods, This may take between five and ten years to come to fruition. Canon Randolf Thomas gave the vote of thanks.

It is 150 years since Mary Sumner started the Mothers' Union and celebrations are taking place around the world. Kathleen Snow, our Worldwide President from Canada, is visiting as many Dioceses as she can during the year. She is running 150 kilometers during this time, 10km in 15 Diocese, 5 of which are in Wales. On Saturday 11th April she was welcomed to the St. Davids Diocese with a special event in Christchurch, Carmarthen.

I was welcomed by Enfys and was glad to see some familiar faces, some fairly local, others from further afield - Aberystwyth and Pembrokeshire. It was good to see a pleasing number of Clerics showing support. Along one side of the hall were stalls to show what we support;- AFIA, Mission to Seafarers, Fight Against Violence and Injustice, Plant Dewi Baby Bundles, Trauma Teddies, (made by our Knit and natter group), and of course Wendy with the MUE sales stall. The buffet lunch was in the centre of the displays.

Glenys introduced Kathleen and Enfys brought her round the hall to meet everyone individually. She was very easy to talk to. I asked her about her running and family. She had not seen her husband for a month but spoke to him every night. While we enjoyed the buffet, she cut the cake. At 2pm we moved into the church to listen to the Carmarthen Male Voice choir conducted by Wyn Maskell.

Kathleen began her address with Mary Sumner's prayer. She went on to explain how she had joined MU starting in a group of young Mums. We have 200,000 members worldwide and she shared stories of how we have touched and improved many lives with the Literary and Numeracy projects and plans for the future. Glenys presented her with a Cross stitch box filled with Cross in your Pocket.

Sue Rivers our Wales Provincial president was also present and showed us a stole that had been embroidered with MU symbols and used for the first time at the Maundy Money service at St Asaph. She also showed us a small bag containing a prayer and a candle which she hoped all members in Wales would say and light at 6pm on 9th August, Mary Sumner Day. A very enjoyable afternoon ending with the National Anthem.

Dates for your Diary

Mai/May 14 7pm Brains Trust
Mehefin/June 11 7pm Evening with Kate and Robert Jones
Mehefin/June 20 2pm Service in Cathedral to celebrate 150 years of MU.
 Followed by optional meal after
Gorffennaf/July 9 7pm Hanes teulu y Puxley/Puxley family history.

Meetings are held in church at 7pm unless stated otherwise. Visitors always welcome. Enquiries to Rev. Jean Voyle Williams 01267 275222.

Barbara Quick