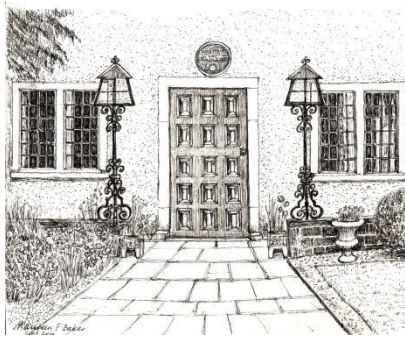


**Founded 1662**



**Building 1694**

# **Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel Chesterfield**

Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel, Elder Way, Chesterfield S40 1UR  
Tel: 01246 554506 Website: [www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk)

General email: [info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk)

*Registered charity No.220091*

*In the light of truth and the warmth of love, we gather to seek, to sustain, to share.*

## ***Newsletter March/April 2025***

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### **Welcome to our Newsletter**

Welcome to this newsletter which feels like the first one of Spring, though this sentiment may be jumping the gun in our desire for warmer days.

We live in very disconcerting times in the world, where imbalance of power, inequality and injustice, and sharing of misinformation is confusing, disheartening and frustrating.

In light of this, more than ever, we should probably remember Janet's contribution in the last newsletter, which reminded us that as individuals we might feel there is little we can do to improve matters, but doing something is better than doing nothing.

### **Details of services and leaders for 2025**

Services are held on the second Sunday of each month and start at 3pm.

9 March	Rev. Maria Pap	10 August	Rev. Maria Pap
13 April	Rev. Maria Pap	16 September	Rev. Maria Pap
11 May	Rev. Maria Pap	12 October	Rev. Maria Pap
8 June	Rev. Maria Pap	9 November	Rev. Maria Pap
13 July	TBC	14 December	Rev. Maria Pap



### **Lunchtime concerts in the Chapel**

The popular Chapel Saturday lunchtime concerts resume on March 15th when there will be a concert of choral music performed by MusicWork Vocal Ensemble. 11.45am to 12.30pm admission is free, with a retiring collection.

## **Maintenance**

The upstairs gas boiler is due to be replaced on March 17 & 18<sup>th</sup> by Roth from Magnus Gas, who replaced the main Chapel boiler. Generous donations from MusicWork and Andrew will help partially fund this. A spring clean of the whole building would be a good idea leading up to Easter!

## **Elder Yard Trustee Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 19 March. If you have anything you wish to raise with the trustees for possible discussion at the next meeting, please let Ann Shutt know by emailing [tillypretoria2@btinternet.com](mailto:tillypretoria2@btinternet.com)

The planned meeting in January had to be rearranged due to the unforeseen personal circumstances of some trustees.

The trustees would like to acknowledge the two generous donations towards the cost of the new boiler upstairs from Andrew and MusicWork. The cold temperature inside and not having ready hot water up there was starting to inhibit activities and future planning for how the use of the room might be increased.

## **With Our Best Wishes**

I'm sure all of us associated with Elder Yard would like to offer get well wishes to our friends Elaine Buttery and Peter Rowson who have both been unwell.

## **General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches – National News & Views.**

The General Assembly explains “Our congregations are autonomous democratic organisations, led by the members. Each elects its own leadership annually and decide their own vision and plans. The culture and ethos of each congregation is unique, while belonging to our larger family.” The national website address is <https://unitarian.org.uk> and the information below, and much more, can be found there and from its regular electronic newsletter.

### ***Unitarian Annual Meetings – 14 and 15 April 2025.***

Will be held in Birmingham, with Alison Webster, General Secretary of Modern Church and Mission Theologian in Residence at Citizens UK as our keynote speaker. Rev Maud Robinson will lead the service. Go to <https://unitarian.org.uk> to book a place and for more information.

### ***Summer School in August***

“Finding our religion: Being Unitarian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. This will take place locally at the Nightingale Centre and is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the summer school. Go to <https://unitarian.org.uk> to book a place and for more information.

### ***Foy Conference – 2 to 5 May.***

The focus is Artificial Intelligence (AI) – what we need to know and don't need to know.

Go to: <https://unitarian.org.uk> Event Page to book a place and for more information.

### ***Latest Executive information***

- A new manager has been appointed for the Innovation Challenge Scheme. This scheme aims to enable congregations to invest in ministry and leadership. There is funding available for this, and the manager can support congregations in thinking through their ideas and planning and application. The funding has to be matched with other income or resources.
- The Ministry Housing Review is ongoing. How can our ministry be supported effectively during this period of very expensive accommodation costs across the country?
- Safeguarding – all General Assembly staff are undertaking 31:8's Gateway to Safeguarding training. Our national Safeguarding Network will look at how to make the same training available across congregations. This is something the Elder Yard trustees have been looking into, in order to maintain and raise their awareness of safeguarding in general and in the context of our chapel and how it is used.

### **A new feature – Unitarians in the Public Eye**

This could be a regular feature about national or locally known Unitarians. Others might be briefer than this first one. Any constructive feedback is welcome.

#### **Mary Wollstonecraft 1759 to 1797**

Mary Wollstonecraft was born in Spitalfields London and was one of six children. She lived quite a radical life for the time she lived in and is known as a philosopher, human rights activist and writer. She is also known as the first feminist and the Unitarian Church she attended at Newington Green in London is considered by many to be “the birthplace of feminism” because of this.

My research indicates that her father was a farmer, but struggled to hold down any kind of work for long, and was an alcoholic domestic abuser. Her mother was “weak and harsh” and by the time she was 16 years old Mary was effectively running the house they lived in. Apparently, she rescued her older sister from an abusive marriage and brought her back home, but she was judged harshly for doing this, and was viewed as a young woman interfering and challenging the prevailing power of men.

Mary worked as a governess and in 1788 she began working as a translator for the London publisher Joseph Johnson, who later published several of her works.

In her book *The Wrongs of Women* 1798 Mary observes the difference between how she and her brother were treated:

“Such indeed is the force of prejudice, that what was called spirit with in him, was cruelly repressed as forwardness in me.”

In 1792 Mary fell heavily for Swiss artist Henry Fuseli after he moved to London and started to mix with her friends and associates. Although it is thought their relationship was platonic, Mary met with his wife and suggested that since her love was innocent, shouldn't the three of them live together? Fuseli ended any relationship with Mary.

In the same year, Mary went to Paris to observe the French Revolution. She had a relationship with an American, Captain Gilbert Imlay and in Spring 1794 she gave birth to their daughter Fanny. Imlay ended the relationship and as she struggled to emotionally cope with the breakdown of her relationship Mary returned to London and worked again for Johnson. She joined an influential radical group, which gathered

at his home. This group included William Godwin, Thomas Paine, Thomas Holcroft, William Blake and William Wordsworth

In relation to her link with the Unitarian church, it is thought that she was influenced by the sermons of Dr Richard Price at Newington Green Old Meeting House. Dr Price was a Welsh philosopher and a non-conformist minister and mathematician. He particularly supported rights for women. He was a strong supporter of the French and American revolutions and his friends included Benjamin Franklin, William Pitt, Lord Shelbourne and David Hume. In 1776 Price wrote "There is not a word in the whole compass of language which expresses so much of what is important and excellent... Nothing can be of as much consequence to us as liberty. It is the foundation of all honour, and the chief privilege and glory of our natures." Price has been called Wales' "most influential; thinker". Based on this summary, it is easy to see how Mary could have been influenced and inspired by him.

Mary's most well-known and influential book is "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" 1792. In this she advocates education for women, and states that women are not just ornaments for men, and there should be rights for women on an equal footing as men. The book caused considerable controversy as these were radical views, which she dared to express at a time when, for example, any inherited wealth usually went to the eldest son in a family, so few occupations were open to women and the majority of women had little knowledge or options for birth control. There were no women MPs, doctors, lawyers or judges to influence change and women could not vote. Over time, in the following century, women's movements resurrected many of the book's principles and it was a particular influence on American women's rights pioneers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Margaret Fuller.

In 1796 she began a relationship with William Godwin and they married in 1797 when Mary was pregnant. It seems the marriage was happy, but short-lived as very sadly, Mary died eleven days after giving birth to their daughter Mary. This daughter also became a very well-known writer called Mary Shelley, the author of Frankenstein.

In 1798 Mary's widower published a Memoir of her life and revealed her unorthodox lifestyle for the time. This inadvertently destroyed her reputation until the twentieth century rise of the feminist movement when her advocacy for women's equality and her criticism of systemic injustice against women was acknowledged as hugely significant.



Newington Green Unitarians continue to meet at the Old Meeting House and are justly proud of their association with Mary Wollstonecraft.

## Did you know?

### *In March*

**2014, 13 March**, the Right Honourable Mr Tony Benn died. He had been MP for Chesterfield from 1997 to 2001 and he left the Commons on 7 June 2001. In his final speech in the House of Commons as MP he talked about his view of the role of parliament and about democracy. He said:

“In the course of my life I have developed five little democratic questions. If one meets a powerful person –Adolf Hitler, Joe Stalin or Bill Gates—ask them five questions: What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you exercise it? To whom are you accountable? And how can we get rid of you? If you cannot get rid of the people who govern you, you do not live in a democratic system.”

### *In April*

**1974, 1 April, massive local government change.** Following the findings of a Royal Commission into local government, which had been presented to parliament in 1969, comprehensive changes were made to local government. The existing system was largely set up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was now considered outdated. It was a mix of city, town, rural districts, urban districts, parish and county councils. For example, Staveley residents came under Staveley Urban District Council, yet Brimington (the next village along) was part of Chesterfield Rural District Council.

Under the new arrangements all former rural and urban districts, the county borough of Derby and the county council were terminated. These were replaced by a new county council and nine district councils. The parish councils were not changed, and those areas that were in abolished districts could apply to set up a new parish council. Inevitably, not all districts were happy with the change, particularly the Barlborough district. It had been transferred to what was then described as “Sheffield and South Yorkshire” as it was considered “under the influence” of Sheffield.

You may remember how some new county authorities were very unpopular, such as Avon and Humberside. I can remember this being reported on national news channels. Both of these were abolished in 1996.

## **Community Support in Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire**

Community Services that can help in time of need.

***Derbyshire Young Carers*** – for carers aged 5 to 25 years who look after family members with long-term care needs. How can they be supported effectively?

Contact Derbyshire Carers Monday to Friday 9 am to 5pm

Tel 01773 833833 or email [info@derbyshirecarers.co.uk](mailto:info@derbyshirecarers.co.uk)

***Emotional Support for Children and Young People in Chesterfield*** – for those experiencing problems at school, or issues with parents, or generally not feeling right about themselves. Contact SPACE, by Relate at Chesterfield. Their specialist counsellors can listen to children and young people and help.

Tel 01246 382772 Email [admin@relatechesterfield.org.uk](mailto:admin@relatechesterfield.org.uk)

Their address in the town centre: 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Dents Chambers, 81 New Square S40 1AJ.

\*To suggest a Community Service for inclusion contact: [sarah.sheila18@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.sheila18@gmail.com)

## Events Coming up in Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire

### *In March*

**Chesterfield Museum on the Move - Code Breaking and Morse Code with Micro:bits Workshop** for children

15 March from 12 to 2.30 pm at West Studios Sheffield Road Chesterfield S41 7LL.

Look at [www.chesterfield.gov.uk/museum-events](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk/museum-events) for more information.

### *In April*

**Chesterfield 1940s Market**

Thursday 10 April 10 am to 4 pm.



**Easter Canal Cruises**

Monday 21 April at various times. For more information, and to book in advance go to [www.chesterfield.co.uk/events/easter-bunny-canal-cruises](http://www.chesterfield.co.uk/events/easter-bunny-canal-cruises)



Continued thanks to our chapel officers:

*Chairman: Alan Shutt    Secretary: Ann Shutt    Treasurer: Martin Barrett  
Organist and Building Manager: Andrew Marples*

Please see any of the above if you need help, have news or require information about the Chapel.

Contact Numbers

Andrew Marples: 01246 211655

Ann & Alan Shutt: 01246 554506

Martin Barrett: 01246 567674

Website: [www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk)

General email: [info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk)

Any contributions for the newsletter may be sent by email to: [sarah.sheila18@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.sheila18@gmail.com)

*Holy and beautiful is the custom which brings us  
together in the presence of the most high;  
to face our ideals; to remember our loved ones;  
to give thanks;  
to confess and forgive;  
to be enlightened and to be strengthened.*

the **unitarians** and  
**free christians**

