

# The hands and heart of Transition Chester

Cheryl Buxton-Sait

The Transition movement represents a community response to Climate Change and Peak Oil. In Chester, as in other Transition Initiatives, a group of people have come together to explore how the city and its surrounding area can adapt to a future of low oil consumption and low carbon emissions as painlessly as possible.

Chester achieved full Transition Initiative status on 21 August 2008 and, having worked through the primer, written a constitution and formed a strong working group, we can now focus on getting some of the more hands-on work done.

We have been busy building up awareness of Transition Chester via film showings about peak oil, stalls at local events, leafleting and providing speakers for other groups. On the surface this awareness-raising process is about informing people about the issues but also, more importantly, it's about getting people to talk to each other and building up strong social networks.

For me, one of the most important tenets of Transition Chester is rebuilding community. In all of our events there is a strong desire to ensure there is space for people to discuss issues and feel some degree of support in exploring them.

We have three embryonic working groups now: the Trees for Chester Group, The Heart and Soul Group and the Renewable Energy Group. I'm involved in the first two of these three groups so can give a bit of a picture of what we are aiming to achieve.

The Trees for Chester group is going to look at increasing the number of useful trees - especially fruit and nut trees - in and around Chester through planting projects. One idea is to use city-wide plantings of trees to create a stock of healthy, productive trees that can serve as a great source of local food and absorb carbon emissions. Other aims of the group include increasing local biodiversity; educating people about trees and

agroforestry, and setting up a centre for the low cost distribution of trees. I like the idea of planting trees. It's a visible, practical manifestation of the Transition idea.

The Heart and Soul Group aims to support the work of the Transition Chester Initiative. Tackling the twin issues of climate change and peak oil will need us to overcome huge barriers to engagement, such as powerlessness and isolation. These feelings do not leave people in a place from which they can generate energy to re direction themselves. We want to move away from trying to engage people by painting apocalyptic visions of the future and instead vision what Chester could be like, painting a picture of the future so enticing people feel drawn to it. We are having monthly open space gatherings where people can talk in a safe space about how these issues affect them and how they are feeling.

During this open space time there is also the chance to celebrate our successes and share inspirational articles, poems or songs.

This coming together, a sense of not being alone, not the only person finding things scary is very powerful. I for one have been energised by feeling part of a collective response and that I am part of something larger than myself.

*If you want to find out more about Transition Chester, get involved, or if you have trees, knowledge of trees to share, land that you want trees planted on, please contact us by email:*

***transitionchester@yahoo.co.uk***  
*or call Cheryl on:*  
***07763 881 036.***

There is also an embryonic group looking at the possibility of Wrexham becoming a Transition Town.

At our first meeting, we watched the inspiring film *The Power of Community*, which is about how Cuba adapted to a sudden loss of oil supplies and food imports. Cubans had to adapt from a highly mechanised agricultural industry to local, sometimes urban, organic farming using traditional methods.

Since then, our group has met twice and hopes to generate more interest at an event organised by the Sustainability Forum in October, to which many local groups working on environmental issues will be invited.

If you're interested in getting involved, send a message to:  
***eco-wrexham@lists.riseup.net***  
or contact WPJF and we'll put you in touch with the group.

*Genny Bove*



*A large number of tree seedlings can be started off in a single grow-bag*

# Obituary: David Jones

Maggie Winters



My brother David Jones, who has died of cancer aged 66, was an ordinary man who did extraordinary things. Growing up in the small Welsh town of Llanrwst, his lifelong interests and beliefs were already evident as a boy. But he did not shine academically, was always in trouble for minor misdemeanours, and did not do great things in his career as a television transmission engineer. Even his name was unremarkable. Yet he has left a legacy that will last for generations.

David was a great internationalist. This stemmed from the age of 12 when he started corresponding with his Mexican penfriend, a friendship that was to last for 53 years. His internationalism manifested itself in his love of travel - especially the classic great train journeys - but also in his politics and interest in radio. I recall how, at 14, his bedroom was festooned with aerials and cards, posters and small gifts received from radio stations around the world - even a copy of Mao's Little Red Book from

Radio Peking. His passion continued, finally resulting in a collection of more than 100 radios spanning 80 years, most of which are to be put on permanent exhibition in his hometown of Denbigh.

As a teenager, David joined the Aldermaston marches and later became a socialist member of Plaid Cymru. He became the first Plaid mayor of Denbigh, serving from 1987 to 1989, when he adopted as his charity the establishment in Denbigh of the first county Welsh language centre - to the lasting gratitude of local and incoming Welsh learners. In adulthood, he himself learned to speak Welsh fluently, not having had the opportunity as a child.

Two visits to Cuba in the 1970s led him to found *Cymru Cuba*, the Wales Cuban Solidarity movement. His quiet but magnetic personality attracted many to the seminars he organised at Clwyd Theatr in Mold, with speakers from all over the world. A tribute from the Cuban embassy bore witness to

his dedication to building understanding between the two countries.

But it was not all serious, and the events were accompanied by poetry, singing and salsa dancing. In recent years Denbigh became the salsa capital of Wales, attracting Cuban bands such as Sierra Maestra to play at the dances David organised. In its turn, the *Cymru Cuba* stall is now a regular feature at the Welsh National Eisteddfod.

David leaves his devoted Bulgarian wife, Vesi, whom he met in 1965, his daughter Awena and son Deian.

Following a private funeral on Friday 5 September, many of David's friends joined his family at Denbigh town hall for a celebration of his life.

Members of David's family and his friends spoke on themes in David's life: his early days in Llanrwst, family life, work, Plaid Cymru, Canolfan Iaith Clwyd and Cymru Cuba.

Apolo Santana of Clwyd Latin America Human Rights Group wrote afterwards:

*Denbigh town hall was highly charged with emotions as friends and family paid their respects to our dear friend and comrade David Jones.*

*As his family succinctly put it: "Don't mourn, organise!" as the best way to honour a life full of service to others.*

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