

Heritage of International Volunteering

International Volunteering organisation UNA Exchange has been based at **Wales' Temple of Peace** since 1973 – set up in parallel with the **Welsh Centre for International Affairs**.

It built on the successes of the post-WW2 International Youth Service (IYS), developed through UNA – The **United Nations Association** – and has evolved into one of Wales' most respected volunteering charities, with a strong focus throughout its history on **social inclusion, intercultural learning, understanding and skills for global citizenship**.

UNA Exchange Today



Recent UNA Exchange Volunteers undergoing pre-departure training at the Temple of Peace

UNA Exchange offer opportunities for volunteers to undertake short term and long term **overseas placements** worldwide; to participate in exchange **workcamps in Wales** and **work experience placements** hosting international volunteers from many nations

annually; and to **search for projects** with specific countries or themes. UNA Exchange work through partners in the **Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations** and **CCIVS – the Global Coordinating body for International Voluntary Service Organisations**.

From 2020, **WCIA and UNA Exchange merged** in order to 'pool resources' so that we can maximise the opportunities for future generations to benefit from international volunteering. WCIA are inviting past, present and prospective future volunteers to contribute to our Review on the Future International Volunteering, and also to contribute towards our shared Peace Heritage – the personal stories and experiences that celebrate the impact of UNA Exchange on successive generations of young people in engaging with the wider world.

Origins: Post World War 2 Reconstruction

The first international volunteers workcamp in Wales was organised in 1932 by the Quakers, working with local community residents in Brynmawr to build a swimming pool.

UNA Exchange's roots lie in the post-World War Two European reconstruction programmes that were developed from the late 1940s, through the UNA-UK International Youth Service (IYS), based in London. UNA Wales played a tremendously

active role in IYS, in particular leading many Welsh workcamps hosting international volunteers from around the world.

When IYS decided in 1973 to stop their UK-wide workcamp programme, UNA Cardiff activist and local architect **Robert Davies** – supported by many others – set out to establish ‘UNA International Service Wales’ – which grew from strength to strength.

- [View ‘A short history of UNA Exchange’](#)



1932 Brynmawr Workcamp with Welsh local children and Pierre Ceresole, *Service Civil International Workcamps* Founder from France



1950s Austrian workcamp aiding post-WW2 community reconstruction

A ‘Timeline’ of UNA Exchange

- 1932 – First international volunteering workcamp in Wales organised in **Brynmawr by the Quakers**, working with **Service Civil International** Founder Pierre Ceresole.
- 1946 – **UNA-UK** and **UNA Wales** founded to build on the work of the pre-WW2 **League of Nations Union** movements.
- 1964 – **International Workcamps** organised annually in Wales by UNA-UK International Service, through UNA Wales.
- **1973** – **Founding of UNA International Service (Wales)** founded by Robert Davies
- 1982 – Founding member of **Alliance of West European Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisations**; first UNAIYS staff member.
- 1987 – Started Wales-wide **Community Volunteering Programmes**
- 1988 – Creation of **Wales National Garden of Peace** (below) by UNA Exchange volunteers
- 1991 – Fall of **Berlin Wall and end of Cold War** led to major changes in volunteering landscape and mobility
- 1994 – First **South-North Exchange** Programme with Uganda, expanding to many project partners in the Global South.
- 1995 – Developed Wales-wide **Workcamps with Local Authorities**, starting in Pembrokeshire
- 1997 – Start of **EVS European Voluntary Service**;

- 1998 – Devolution and creation of **National Assembly for Wales** led to increased support for youth skills development and volunteering.
- 2000 – **‘UNA Exchange’** name supersedes UNA International Youth Service; expansion in Temple of Peace.
- 2004 – **Global Education Project** enables over 1500 young people to participate in South North Placements.
- 2005 – **Make Poverty History** campaign involved many returnee international volunteers as ‘ambassadors’
- 2014 – **Austerity** cuts lead to focusing of UNA Exchange programmes, and partnership with WCIA’s HLF-funded **Wales for Peace** project.
- 2020 – **WCIA and UNA Exchange merge**, post-Brexit, to champion **Future for International Volunteering** between Wales and the World.
- **2023** – Will mark the **50th Anniversary** of WCIA and UNA Exchange.



1988 Press Cutting about UNA Exchange Peace Garden ‘workcamp plans’ (with then-Executive Officer Sheila Smith on LH)

Wales’ National Garden of Peace, 1988



1988 Peace Garden project volunteers with Robert Davies

Founded in 1988 by UNA Trustee Robert Davies – an **International Youth Service (IYS) volunteer** since the 1950s – **Wales’ National Garden of Peace** was created by a series of international exchange youth work camps to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Temple of Peace in 1938, and to celebrate the values of the United Nations.

International volunteers from all over the world (including 1 from Russia, then still in the **Cold War**) dug out and landscaped the space, planted the first trees, and – around a central flagpole – laid a mosaic designed around the UN blue laurel and dedicated to the ideals of the **United Nations**.

In November 2018, as part of [#Temple80](#), WCIA organised a [#Temple30 family fun day](#) to mark the 30th anniversary of the Garden of Peace – at which founder Robert Davies joined with primary school children from Roath Park Primary to bury a time capsule, led by 8 year old Lexi Tsegay.

International Youth ‘Peace Camps’ with WCIA, 2015-20



2015 Peace Garden project volunteers

Between 2015-18, working with [UNA Exchange](#), Wales for Peace supported three ‘Peace Camps’, bringing international volunteers together with youth volunteers from across South Wales to work on the peace garden. These can be viewed from links below

- **2015:** with UNA Exchange Welsh and [International volunteers to rejuvenate Wales’ Peace Garden](#); Photos from [Peace Garden Workcamp, Summer 2015](#) and [Mosaic Workshops](#).
- **2016:** with Riverside BME Women [Growing Peace Stories youth exchange workcamp](#), August 2016; and [‘Growing Peace Stories’ blog](#).
- **2017** with Urdd Gobaith Cymru youth volunteers [Peace & Goodwill blog](#) and [2017 Workcamp Volunteers’ Blog](#)
- **2020** with Grayhill Conservation Group [‘Living History Week’](#)