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Chwefror 2023



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comprising the parishes of Clydau, Llanglydwen,
Llanfyrnach, Llanwinio and Mynachlog-ddu

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St. Valentine

Cylch y Frenni Circle of Churches Clydau, Llanglydwen, Llanfyrnach, Llanwinio and Mynachlog-ddu

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY 2023

1st Feb – Bro Preseli 10.15 CC/EL/JW

5th Feb - The Third Sunday before Lent

PLACE	TIME	SERVICE	
Llanglydwen	9.30	Holy Eucharist	CC/JW
Llanwinio	9.30	Boreol Weddi	PH
Llanfyrnach	11.15	Holy Eucharist	CC/EB

12th Feb – The Second Sunday before Lent

Llanwinio	9.30	Holy Eucharist	CC
Clydey	11.15	Holy Eucharist	CC/EL
Llanfyrnach	11.15	Morning Prayer	EB

19th Feb – Sunday before Lent Transfiguration Sunday

Llanwinio	9.30	Boreol Weddi	PH
Mynachlogddu	11.15	Holy Eucharist	CC/JW

26th Feb – First Sunday of Lent

Llanwinio	9.30	Holy Eucharist	CC/PH
Llanfyrnach	11.15	Holy Eucharist	CC/EB
Clydey	11.15	Morning Prayer	EL

Editorial

I would like to start my first contribution to Grapevine by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. I have now been at the Cylch y Frenni group for three months and I am still enjoying meeting new people in this area. As some of you will know I am from St. Clears but my family are originally from the Cwmfelin Mynach area and I have some family in Crymych. I have also met up with people that were with me in Whitland Gram, many years ago.

My first Christmas did not go as planned. The weather up to Christmas was terrible and icy conditions meant that many of our scheduled services and concerts had to be cancelled due to safety issues. The big thaw caused problems for many with burst pipes, flooding and fallen ceilings. For me it was a flooded boiler which was fixed on Christmas Eve.

I have started regular home visits to anyone who would like me to call, whether connected to our churches or not. If you, or anyone you know would like a home visit, please get in touch.

We will soon be approaching the period of Lent, when we begin our preparations for Holy Week and Easter. This year, we will have Lenten meetings at the vicarage in Crymych on Wednesdays at 2pm starting on 22nd of February. Please join us for a cuppa and cake while we prepare for this special time.

To those that I have not yet met, I hope to catch up with you soon. Have a blessed 2023.

Rev'd Carol

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Assistant Priest Dr Canon Jeni Parsons

Lay Worship Leader Mr. Nathan Jenkins
eastlandsker.com

Services in February

Sunday 5th	Septuagesima		
9.00 am	Holy Communion	St David	KT
11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Brynach	JP
Sunday 12th	Sexagesima		
11.00 am	Matins	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Morning Prayer	St David	NJ
2.30 pm	Holy Communion	Cyffig	KT
Sunday 19th	Quinquagesima		
9.00 am	Holy Communion	St Tysilio	KT
11.00 am	Matins	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Morning Prayer	St David	NJ
4.00 pm	Holy Communion	St Brynach	KT
Sunday 26th	Lent I		
11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Matins	St David	NJ
2.30 pm	Evensong	Cyffig	KT



Happy New Year from Richard and Elizabeth Law



Members of St. Clears and District Walking Group at Stepside on the 18th of January

Lent

In the new lectionary the –gesimas are only a footnote, the Sundays are now so many Sundays before Lent. This throws us straight from Epiphany into pre-lent which means Easter is only round the corner, can we not even have a break to catch our breath? I have always felt the church year runs away with time but I am feeling it particularly now. Well, Lent is almost upon us so let us prepare to prepare, it is a time when we consider our relationship with God, the sort of people we are, and is there anything we need to put right especially in our dealings with others. But we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves, we are human and we live in this world with its pressures and concerns. And what will I give up for Lent? The same as I always have.

In Memoriam

Our sympathy to the family and friends of Huw Windsor Evans who died sadly in November and his Funeral took place on Monday 19th December at Parc Gwyn. He was a quiet presence in the town and is sadly missed.

Also to the family and friends of Margaret Hannah Thomas who passed away peacefully on Saturday 17th December and her Funeral took place on Friday 30th December at St Mary's and Soar Cemetery. So many people have fond memories of her.

And to the family and friends of Benjamin Gwynfor Thomas Phillips who passed away peacefully in December and his Funeral was on Tuesday 3rd January at St. Mary's and Parc Gwyn. Ben was a quiet man and he will be sadly missed.

Kingsley

Ciffig

Good Heavens! Is it February already? I think this year is going as fast as 2022.

The weather is a source of deep discontent for me, the wind and rain seem to be incessant. We are constantly emptying the buckets in the Vestry.

Roll on Summer, then we can hold a Coffee Morning!!!

Our thanks to Revd. Kingsley who seems to be putting our Spiritual needs ahead of his own health at present, so we hope this year will be a good one for him.

Best wishes to everyone not feeling so well as they'd like to be.

And please may we have some Sunshine! Amen.

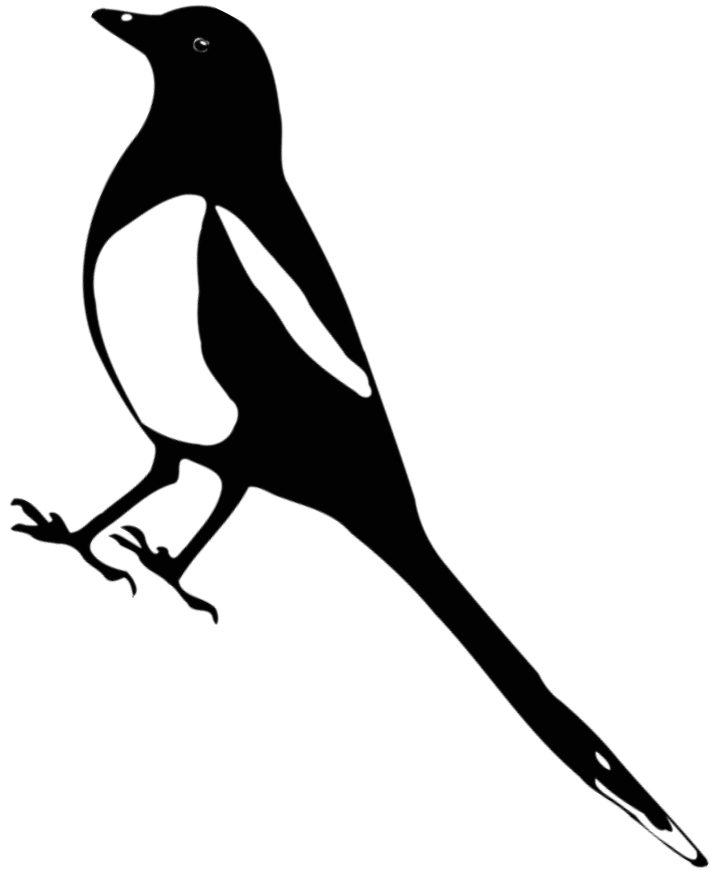
Lynn Werrett

MAGPIES

Along the road the magpies walk
with hands in pockets, left and right.
They tilt their heads, and stroll and talk.
In their well-fitted black and white

They look like certain gentlemen
who seem most nonchalant and wise
until their meal is served - and then
what clashing beaks, what greedy eyes!

But not one man that I have heard
throws back his head in such a song
of grace and praise- no man nor bird.
Their greed is brief; their joy is long.
For each is born with such a throat
as thanks his God with every note.



Judith Arundell Wright, Australian poet 31.5.1915 - 25.6.2000

Environmentalist and campaigner for Aboriginal land rights.

Poem submitted by Lynn Werrett

ALL ROADS ARE NOT THE SAME

One of the most dangerous ideas in the realm of religion is often expressed like this: "We're all striving for the same place. So long as a person is Sincere and practices his faith, he will find God and heaven." No Christian should ever say this, for it is the same philosophy as that of a pagan priest who said, "There are many paths leading up the mountainside. Take whichever you please, and eventually we will all reach the top and view the moonlight together."

It sounds nice, but it is contrary to what the God Who made us has said. He revealed Himself through His Son Jesus, Who said, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3) He said

more: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me." (John 14:6)

If you are depending on being religious to insure your place in heaven, you are depending on yourself and what you can do. If so, you will fail, for you cannot save yourself. There are many religions in the world, and all of them are the work of men and women, except one, the Christian faith. Some offer beautiful teachings, impressive rituals and a happy fellowship, but only one is God-given, and that is God's Self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

In the beginning God and humanity were in union in the Garden of Eden. When people sinned against God they were separated from God. There was no way for them to get back to Eden, but there was a way for God to bring them back. He did this by sending His Son Jesus into the world to provide a bridge from us to God, a means of forgiveness, redemption and restoration.

We must cross that bridge on two spiritual legs: repentance and faith. We repent when we turn from our own way and renounce our sins, and we exercise faith when we accept the sacrifice of Christ for us on the cross and commit ourselves to Him forever. The only road that leads to heaven is the Jesus road. If you are travelling another road in life, it is time to change to the right road. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Entrust your life to Him.

Chris Rees, Minister, Bethesda Baptist Church

St Clears and District Gardening Club

The Club held the Cheese and Wine and Big Raffle meeting on Monday 9th January, having postponed it from December due to adverse weather conditions. Chairman Nancy welcomed Mr Huw Davies as the guest speaker. He had brought along a collection of small antiques and artefacts, to make a quiz. Teams had to try and identify the objects. The next meeting will be on Monday 13th February at 7.30 pm in the Scout Hall when the speaker will be Roddy Milne, Head Gardener at Picton Castle. All existing and new members will be warmly welcomed.

Llangynin Gardening and Nature Group

The group held its Annual General Meeting and social evening on Wednesday 4th January. Chairman Anita Jennings welcomed fifteen members. Following the business meeting, at which Anita gave a Power Point presentation of all activities over

the last year, the committee all agreed to carry on. There was a buffet and the white elephant raffle which entailed some members having their raffle prize taken! The next meeting will be on Wednesday February 1st when Mark Underhill from the National Trust will be the speaker.

Time to Pray

*Heavenly Father; we pray bring us together under the wing
of your Lordship!*

*We pray for protection and Divine understanding from the Holy Spirit
that no evil influences will move into our Church gathering, protect us Lord
from false teaching, which may draw us away from Your true counsel.*

*Protect us Lord from the counterfeit, changes to Your Divine Word,
so that those seeking the truth will not be misled or confused
as to where the truth lies.*

*We pray Father that all people may come to know you as we know you;
that disunity and conflict may be swept away.*

*May Your eternal kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Be with us to-
day, and every day as we wait in anticipation for Your return. Amen.*

Lyn Bettinson

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Llanfyrnach

Janet and David Carter of Llanfyrnach Church have become great-grandparents as their granddaughter Ffion gave birth to a baby boy on 20th January 2023. Congratulations from the Grapevine!!

Sue Jones writes from Llanboidy -

Llanboidy Market Hall Hub - is open to everyone until further notice on Thursdays from 10 am until 5 pm - lots of activities to join in with or sit and chat over a cuppa and cake, read books and magazines, craft activities for all ages and After-school for children and teens.

Starting with:-

Craft club at 10.00 am to which all are welcome to join in or watch and learn new crafts, or just chat.

Lunch 12.30 pm

1.00 pm onwards - just call in for chat, crafts, books, TV, WiFi etc, to suit yourself

3.15 pm to 5.00 pm - After-school activities - this is not a crèche and adults need to be with children please .

This is all free and run by volunteers - if you want to help please pop in and make yourself known.

Great opportunity for us to socialise and meet old and newcomers to our locality after the difficulties of the past few years.

Llanboidy Market Hall Warm Hub



Ann Robinson, Eglwys Gymun, cutting her birthday cake (baked by Beryl Gibbin) at Afon Taf Gardening Club on the 19th of January. I don't think I am allowed to say which one it was, but it was a big one!!! Happy Birthday, Ann!

Llanboidy Market Hall Film Shows - please look out for posters around Llanboidy village and at Rodney's and on Facebook for future film showing - we have already had successful showing of Elf in December and the Cardi Bach railway in January, and more are planned.

'Ooh, I say!'

That's the line which greeted Barbara Windsor's wardrobe malfunction when (from behind) we saw the top half of her character's bikini pop off during an exercise class in the film *Carry on Camping*. It's the clip they always use on telly to prove how misogynistic we all were in the bad old late 1960s. But does it? It hasn't stopped anyone appreciating Ms Windsor's talent as an actor and her being made a Dame in 2016.

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The bit they never show from the *Carry On* series is the running gag where the Leslie Phillips's character spots a magnificent example of what it used to be OK to call 'feminine charms'. 'Ding dong!' he would exclaim, straightening his tie, and moving in for the attack. His victim would tolerate his chat-up for a few lines before delivering a stinging put-down – devastating, but always couched in a way which made it sound like a compliment. Then she would walk off, and Leslie's character would preen himself at his seeming success. Only gradually (and hilariously) did it dawn on him that far from the prospect of a blossoming romance his ego had been subtly but brutally squashed. But you don't hear cries of 'misandry' over that.

Then came the 80s, when there was a rash of ads on the telly in which a man would be portrayed as stupidly incompetent while some woman would roll her eyes indulgently and rectify his blunders. That's funny when it's part of a witty script for the television series *Not Going Out*; but when the humour is limited to a man walking into a lamp-post it's a bit – well, limited.

Don't get me wrong: I was a supporter of the Movement for the Ordination of Women in those bad old late 1960s, and in fact trained with one of the Movement's founder members. I rebelled hotly against a male-dominated institution which ignored a potential 50% of its work-force – not a defensible attitude for an organisation which lauded women's perceived superiority as carers and yet denied them advancement in a caring profession.

And this had been going on for years. My own mother's first Headmistress (sorry, Head Teacher) was a 'Lady Literate of Arts', simply because as a woman she wasn't allowed an MA degree by the University of St Andrews, founded in 1413 by Augustinian monks (and incidentally voted the UK's top university in a 2023 Guardian poll, ahead of Oxford and Cambridge). Nor was this kind of discrimination limited to women. My grandfather found it impossible to get a vicar's job in England because, coming from Scotland, he hadn't been to an English public school.

All this is very strange for an establishment which had been told by one of its founding fathers: 'In the Church there must be no racism, no class distinctions, no sexism' (Galatians 3.28).

Although no anthropologist, I can't help wondering whether this sort of behaviour originates from the time when our ancestors swung down from the trees, the females genetically programmed to care for the young while the males fought each other for dominance within the tribe and then led their fellows into battle with neighbouring groups to expand their range for huntin', shootin', fishin' and gatherin' nuts and berries. A sexist view? Perhaps it's what's really meant by *original sin* or *peccatum originis*, a fault arising from our origins. Whatever, in the light of the

current war in Europe it all sounds depressingly apt. I have a private view that since human females are widely noted for their collaborative skills, while males tend to be competitive, no-one ought to be allowed to be a world leader unless they're a woman. Although very-short-lived prime ministers might perhaps be excused consideration.

Talking of PMs, when Rishi Sunak assumed the role there was an on-air spat between the BBC's Economics Editor Faisal Islam and Uncle Huw Edwards over whether we should be making a thing about Rishi's being the first British Prime Minister of Indian descent. Faisal held we shouldn't. He wasn't given a chance to explain, but I suspect he would have said that in 2022 we ought to have got past remarking on skin colour. (After all, everyone is some shade of brown: no-one who is alive is actually 'white' or 'black'.)

And of course tribalism isn't confined to racial prejudice: look at the rivalry between Man United and Manchester City, and in Scotland between Rangers and Celtic and between Hibs and Hearts. Friendly rivalry it may be (well, mostly), but it's still tribalism, often with religious roots.

Thank God (and I mean that) our particular religion has grown out of its silly sexual prejudice (well, mostly). The General Synod of the Church of England – yes, a foreign body but an influential one – voted in favour of women bishops as long ago as 2014. Perhaps it won't be long before one of our nations has a female archbishop.

Ooh, I say!

Jonathan Copus

New Year's Honour for Hywel Dda UHB

Senior Chaplain, Euryl Howells

A chaplain who has given support to patients, families and NHS staff in times of great sorrow, joy and uncertainty has been awarded a King's New Year Honour.

Senior Chaplain for Hywel Dda University Health Board, Euryl Howells, has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the Chaplaincy in NHS Wales.

Rev. Howells, 63, said: "I am stunned and shocked to have received this honour. I am accepting it on behalf of all my NHS colleagues, as at the end of the day every one of them deserve this recognition, and also in thanks and remembrance to those people who have supported and mentored me.



“I don’t think I have done anything extraordinary. The meaning and whole idea of a chaplain is to shield and protect, to be a cloak, and that is what I see my role as.

“It is a privilege to give kindness and compassion to people, to listen to their story, and to be part of a multi-disciplinary team in the NHS to connect with people.”

Rev. Howells, a native of Newcastle Emlyn, started his career in banking with Lloyds TSB, but undertook his theological training more than 30 years ago. After serving in the parish of Llangeler, just outside Newcastle Emlyn for 10 years, he joined the then Carmarthenshire NHS Trust in 2002.

“I knew from my training that I wanted to work in healthcare as I had a mentor who has worked in this area and inspired me to be part of a multi-disciplinary team that provided emotional, psychological and faith-based support for patients, as well as mental and physical treatment,” he said.

Rev. Howells lives in Carmarthen with his wife, Rev Canon Ann Howells, who is ministry team leader for Bro Sancler.

He has had a rich vocation providing support to people across all hours of the day and in so many different circumstances, including, most recently, providing support to people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

G. Williams

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"The pandemic was such an unknown for us all, and for our healthcare workers particularly, there was fear of walking into that unknown and potentially putting their own families at risk from carrying out their vocation," he explained.

"However, we have been there for each other, across the NHS and with our partners from 999 paramedics, social workers, police, and third sector providers. We are so fortunate in our community to work alongside such dedicated and committed people all working hard to fulfil their roles to public service.

"And in these roles, we have walked alongside people when there has been a tragedy, such as an unexpected death, or supporting our overseas community for example when there have been disasters abroad.

"But there is also joy, including at end-of-life when we are able to support people's wishes, for example by facilitating a wedding. We also share in the hope and advancement that modern medicine and research brings, for example if a family has success with IVF where in the past, this chance would not have been there."

Officiating at the funerals of colleagues has been amongst the hardest roles Rev. Howells has had to undertake in his vocation.

“We cry together as a community but we celebrate together as a community also. We come together as a multi-disciplinary team to empower each other to carry out our responsibilities and try to make a difference,” he said.

Rev. Howells is the Wales lead on the Healthcare Chaplaincy Council for England and Wales and worked with the Welsh Government and other faith leaders, and those of no religion, as part of the Ceremonies Committee during the pandemic.

“The respect people of different beliefs, communities, and cultures, demonstrated to one another was humbling to see. We can label ourselves but we have more in common than not – we are all humans at the end of the day,” he said.

The New Year Honours List 2023 marks the incredible public service of individuals from across the UK.

Recipients in the New Year Honours List have been awarded for their outstanding contributions across all parts of the UK for their work on areas including sustained public service, youth engagement and community work.

Chair of Hywel Dda University Health Board, Maria Battle, said: “Euryl is an unsung hero, who has been a pillar of strength and support for our patients, their families and our staff for so many years and we are delighted he has been recognised with this BEM.

“The needs of people are rich and complex and we are so grateful to have the contribution of Euryl, and the wider chaplaincy team and people of other faiths and none whom they work closely with, to be able to provide spiritual guidance, pastoral care, and comfort, to people within healthcare when they need it.”



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CANOLFAN
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Warm room and free meal at Canolfan Hermon every Friday over the winter



The **Keep Warm Keep Well** initiative in Pembrokeshire has provided funding for community halls and venues to offer a warm space for people to meet up and socialise over this winter, and also some of the venues offering a free meal to locals. The Warm Room initiative in Hermon has been initiated by a group of volunteers and the grant bid submitted by Cris Tomos - chair of Crymych Community Council. Cris explained, "This initiative has received funding from the Keep Well Keep Warm funding for Pembrokeshire and we at Canolfan Hermon have teamed up with Fairfield Catering in Crymych to offer a free meal each Friday at 12 noon in the hall in Hermon" Cris added "Everyone is welcome and it is an opportunity to address the costs of living crisis as well as ensuring people socialise and discuss current issues affecting their day to day lives. People who can afford to donate some funds will then help the project continue past the end of March end date and allow the project to continue into April, May and June in 2023". Anyone interested in a meal need to contact Cris Tomos on 07974 099738 or email info@canolfanhermon.org.uk before 8.00 pm on the Wednesday prior the meal to confirm booking and the choice of meal and pudding. Cris concluded. "I have also been successful with funding for a Warm Room and free meals at Seion



Chapel Vestry in Crymych itself. There is a supporters' meeting on Thursday the 29th of December at 2.00 pm to prepare for the meals in Crymych every Thursday at 12 noon from January 2023 onward. But we need help in co-ordinating the cleaning, washing up and collecting orders for the Crymych venue. If you can help please come to the meeting or get in touch".

More information about the pan Pembrokeshire initiative can be found on www.connectpembrokeshire.org.uk/pembrokeshire-community-hub or by calling the help line on 01437 723660.

St. Mark's Gospel

The Venerable Paul Mackness urged us toward greater Biblical literacy in a landmark sermon while covering Cylch Y Frenni's interregnum, and then made every sermon thereafter count toward that objective. I have written about the Gospels and the dating thereof more from a position of faith than academic training, while Jonathan Copus was strongly academic in his interpretation of much of the New Testament in Bible studies and sermons.

I tended to mistrust that position to the extent that those dating theories are based on what is in the Gospels without consideration of what is missing and why. What I do not like is the void between New Testament events and the dates ascribed to Gospels. Academia requires that everyone who could write about Jesus refrained from doing so for some forty years after the Gospel events.

Ken Davies A'i Fab

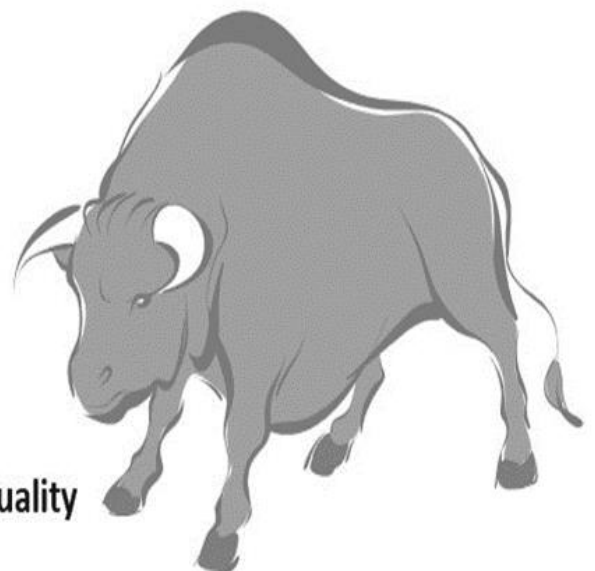
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Dating events, at least within a time frame, can be done from sources other than the Bible. The first problem is the dating system. Mr. B Kenney, of Georgetown, Indiana, explains that ***“the BC/AD system was invented by a monk named Dionysius Exiguus who was trying to establish a Christian chronology; before his time one had to use some system more or less tainted with paganism, such as the AUC system (from Rome's foundation) or consular dating (“the year when X and Y were [Roman] consuls” - by the sixth century of our era there had been more than a thousand pairs of consuls, which had to be memorized in order). Dionysius calculated that the year in which he worked was the 533rd since the birth of Christ, so he designated it AD 533 (or AD DXXXIII). It took some time for Dionysius' scheme to catch on. Bede is the first writer other than Dionysius himself to use it; he dated one of his works AD 704.”***

Dionysius was a ‘Roman’, writing in Latin and using Roman ‘numerals’ – I, II, III, IV, V, X, L, C, D, M & V. The Romans had no concept of ‘zero’ and thus had no sign for it. Indian mathematicians came up with ‘zero’, which was passed on to Arab scholars from whom Italian Mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci (1170-1250) cribbed it via the Knights Templar. They created the first European version of Western Union for banking and moving money around because they had people – Jews- in every country in Europe, who spoke a common language – Hebrew – and used a nice, simple mathematical system of Arabic numerals: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. A literate people, as we know from the Bible, with an international language and a good accounting system.

Back to Dionysius; he did not put a year dot (or zero) between 1BC and 1AD because he did not have one. In 2000, millions of us celebrated the millennium all around the world, after which a stunned Australian Parliament was told they had it all wrong and had celebrated a year too early. The Australian solution was to do it all again in 2001, bigger and better, thus putting one of the Roman monk’s errors right.

There were others, however using the BC/AD system, Herod the Great was born in 72BC. Sources disagree on when he died – 4BC, or 1BC. Either way, he was still alive for the wise men (?!) to ask him how they were to find his successor and died, according to Matthew, shortly after Jesus was born.

Robert Bauval, quite the most thoughtful New Age writer on the correlations between the starry heavens and the goings on at ground level, came up with a conjunction of the planets in 7BC as a candidate for the star of Bethlehem. OK, it took Marco Polo three years to get to China from Italy so wise men from the far east could take as long to get to Judea to meet Herod before he died. That theory had been around for centuries. Academia tends toward thinking that Matthew made it all up in the second century to link Jesus to the Old Testament prophecies.

Caesar Augustus, mentioned in Luke's Gospel, reigned 27BC-14AD, so he is of no help for narrowing Jesus down; nor, at first sight is Luke's mention of the census of Quirinius. He really gets academics going with all sorts of ways of reconciling what Luke says to the historical record, such as it is.

At the other end of Jesus' life – his death and resurrection – we have Pontius Pilate, in office in Judea 26-36AD and Caesar Tiberius reigning 14-37AD. Luke says John the Baptist started his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius, or 29AD, so if Jesus was at the front of the queue for baptism, he would have been aged 30-33 at the time. If you allow John the Baptist a year to get onto Herod Antipas's 'to do in' list and three years for Jesus' ministry, his crucifixion is 33-34AD.

Academia then assumes everyone in the Middle East who could write about these events failed to write anything for several decades. So how did Josephus, writing in the 90s AD know about Jesus and his brother James? One academic answer is that the references were added to Josephus later, implanted in the 2nd Century.

The problem with that, points out papyrologist Carsten Peter Thiede, is that the two references are in *every* copy of Josephus handed down to us from antiquity. Prior to

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printing presses, everything written started out as a single document that was copied by scribes. The process went on for centuries and copyists had to be accurate.

There is some evidence to suggest that copyists were not themselves literate. You could have fifty scribes in a scriptorium with someone at the front shouting out the letters for them to draw. If somebody took one copy of Josephus and embellished it, his doctored copy would be different to all the others and then there would be variations in circulation.

The most ancient text I have experience of is the epic of Gilgamesh, which in written form dates from about 3,000 years ago. Two things stand out from the text: one is that it was written to be read aloud and the other is that there is much repetition in the text, *like a chorus*. I can imagine an orator reciting it and the audience joining in those bits. If anyone doctored the text, everyone would notice.

The same can also be said of the Old Testament. There is textual evidence for the amalgamation of sources, such as in the Noah's ark story. You can read alternate verses and still get the whole story. That is because 'editors' could not leave anything out, and by extension could not add anything either.

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Christmas morning's Holy Eucharist at St. Clydai was well attended and badly photographed. Being in the northern hemisphere, the sun rises south of east and sets south of west, marking due south at 12 noon local time. Which is about when this photo was taken: sunshine blasting in through the south window giving everyone ducking away from the camera a halo. Now the nights are drawing out and the sun gradually rises a bit more to the north each day. By mid summer it will shine through our east window, but too early for us to enjoy.



I did headline this essay as being about St Mark's Gospel and I mentioned Jonathan Copus. He sent me a copy of Eugene Boring's commentary on Mark in hope of lifting my academic appreciation of that holy book. St Mark's Gospel is, by the common consent of academia, the first Gospel – of those handed down to us - to have been written.

The dating evidence is based on what is in it: in chapter 13, Jesus predicts the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, wars, earthquakes and famines – all of which happened in the Roman world in 60-70AD and academia does not believe that the 'prophesies' could have been written *before* the events.

Every one of you could have predicted a sticky end to Boris Johnson's premiership *because it was inevitable*. The last Prime Minister to leave office with his head held high and on his own terms was Harold Wilson in the 1970s, so predicting Boris Johnson's downfall would not have been that difficult: what would be difficult, is predicting *when* and in that department, Gospel writers are authentically vague, whereas someone writing after the events could be more accurate and precise.

I am confident that versions of the gospels had early dates and were lost during the persecution of Christians, started by Emperor Nero in 64AD; and then the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and its library in AD70. Gospel writers all mention 'scribes' at the Temple along with other classes of officials; they must have been busy doing something.

In 79AD the volcano Vesuvius erupted, burying Pompeii and Herculaneum. In the latter, some 1,800 scrolls were found in one house. The pyroclastic materials that smothered this little seaside town preserved ordinarily combustible materials including paper and wood. The scrolls cannot be read, having shrivelled up and carbonized in the heat – technology may unravel them eventually – but my point is that if one house could have a library larger than most of us have today, just imagine the scale of the Jerusalem Temple library.

My co-author Peter Brookesmith (three books and numerous articles together) presented the view that 'biography' was an exclusively Jewish genre, citing what the Bible has to say about King David. As a genre it had no gentile followers - they liked autobiography as exemplified by Julius Caesar's writings. On his reasoning, and with St. James and the non-St.-Paul side of the church being Temple based, that library would have been collating what was circulating about Jesus post crucifixion. Paul, the loose cannon, was writing and circulating material all around the Roman Empire while Jerusalem was not. After James was murdered in 62AD and the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, the Pauline doctrines were out there, counterbalanced by the negative reputation Christianity was getting through setting Rome alight and not paying taxes.

The 2nd century sees 'biography' gaining traction as a genre. Suetonius published his lives of the 12 Caesars in 121AD: chicken or egg? He might have sparked interest in other writers to bring the real Jesus out of the shadows of Pauline theology, or the other way about. The diaspora after 70AD might have been trying to reconstruct what had been lost.

My brother Simon, a clerk in holy orders in Essex, mentioned that the two details giving the Gospels late dates were prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem are much easier to write after its happened and the absence of references to the Gospels by early Christian writers. In the latter, disinterest in the biography genre may be to blame. Old Testament 'history' does not advance theology. I studied history in school and Sunday school without anyone ever ascribing any motivation towards those who went out conquering the world. I have no idea why Alexander the Great invaded India; they all seem to do it 'because they could' and all biography fights shy of telling us why they did anything.

Jesus, in the Gospels, has no beef with Rome; his struggle was with the Temple autocracy. St. Paul was the one rubbing Rome up the wrong way. I never did quite get why Simon Peter went to Rome in the first place. Paul was the one advocating the recruitment of Gentiles to the Christian church, whereas those who knew Jesus – led by James – held the position that the redemption Jesus brought was for God's chosen people – the Jews.

Peter, going to Rome, seemed to represent either a split between he and James, or ambassador work for James; Peter being sent to rein Paul in. Another new age writer – Graham Hancock – wrote that Galilean salted fish was a delicacy in Rome and he presented Peter – the big fisherman – as being in Rome promoting his wares and

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telling his Gospel as well. St Mark's Greek is not academic and reads somewhat like somebody writing down what Peter was saying in the lingua franca of the Middle East.

Which is such a long introduction to a book review that we'll keep the review itself for next time!

Richard Law

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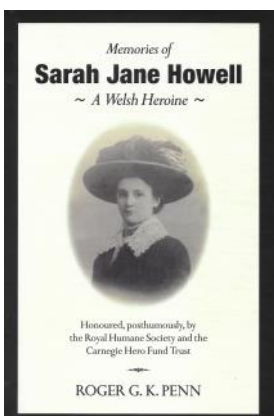
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Memories of Sarah Jane Howell—a Welsh Heroine

Chapter 2

Family Life at Abergarw Farm



Sarah Jane grew to enjoy country life amongst all kinds of animals from an early age. Abergarw, a typical and modest farm of the day, compensated for its lack of size by way of activity, with cattle, sheep, pigs, horses and poultry of all kinds playing their part, as well as the growing of potatoes, vegetables and some hay and grain. Such was the nature of the day's smaller holdings, and so productive, yet only a part of old-time farming's cycle of

reproduction that saw waste fed back into the soil, making it fertile for future growth. For Sarah Jane, the lambing season brought great interest. At a time when green shoots and buds coloured the hedgerows and heathers, it was a joy to see these four-legged friends bouncing around in a seemingly endless world of play.

At a young age, Sarah Jane, like most farmers' daughters, played her part in the hen-house activities, which involved searching for eggs before jumping aboard the open cart with her mother or uncle to make deliveries. These comical birds, which move around with deliberate steps and scrape the earth for grubs, brought much amusement at feeding time, racing forward in one mad dash, often airborne, to avoid missing out. And when the egg basket started to fill, it meant another journey for Sarah Jane. More importantly, when returning from the local markets, she had usually gained a small coin to save or spend.

The harvesting of fruit and nuts also brought rewards for a growing child whose personality blossomed on the hillside slopes of her native farm. But it was whilst enjoying the attention of her family that another event gave her young existence greater meaning: this being the birth of her sister, Katie, in 1893. Little kept the two apart, Sarah Jane attending to her needs and enjoying the privileges that came with being an elder sibling. Seeing Katie grow from a baby chuckling, cheerfully, in her cot, to a not so tiny toddler, filled Sarah Jane with duty and pride, as Katie's daughter, today's Janet Moody, explains:




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When my mother was born, Sarah Jane's world changed completely. She was no longer the smallest in the household and she developed protective instincts of her own. As a caring person, this is where it all began; it was the start of the road for her. The two girls were always close and, living on the farm, the fields became their playground. From day-one they both enjoyed nature, especially herbs and flowers. Michaelmas daisies and cowslips and all the usual flowers were growing on the bank outside the farmhouse.

They were both attracted to the colour and little stopped them from tearing the flowers' heads from the top of their stems. This was as much as they could manage with their small fingers, of course, and, from all accounts, they did a good job of depleting the front garden of much colour. But their love of flowers became more purposeful in later years. They were forever making floral arrangements, putting them into pots and jugs to decorate the house.

From those early days, the two infants shared all they possessed: from secrets and stories to clothes, books, everything, as Janet recalls:

They had to; nothing went to waste. They also slept in the same bedroom. When I look at old pictures of the farmhouse, it was a long, white-washed building, but it was also narrow. There was not a lot of room, especially when the family grew bigger.

There was a wide gate leading into the yard and then a couple of steps went down to the dwelling. As far as I could see it was more-or-less joined to the barn as one structure. The fields went back to the high levels behind these buildings, into the distance. The village was full of small farms, dozens of them, dotted everywhere. The fields were often no bigger than little paddocks and each holding was self-sufficient.

During wet weather, the Ogmores river which ran through Abergarw's lower fields became fast-flowing and deep, but the girls knew of its dangers. Besides, the river wasn't that inviting for them because this is where the cattle went for water, at least twice a day at the end of milking. Half the time the small herd stood right in the middle of it; so the river was muddy and murky, not the best of places to play.

All the family were thrilled to see Sarah Jane and Katie playing with their cousins when they arrived from Bettws, only a few miles away into the countryside. The farm was a place of great activity and, oftentimes, neighbours called for a jug of milk or for a few eggs, as was accepted and so typical at the time. It was a case of share and share alike. If there were blackberries or hazelnuts to be picked, they would not remain in the hedges for long; they were soon gathered-in and enjoyed by everyone. Likewise, apples and seasonal fruits provided a feast for all, and this was to be expected when villagers helped to bring the hay harvest and other crops from the ripened fields.

Mynachlog-ddu's Christmas tree was taller than Elizabeth and Carol, pictured at the Christmas Eve Mass. We missed Sharon Edge – still off sick and in our prayers, as last time we had a service in the dark there, she put fairy lights by the slippery path to the church door. Without her, it was a torchlight procession.



With responsibility for the animals and crops, Sarah Jane's uncle, Jenkin, spent most of his time on the farm, and such was his laid-back manner that he was never in too much of a hurry. Janet explains the importance of Jenkin to his young nieces:

He was the mainstay of the family. Every other word [from the girls' mouths] was 'Jenkin.' He was their favourite person and they looked up to him. He'd take them round the farm and he'd persuade them to help: carrying feed, filling the water buckets, anything that they might enjoy whilst also making his own life easier.'

Not surprisingly, Jenkin's nature instilled confidence and this was to the great benefit of his nieces. They shared a lot of fun, especially as Jennet could be strict and George was often away from Abergarw at work. But neither parent failed to give their fullest personal attention to their daughters, as Janet knows well:

Correcting the children was left to their mother, who was known as Mumma. She was the disciplinarian. But I also know that their father, Duda, treated them in an adult way. He'd spend time sitting and reading with them, taking them aside. He was the one who passed on information, and education meant everything to him.'

It was their mother, however, who showed them how to bake tarts and knead the dough, resulting in the aroma of freshly-baked bread, which emerged from the fireside oven, built into the thick stone walls of the hearth. Preparing pots of broth, known as cawl, was another task: a regular and solid meal in the winter months, full of vegetables, onions and chunks of fatty meat. This is what kept the cold weather at bay, also silencing uncle Jenkin and his helpers when they arrived on the pantry doorstep at lunchtime.

Severe winters came with the need to chop potatoes and turnips for the cattle, just as the boiling of vegetable-peels fed the pigs. These amusing animals with floppy ears and studious expressions ate whatever landed in their troughs, causing their weight to teeter around the twenty-score mark, a considerable weight, when killed and salted during the colder months. This is when Jenkin separated the joints, dividing all amongst farmers who returned the compliment when their own swine went, in turn, the same way – so that pieces hung by skewered hooks from the dairy beams, one flitch besides another, mostly a mass of fat, broken by lean bacon streaks few and far between. Nevertheless, when important visitors such as the doctor or minister called, Jennet took delight in wrapping-up a few pieces as a treat for them to take home.

During these days of Sarah Jane's early childhood, there were casual workers helping on the Brynmenyn farms. Many were from Ireland, men who had in earlier years settled in the area following the potato famine in their native land. And there was the regular arrival and departure of travelling merchants, some of whom lodged on the farm. Janet continues:

I have a census confirming that a man from Carmarthen was staying overnight around the 1890s. He is described as a clothier and came round selling his wares. The family would buy reams of materials from him, because sheets, underwear and most items were handmade. According to my mother, these traders would stay a week or so, exploring the area, looking for business before moving on.

Cattle and fat stock marts at Bridgend, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major were now big events, as were the sheep sales, where farmers and herdsman directed the animals down winding lanes, often for many miles in all kinds of weather. Horse-drawn carts followed behind, bulging with homemade products such as baskets and blankets as farmworkers and country folk enjoyed their time together. And once the auctioneer's hammer had determined their destiny, there was time enough for a drink and fireside fellowship before the journey home.

This is where Jennet was hard at work: cleaning the farmhouse from the mud of dirty boots, arranging the grate, tending to the fires, dusting the furniture. Her tasks were never-ending as her niece, Janet, explains:

They had an old sideboard and rather a lot of china ornaments. Mumma was never idle and as soon as Sarah Jane was old enough she had her little jobs. Washing clothes by hand was a regular task. This was before they had a scrubbing board, when they used an old 'dolly.' I know this because it has since been given to me. It consists of a round copper object, which is attached to a long pole. They used to beat the clothes with this to remove the mud. Tubs of water were filled up in the dairy and they'd have some form of clothes line attached to the farmhouse. I imagine it to be an old rope propped up by a piece of wood. Uncle Jenkin was the practical one; he'd have arranged this.

The simple ways of life carried the day, yet no one could deny that farming had by now progressed steadily as modern practices, having survived strict scrutiny, were put in place. In *The Glamorgan Gazette*, regular advertisements offered the latest in chaff cutters, mowers, reapers, sheep racks and feeding troughs. Likewise, in the nearby market town of Cowbridge, the 'Eagle, Corn, Seed, Manure and Implements Store' was in demand, firmly at the forefront of every farmer's mind – as were the private loans, from as little as £3 and upwards, which tempted landowners such as Jenkin to spend. Progress had been steady and sure, rather like the farm horses: respected for their part in turning the wheels of agriculture and everyday life, uncomplainingly, for as far back as people could recall.

At home in Abergarw, Sarah Jane saw the horses as being an extension to the family, and their doleful-look, and loyal, hardworking nature made them much-loved. Her uncle, Jenkin, treated them as his trustworthy friends, ensuring they were well fed, watered and rested; regularly taken to farriers to be shod; given bedding in their

stables, and pampered with carrots and other treats. In return, they tackled all manner of work: transporting manure onto the land; dragging cutters and cultivators across the fields, and pulling cart-loads of produce into the stores. In fairness, they also knew the way home late at night, when their owners were too sleepy, or merry, to take to the reins.

In every respect, horses led the way and little moved without them. They featured at the annual Glamorganshire Ploughing Match at nearby Cowbridge and at the Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show – whilst at St Mary Hill, between Bridgend and Cowbridge, they provided every reason for one of the biggest fairs in the country. Each year, August 26th was a day to look forward to when horse dealers and traders arrived from far away, before having to climb narrow, twisting country lanes to an isolated mountain top location. It was there on a plateau-like summit overlooking Bridgend and distant counties – even beyond the Bristol Channel – that deals were made amongst the excitement of an action packed day. Tom Harry, who has lived his life near this famous old venue, and whose father remembers the fair during Sarah Jane's lifetime, has this to say:

St Mary Hill Fair was noted throughout Britain; it was the biggest horse fair of its kind and brought people in from everywhere, many from Ireland. They would arrive a week early, setting up camp, lighting fires and pitching tents on every spare patch of grass around the mountain. Twelve acres were set aside by the Radcliffe Estate and the entire area was packed on the big day. Besides serving the farming community, the fair was a special occasion for everyone. Horses were so important then and dealers were present from everywhere; they were all influential, big employers, often distinguished with long black frock-coats and bowler hats.

Tom is aware of a plaque, donated by Bernard Battrick from nearby Llangan, standing at the site of the old fairground, stating that the event originated way back in the fifteenth century. And, come what may, everybody arrived at this unique setting to enjoy themselves, despite commotion and controversy often forcing a way onto the scene. Police constables were known to be busy and fights would break out although most came and went without major disturbances. No one could forget these events, least of all Tom:

Any grudges were settled there and then, often in the middle of tight circles of onlookers who converged – as a human wall – around those involved. In later years cattle were also sold [adding more chaos to the day]. They'd arrive in rail trucks at Bridgend station and they'd be herded to the fairground. They'd pass along the same cluttered little lanes as the steam engines, beer carts, mares, ponies and all the crowds.

Understandably, the activities of this bumper day in August filled large columns in the local newspapers. *The Glamorgan Gazette* of April 29th 1890 stated that to be absent for St Mary Hill Fair 'would be to some people a never failing source of regret, a calamity in their brief existence.' Stating that it captured the interest of 'old and young alike,' the paper added that there are individuals who 'boast of having been present at every St Mary Hill Fair for the last fifty years' ... but would Sarah Jane have been amongst the masses when she grew old enough, one wonders? Well, Tom seems to think so:

It was a special day for all the family, for everyone; and people would dress up to go. They arrived to enjoy themselves. There'd be marquees and refreshments and food and beer; and sales of saddles and carts. There were boxing booths, and freeman's side-stalls and fairground attractions. Farm workers gathered in their droves, some found future work there, and they'd mix with the miners who didn't want to miss the day. They were there in great numbers, having booked a day's leave well in advance – many of them having jumping on to the back of a mare for a free ride to the ground.

All of this happened on a remote mountain-top where, in addition to the liquor tents, there were two special hostelries situated nearby. One was 'The Bell', a few hundred yards away from the fairground on the road returning to Bridgend, where the church yard next door provided rest for those who drunk themselves to sleep – whilst in the opposite direction, and a similar distance from the main venue, 'Yr Hen Dafarn' (The Old Pub) catered for the crowds returning homewards towards Llantrisant. Both inns enjoyed a bumper trade during the week of the fair – before the gatherings dispersed and life returned to its normal and more orderly pace.

And it was in a similar fashion, slow, steady and unhurried, that the days moved along at Abergarw, where Sarah Jane knew the meaning of hard work and being busy whilst seizing happiness along the way. Then, as in all households, when the busy week was over, Sunday became a celebrated day of rest. Lunch with vegetables and meat – both having been prepared the previous evening – were followed by a pudding, usually of fruits in a pastry tart, as formality and religion dictated the order of the day.

From a young age Sarah Jane was taken to Betharan Chapel, one of the oldest and most respected buildings in the village where, in Sunday school, she made friends as the seeds of later worship were sown. She, like members of her family, looked forward to this day, when black suits and hats were worn by men and mantle cloaks, capes and costumes by the Victorian women, with eye-catching bonnets and accessories. In time, Sarah Jane was introduced to Bible stories and readings and, from these early years, her disciplined and faithful behaviour was set in stone for life.

To be continued ...

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