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January
Ionawr 2023





Grapevine is published monthly by: Cylch y Frenni Circle of Churches



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

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Front Page: Miss Mathilda Phillips, aged 15, who is the granddaughter of Jean Phillips and Roy Phillips of Crymych, on her Confirmation Day in July 2022 at NACKA Church, Stockholm, Sweden.

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

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2023

There will be no services on January 1st

4th January 2023 Holy Communion Bro Preseli 10.15 CC/JW/EL

8th Jan The first Sunday of Epiphany - White

PLACE	TIME	SERVICE	
Llanwinio	9.30am	Holy Eucharist	CC
Clydey	11.15am	Holy Eucharist	CC
Llanfyrnach	11.15am	Morning Prayer	EB

15th Jan The second Sunday of Epiphany - white

Llanwinio	9.30am	Boreol Weddi	PH
Mynachlogddu	11.15am	Holy Eucharist	CC

22nd Jan The third Sunday of Epiphany - white

Llanwinio	9.30am	Holy Eucharist	CC
Llanfyrnach	9.30am	Holy Eucharist	CC
Clydey	11.15am	Morning Prayer	EL

29th Jan The fourth Sunday of Epiphany – white (5th Sun)

Clydey	10.30am	Holy Eucharist (joint)	CC
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EDITORIAL

Our Hope in a Changing world.

Seldom in the twentieth century have we seen such rapid and pervasive changes as we have seen in the past year. Such changes cause some persons to lose hope for a better world because of the increase of crime, the use of recreational drugs and the increasing violence around us. In an intriguing book entitled Profiles of the Future, Arthur C. Clarke prophesied that our expensive highway system will soon become obsolete, and the air lanes are already overcrowded.

There are others who view the future with paranoia and question whether our civilization can survive. It depends on a person's perspective whether he sees hope for our future. The late William Faulkner was lionized as a great Southern writer, but he was a pessimist. When he was on his way to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize for literature, he paused in New York long enough to express his lack of hope for our world and for people.

He said, "People have only one question in mind, 'When will I be blown up?' The questions of honour or no honour, courage or no courage, virtue or no virtue, don't exist." How sad it is for anyone to feel and express such lack of hope. We know that he was not right. He overgeneralized his own pessimism, and he was not thinking from the standpoint of the Christian faith. When anyone fails to take into consideration the power of God through human faith, he will miss reality.

The changes in Eastern Europe are things Faulkner never expected to happen. The moving of the superpowers toward the lowering of armaments and the effort to find ways to work together rather than to stand poised for war are something he never expected. In fact, he expected atomic holocaust long before the present.

Our hope in our rapidly changing world is not to be found, however, in the flowering of glasnost and the reappearance of democracy in many countries where dictatorship and repression have been the norm. It is to be found in the reality that spiritual things are indestructible, and in faith in the unchanging God: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever." Herein is our best hope. For those who place faith and trust in the Lord there is hope. In the book of Romans we read, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

Chris Rees, Minister of Bethesda Baptist Church, Narberth

Message from the Editor

May I please remind everyone that subscriptions for 2023 are now due.

Magazine prices remain the same as last year, that is £1.10 per copy or £11.00 for a whole year's subscription. We can also now offer postal copies for an extra £7.00. Please give your remittance to your church representative as soon as possible.

Advertising costs also remain the same, that is £45 p.a. for a quarter page ad; £75 p.a. for a half page ad. and £135 p.a. for a full page advertisement.

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Kathie Dubben, Myrtle Hill, Gellywen. Carmarthen, SA33 6DS

I also **desperately** need more contributions from you, dear readers! I am starting to struggle to fill the pages because of lack of contributions, and I would very much like to see this little magazine continue into the future, as I hope you would too.

Many thanks.

Kathie Dubben

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Members of Glandwr Women's Institute enjoying their Christmas lunch at Canolfan Hermon



Milking

We watch as mother leaves, bucket in fist –
the door slams shut on warmth and carpet world.

She treads compacted earth, layer upon layer
of leaves and moonlit stars and scattered frost.

Now soft warm goats press haunches in on her,
their heartbeats steady, familiar their scent.
Breath forms a cloud, low in the grain-dust air,
to melt the skin of ice on water-trough.

Her pallid fingers move, the milk comes down,
long blue-white threads sharp and as clean as silk:
it drums then splashes, on the top is froth.
Each time it's full she tips it in the churn.

Her task complete, indoors she kicks off boots
and pads to switch the kitchen light back on,
bathing the garden in a pool of gold,
ending our wait by coming back again.

Shadows shut out dissolve her children's fears.
Beyond the darkened stable stands on guard.
The Milky Way above and overflowing
empties all over us the moon and stars.

The Pew Poet, Janet Jackson

Clydau

Bwlchygroes Community Hall hosted a merry festive Christmas Tea on Saturday of December – almost over-subscribed despite the bitter weather with some fifty people in attendance to enjoy tea with all the festive snacky bits, each others' company, bingo and a raffle. The community has funds to help do these get-togethers for a hot meal, but the Kitchen has yet to be installed, hence this one was a 'tea'.

Writing something while we are all preparing for Christmas that will be read afterwards; before twelfth night we hope, recalled the preparations for the feast in other times and in other cultures. My brother is an urban clerk in holy orders and one year he arranged for his church's nativity scene models of Mary, Joseph and the donkey to process along the high street shop window to shop window, arriving at the church on Christmas Eve in time for midnight mass.

The shepherds joined the nativity scene from elsewhere in church the next morning and the wise men, who had been following the shop window trail somewhat behind the Holy Family, arrived for Christmas Sunday. It would not work here – not enough shop windows – but they can start from different points in church. Mary and Joseph travelled south from Nazareth to Bethlehem, while the wise men came from the east; the shepherds were there already but in the fields rather than in the nativity scene. It works if there are enough services...

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On Christmas Eve 1914, men of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) stationed on the front line in France heard German troops in the trenches opposite them singing carols and patriotic songs and saw lanterns and small fir trees along their trenches. Messages began to be shouted between the trenches.

The following day, British and German soldiers met in no man's land, exchanged gifts, took photographs and some played impromptu games of football. They also buried casualties and repaired trenches and dugouts. After Boxing Day, meetings in no man's land dwindled out.

This was expanded in the 2005 French film *Joyeux Noel*, directed by Christian Carion. In the movie, the Kaiser has sent Christmas trees, which were a German invention brought to the UK by Prince Albert, to the front line for Christmas. The exchange of carols starts with the



Germans, to which the Scottish soldiers opposite reply with bagpipes. It develops into a midnight mass in no-mans-land and draws on the concerns the high command on both sides had about soldiers fraternising. The film ends with the German unit being shipped to the eastern front, quietly singing to a tune they picked up from the Scots.

The Christmas tree made another appearance at the end of the Second World War when a handbook for British soldiers occupying Germany after VE Day told them that 'even old couples will have their tree...' as though Christmas in the UK was only for children.

It might have been then; none of us are old enough to say either way. Tradition in my childhood, which I presume my dad inherited from his parents, was to decorate on Christmas Eve and take the paper chains down on twelfth night after opening the Christmas tree presents. Public spaces and buildings, schools and shops sprouted trees and lights sooner, then as now. As a Saturday boy in Woolworths, my recollection is that Christmas appeared after Guy Fawkes night. Nowadays it feels sooner. When driving for DHL, I was delivering those big outdoor Christmas lights to garden centres in August.

The tree in Trafalgar Square has been a gift from Norway every year since 1947 – so celebrating its seventy-fifth appearance this year – a thank you for the UK's support for Norway in the war. And in the old days we used to gather by the tree on Christmas Eve to sing carols, led by the Salvation Army band who would hand you an illustrated

carol booklet on arrival for £1 and accept it back when you left.

Nowadays, choirs (minimum of 30) can book one-hour slots by the Norwegian tree throughout December with the Greater London Authority – which ***“reserves the right to amend, cancel or withdraw authorisation for carol singing and accompanying charity collections at any time.”*** All rather Teutonic, as befits the Christmas tree’s German origins.

We also got ‘Yuletide’ from them and the principle of the Yule log. At our latitude we get barely eight hours of daylight on the shortest day of the year – 21st December – and the further north one travels, the less it gets. Go far enough and the sun does not come up at all, which is why the northern cultures developed the fortnight-long staycation family Yule party. The Yule log was a suitable lump of timber added to a good fire in the evening. Putting a big log on an old fire near to bedtime means it will still be there next morning, only partially consumed. With the Yule log, it’s a case of repeating this each night until it’s all gone and then the party is over.

Evergreens have had a special place in European culture since before recorded history. Romans regarded such as symbolising life and decorated the dead with them for their funerals: Bay, Box Holly, Ivy, Olive and Yew were all used thus and still feature in churchyards. We’re a bit north of the olive line now but global warming may bring us back into civilisation. The Romans regarded north of the olive line as uncivilized, but in their day, Britain was warmer than now and they grew grapevines as far north as Peterborough.

Fir trees naturally occur further north, which is why Northman used them, with the Norwegian spruce – as seen in Trafalgar Square – being the most popular. Trees are adaptable; while as a farming community we understand that we are too far north to grow bananas and coffee and a bit south of where the best gooseberries grow, it’s a



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question of altitude as well as latitude. Every one of the United States, including Hawaii, grows its own Christmas trees. American movies about Christmas are usually set in the northeast, where dreaming of a white Christmas is not necessary as it happens every year. Christmas Day in Florida (we tried it in 2016) was an ordinary working day for everyone living there: restaurants and parks all open as normal. We overheard a waitress of Caribbean origin (in a restaurant next morning) that when she got home the night before her mum had the traditional Christmas feast prepared and ready, so in her household Christmas was just the feast. She didn't expand on what the feast consisted of, but the internet advises;

“Dinner is usually served in the late afternoon and this may include turkey, chicken, curry goat, stewed oxtail and very importantly rice and peas. Jamaican red wine and rum fruitcake is traditional and is eaten in most homes. The fruits in the cake are soaked in red wine and white rum for months before Christmas.”

Americans make more of Thanksgiving in November. That is like Christmas in principle as a family event but separated from the religious origins of Christmas. Christianity adopted December for Christ's official birthday as midwinter parties were already flourishing anyway, more so in the north than in warmer places.

Since Australia has its summer in our winter, their Christmas party is a beach barbecue – or so they tell us.

In Japan Christmas is a commercial event and the 'traditional' costume is the “minisukasanta,” – decorating young ladies as Santa rather than old men.





Rwenzori Medical Fund

Christmas 2022 and the New Year

Newsletter



Looking Back

This year 2022, in November, Mercy became a teenager! It doesn't seem all that long ago since we carried a sick disabled little girl into Doctor Sarah's Clinic whilst on holiday in Western Uganda. Before I had finished speaking the reception nurse had placed a thermometer under Mercy's arm and in a few minutes, we were sitting in front of Doctor Sarah's desk. A quick trip to the next room, the laboratory, and a spot of blood later and malaria was confirmed. After being treated, Mercy was admitted to a children's ward for the rest of the day. Further tests revealed that Mercy also had sickle cell disorder.

*Have a
Blessed Christmas
and a
Happy New Year.*

*Mercy, her
Grandmother
and the writer in
Dr Sarah's Fort
Portal Clinic.
November 2015.*



*One of Mercy's many visits,
to the X-ray Department.*

Mercy's overriding medical problem was that her leg bones were about to break through the skin of her stumps. This condition was beyond the scope of Doctor Sarah's Clinic; she would need to be admitted to CoRSU Hospital. CoRSU Hospital, based at Entebbe, was established in 2009 as a non-government hospital. CoRSU's aim is to mitigate the debilitating effects of disabling physical conditions. They are supported by CBM here in the UK and was exactly the kind of hospital Mercy needed. When we returned to Kampala/Entebbe to fly home, Mercy was well enough to travel with us to go to CoRSU Hospital for surgery. The fund continues to pay for treatment, travel to and from hospital and related expenses.

Education

Being able to walk on prosthetic legs made it possible for Mercy to attend school. The fund pays for Mercy and her foster siblings Betty and Keith to attend Green Circle Primary School. Betty and Keith have excellent reports. Mercy was late starting school and interludes to return to hospital for treatment hold her back. However, Mum Mary reports that she can read (English) fluently.

Lastly a big "Thank you" to friends and supporters who give generously in cash and in kind to the Fund. To those who have made purchases from our Craft stalls in England and Wales a big "thank you" also.



*Betty Keith and Mercy
ready for school.*



The Rwenzori Medical Fund, President: Judy Webb.
Ty Rhyddid, Tegryn, Pembs, SA35 0BL Tel. 01239 698405



The only difference Christmas Day brought to holiday guests in a Dominican Republic hotel was a massive fish fest feast.

Having had Christmas abroad, I prefer the staycation principle; family, the feast and exchanging gifts. As to whether the weather permits us to go to church, the 11th of December is too early for 25th December weather predictions.

Clydai's morning prayer was cancelled today due to fresh snow lying on sheet ice.

Richard Law

Llanwinio

St Gwinio's Church Llanwinio held a gift day on the 19th of November. Light refreshments were provided by the members resulting in donations totalling £900 to date. Many Thanks to all those who donated.

Barbara Howells

N°HBC **FMB**

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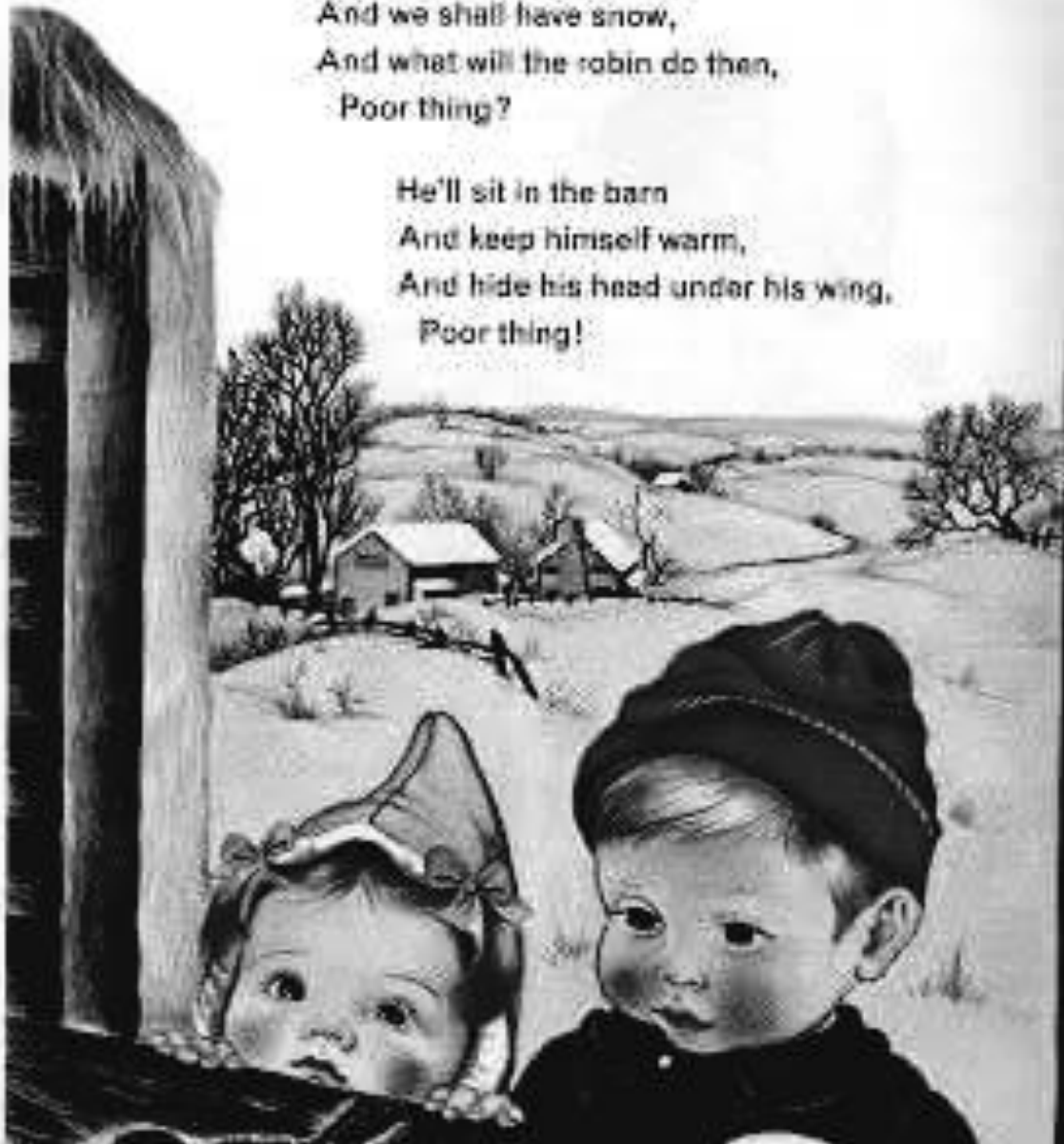
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The North Wind

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will the robin do then,
Poor thing?

He'll sit in the barn
And keep himself warm,
And hide his head under his wing,
Poor thing!



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The cost will be £6 for a home cooked lunch, pudding and tea
or coffee.

Everyone is welcome, but **please phone beforehand** so we know
how many people to expect.

Please phone Diana on 01239 612614 or Marie on 01239 698003.
VOLUNTEERS ALSO WELCOME!!

Ionawr 24 January 2023

Chwefror 28 February

Mawrth 28 March

Ebril 25 April

Mai 23 May

Mehefin 27 June

Gorffennaf 25 July

Medi 25 September

Hydref 24 October

Tachwedd 28 November



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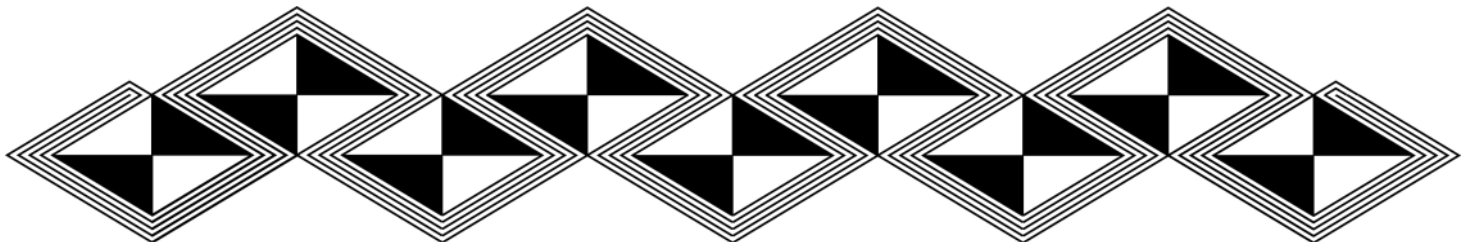
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Llanfyrnach

Sincere condolences go to the family of David Mansel Kaye Davies MBE of Cefn Mawr Farm, Crymych, who died suddenly at work on Saturday the 5th of November at the age of 86. Kaye was the devoted husband of Purita; loving father of Stephen and Shân and proud grandfather of Sasha, Scott, Jamie and Alex.

Davies David Mansel Kaye MBE

Yn sydyn ac yn annisgwyl, yn ei weithle, ddydd Sadwrn 5ed o Dachwedd 2022, hunodd Kaye o Fferm Cefn Mawr, Crymych. Priod ffyddlon Purita, tad cariadus Stephen a Shân, tadcu balch Sasha, Scott, Jamie ac Alex.

The milk tank driver who called at the farm on the Sunday could only utter 'He's gone, he's gone!' in disbelief.

After Kaye completed his National Service he joined the family haulage business which was started in 1875 by his great-grandfather, John. The company has been a goods and freight supplier since 1900, initially with horse and cart and then by truck.

Today it includes a Volvo dealership and fleet of over 150 trucks, employing over 300 people from a 25-mile radius of its headquarters at Llanfyrnach.

The public funeral was held at Parc Gwyn Crematorium, Narberth on the 12th of November. Rev. Huw George officiated. The eulogy was read by John Davies, Cwmbetws.

The funeral cortège was led by a lorry driven by the longest standing employee. It stopped in the yard at Llanfyrnach which was a place dearly loved by Kaye. Neighbouring haulage firms parked their lorries by the side of the road to the Crematorium in tribute.



Kaye Mansel Davies flanked by his son, Stephen (left) and Preseli Pembrokeshire MP Stephen Crabb at a Downing Street reception in 2016.



Joyce Williams, Llanfyrnach

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Deacon Reverend Sharon Edge

Assistant Priest Dr Canon Jeni Parsons

Lay Worship Leader Mr. Nathan Jenkins

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Services in January

Sunday 1st

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 8th

Epiphany I

11.00 am	Matins	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Morning Prayer	St David	NJ
2.30 pm	Holy Communion	Cyffig	KT

Sunday 15th

Epiphany II

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 22nd

Epiphany III

11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Matins	St David	NJ
2.30 pm	Evensong	Cyffig	KT

Sunday 29th

Epiphany IV

11.00 am	Holy Communion	St Mary	KT
11.00 am	Matins	St David	NJ

New Year

Almost everyone I speak to has asked where did 2022 go? In many ways it was a sort of no-mans-land of a year—we are not sure if the pandemic is officially over or what restrictions are still in place, and many are still wary about gatherings, and yet life has gone on as near as normal as is possible. The war in Ukraine has been a huge shock in so many ways and that still goes on too. December will probably be remembered for all the strikes and all the suffering caused by economic hardship.

However, you know me, I know things are going to turn out to the good, 2023 is going to be a good year when we learn to mix again, when we learn to laugh again. Last year saw the Way of the Cross Grand Tour, this year perhaps celebrating in the open air at sites of historical importance throughout the LMA to get the Church noticed. And, I am sure, a whole lot more.

In Memoriam

Our sympathy to the family and friends of Leslie Beaumont Rowlands whose funeral took place at St David's, Llanddewi Velfrey on 2nd December. In his quiet way Leslie was a presence in the area and will be sadly missed, especially by his family.

Kingsley

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Cyffig

We held our Carol Service at Cyffig on the 11th of December. Now to one who always leaves Christmas 'til the last minute, this was slightly early, but no less joyful! The day was bright and frosty and we had a joyful Service followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

Thank you to Revd. Kingsley who led the Service and provided the music, and to all the readers.

We are very happy to see Revd. Kingsley enjoying better health, and send our best wishes to Revd. Sharon hoping she will also soon be restored.

Also in our thoughts, Colin Beynon, Blaenwaun who has a nasty attack of Shingles.

Best wishes to everyone for a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthful New Year.

Lynn Werrett

Snow in the Suburbs by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute:
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back upward, when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and descend again.
The palings are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
And overturns him
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

Poem submitted by Lynn Werrett

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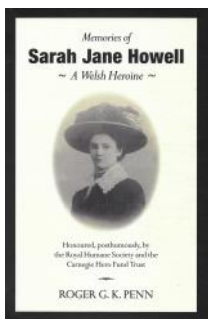
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Memories of Sarah Jane Howell - a Welsh Heroine

Roger Penn has agreed to the serialisation of his book, which tells the story of his father's aunty who lost her life in 1911 when helping to rescue a schoolboy who had fallen into the Llynfi river at Brynmenyn, north of Bridgend. For anyone interested in purchasing a copy, they are available in mainstream bookshops, online and from Roger.

A Village Welcome awaits Sarah Jane

Chapter One

SARAH JANE HOWELL was born on Saturday January 4th 1890 at Abergarw farm in the quiet country setting of Brynmenyn four miles north of Bridgend. She was the daughter of George Howell, a twenty-seven year old carpenter and journeyman from Rhymney, and Jennet, his wife, who represented the latest generation of Morgan's to occupy this small farm, through which the river Ogmor runs its winding course. George and Jennet were now in their second year of marriage, having met when George, an ambitious young man who had moved into the area, stumbled across Abergarw in search of work.

Jennet, aged twenty-six, was a typical farmer's daughter capable of turning her hand to most work whilst responsible for giving Abergarw the feel of a happy and hearty place to live. As a committed companion and best friend to George, she provided the mellowing influence that lightened his load, consumed as he was in building work, possessed of a natural eye for business which inclined his mind and rule-measure towards the next task in hand. In every respect, Jennet was also a housekeeper for Jenkin, her bachelor brother, a mild-mannered, likeable character of traditional farming stock who loved his animals and was never far away from the home fields – although needing Jennet to keep him fed and cared for and on the straight and narrow of life's bumpy course.

Jennet's father, Evan, also lived on the farm, where he was born and bred way back in 1821. He was a man who liked to reminisce about boyhood days, before getting up and stretching his legs in order to see the heifers and calves. He remembered the Royal Mail coach passing through Bridgend, driven by the finest, fastest horses; and the days of the Turnpike trusts, when toll fees were collected on the highways. As a young man he witnessed horse-drawn trams, before trains chugged their way into this quiet corner of Glamorgan as the great invention of the day. But his best stories involved the Llangeinor Arms, a farmers' inn at the top of the nearby mountain, where he joined the local characters for much merriment and a drop to drink, before riding home in his horse-drawn cart down the narrow, bumpy lanes.

Life for Sarah Jane's grandfather had not been without its struggles. He raised his four children, Jennet and Jenkin, as well as Thomas and Catherine, following the loss of his wife, Jane, who met an early end when she failed to recover after falling from a horse. During harsh days of toil and cruel epidemics, Evan kept his family strong and healthy with hard work, which brought food and shelter and peace of mind. But Evan allowed himself time to stop and stare and, as inner contentment seeped into his thoughts, he often amused himself when recalling the enigmatic chapel ministers of his youth. Following family traditions Evan introduced his children to Betharan, a Welsh Congregational Chapel which was the hub and heartbeat of the village, and a discipline throughout life. With Catherine



***Winter scenes at
St. Mary's Church,
Whitland from
Roger Penn***



married in the locality and now the birth of Sarah Jane, Evan was a contented man, despite his son, Thomas, having set sail for new horizons, in Ohio, America, where he had settled and would stay.

Evan's thrill was to see Jenkin, his second son, following closely in his footsteps, so that the two shared a vision for the farm besides being friends. In truth, Jenkin devoted himself to Abergarw (meaning the mouth of the river Garw) and ran it in almost every respect, before disappearing to enjoy a drink. When his day's work was done, having cared for the animals as the good shepherd of his pastures, he had removed his muddiest clothes and was on his way. The Miller's Arms was a small thatch-roofed inn situated just a step away near the hump-back bridge of the river Ogmore. Looking out onto the greenery of small paddocks in the distant hills, it shared the soothing sound of fresh water-flow with the old corn mill next door. Despite the presence of nearby quarries and mines, Brynmenyn was a peaceful, even sleepy, little place of small cottages and family-run farms. But Sarah Jane's uncle wished for nowhere else, and here, in his favourite watering-hole, he enjoyed sipping ale with his farming friends.

At this time in Brynmenyn's history, the essential gains of early quarrying gave work to the local men besides defining the village, 'Brynmeinyn,' as it used to be known (a hill of stones) – before giving way to today's 'Brynmenyn' (a butter hill). But whatever description is deemed most appropriate, the village had the homely feel of a backwater retreat, broken by the huffing and puffing of

friendly trains that chugged their way into the small, but well-kept railway station. Bursting with activity – of lad porters and maintenance men on duty, and a station master whose whistle, loud and shrill, carried a respected blast – it is here that the steam engines were directed either up the nearby Garw or Ogmore valleys. There lay the rich coal seams that fanned the flames of industry and sent trains laden with freight through Brynmenyn, a village that was something of a haven amongst rich mining belts almost all around.

Alongside the railway station, stood the Fox and Hounds Hotel, a big block of a building, tall, sturdy and spacious, peering down from its upstairs rooms almost on top of the moving carriages. This is where beers and spirits were sold to the men of the neighbourhood and community meetings were held in the rooms adjoining the bars, whilst open fires and fine brews offered a warm glow to travellers staying overnight. The Fox and Hounds also shared Sunday services with Betharan Chapel, its next door neighbour; and the good times of weddings and parish teas, besides the sadness and loss when loved ones left the scene and villagers turned-out in great numbers to pay their respects.

Only a few days before Sarah Jane's birth, this same building experienced the unrestrained joy of New Year's Eve: its bars bursting with merrymaking and laughter and muffled mouth organ sounds, not half a mile from the family farm. The Miller's Arms was no different, stocked with casks of beer from Abergarw's own brewery whose malt and hops produced the most agreeable mixtures and were delivered by horse and cart in wooden barrels, usually one at a time.

At such a night as this, taverns were crowded everywhere, all eagerly awaiting the visiting ‘Mari Lwyd’ revellers who, in accordance with Glamorgan’s celebrated customs, arrived on the doorsteps of homes, farms and inns with a rather frightening horse’s skull, draped in white sheets and jingling bells. They sung and entertained the crowds, the horse’s jaw opening and closing to the sound of each verse, amidst the hilarity and hwyl (good humour) of the occasion. Accepting, with gratitude, the mulled wine and drinks on offer, as well as any loose change donated towards voluntary organisations, the visitors invited locals to match, or to better, their act – whilst others looked on, enjoying the entertainment, merrily drinking the last of the Christmas cheer. Beer measures were poured from large jugs, the white froth floating on top – and, when everyone welcomed the New Year with hymns and arias, most had usually had their fill.

George and Jennet would have heard the distant echoes of exuberance as the men wandered home in the dark early hours – Jenkin, happily amongst them – directed by the faint and flickering glow of dim street lighting. They knew that there was no room for life’s hardships on such a night – as laborious work, long hours and little pay paled into insignificance, as did sicknesses, everyday accidents and cold, often damp, conditions at home. George and Jennet wished them well, pleasantly uplifted by their rejoicings, knowing that a difficult year lay ahead for all, in a harsh world where poverty and struggles dominated day to day life.

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT



He said, "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

In truth, men laboured for little reward, digging for valuable minerals, or seeing the food harvests safely home from the open fields. They counted their blessings for the rich natural resources, shaping-up to life's real battles, often hanging-on by their fingertips, hoping, praying and believing that better days lay ahead. Dignity and honour counted greatly and came the way of those who earned their crust from the sweat of their brow. At such times when tramps and vagrants lived roughly in barns and outbuildings, clinging to their freedom and pride, no one could afford to ease up, those failing to sustain themselves suffering the stigma, humiliation and degradation of life in the local workhouse at Bridgend.

George and Jennet took heart in knowing that conditions within this strict, prison-like institution for the homeless, had improved but, equally, they pondered over the ways of a difficult world into which Sarah Jane was to be born. It was a world that relied on the charity and generosity of citizens who had something to spare. Those born into privilege led the way, taking their reward from knowing that it was in the 'giving' that they 'received.' Parcels of land were released for buildings, supplies of stone were offered by quarry owners, and labour was volunteered – with the result that churches, chapels, schools and halls later took their rightful place in society.

Giving and sharing was the order of the day: the Mari Lwyd collections, mentioned earlier, supporting organisations such as the cottage hospital near Bridgend railway station, just as the Salvation Army's deeds were delivered with Christian fellowship in mind. Likewise,



***'Warm Place'
and
Community
Meal at
Canolfan
Hermon***

when people could not pay medical fees or settle in kind, doctors often chose not to charge, turning a blind eye to their costs or adding them to the bills of wealthier patients who were known to oblige.

It is in the midst of these daily battles that a new generation was arriving onto the scene, Sarah Jane among them, each little soul a living hope for a more promising future, God's way of advancing the world, taking life onward. Within a few years of her birth, Sarah Jane was among the infants of the neighbourhood, arriving on doorsteps standing on her own two feet, singing a verse or rhyme in exchange for a small, but customary gift during this Yuletide season. Wearing a bonnet to keep her head warm and carrying in her small hands a decoration, this gesture, known as 'Y Calennig,' was another Glamorgan custom to celebrate the New Year morn. It was also one that put a toffee or a piece of fruit, or a few nuts into her excited, eager hands, before coming to an abrupt and rather unwelcome end when the clock struck midday. **To be continued ...**

Sarah's Post Office, Newsagents & General Stores

13 St John Street, Whitland and Maenclochog Tel. 01437 532909

Drop in for a coffee and a snack, or an ice cream.

DESIDERATA

GO PLACIDLY amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

Max Ehrmann

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 coordinating 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.

Shed

I cough, rasping, and conjure up my grandfather
planing some stubborn plank, anchored in a vice
in the cool deep shadow of his tin-roofed shed.
Where nothing is misunderstood silence will suffice.

Here is no need for elaborate translation:
at one with his plane, in this world of fit and fact,
the silence is broken only by the planning.
Where every line is straight, the meaning is exact.

Here my grandfather practises but never preaches.
Quietly he calculates, corrects, constructs,
reshaping and re-using broken bits of his junk-ward
to make dolls' houses, go-karts, three-seater trucks.

The shed is my grandad's natural habitat,
familiar, understood as a fish to the sea:
he only hears a pin drop to dive to retrieve it
with a kingfisher's flashy accuracy.

This is not the same world as the world of the house
where my grandmother rules time and her word is the law.
Here is hermetic: time is the time the task takes,
While a different tongue latches the workshop door.

Here my English nana never sets foot –
no need to welsh on his native tongue .
Here you cannot tell the carver from the thing that's carved,
Nor yet the soft hissing from his whispered song.

The Pew Poet, Janet Jackson

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