

St. Dyfnog's Church

Newsletter

Llanrhaeadr

February 2011

From the Vicar

Candlemas

" I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. "

At the beginning of this month we celebrate Candlemas, also known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Three things then - that the infant Jesus would be a light of revelation for all people - the presentation and offering of a first born child to God for his service - the candles being brought into church and a blessing said over them as a Festival Day (or " mass ") of the Candles. The feast was first celebrated in Jerusalem in the fourth century.

Candles were important as there would be no alternative form of light, and many thought they gave protection against plague, illness and famine.

More importantly for us, they are a reminder that before Jesus it was as if everyone was "in the dark," so many people often felt lost, lonely and afraid. Then Jesus came with his message that he is with people always, ready to comfort and help, especially in the dark places of life, as a guiding light in the darkness. We often speak of Jesus as " the light of the world " and so light our candles to remind us of this.

This month - light a candle - pray a prayer!

O God, who in the work of creation commanded light to shine out of darkness, we pray that the light of the gospel of Christ may shine into the hearts of all people, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and revealing the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ - Amen.

Michael

The following are taken from a lovely little book, that came in to the Church stall, entitled
'God bless love' written by children:-

Guinea Pigs like Peace Emma aged 4.

I would like to marry my dog, but it isint alowed, is it? Bruce aged 6.

My cat falls in love and stays out all night and then he brings a lot of kittens back.
Henry aged 6.

When you go to church you put mony in the box and god loves you Florence aged 7

My granny always talks to Jesus on Sundays. The rest of the week she goes to Bingo
which is where he lives sometimes. Charles aged 5.

I wish Jesus would come back and stop the fighting because I think they've all had
enough by now Alan aged 7

I wish they would declare love instead of war. Deirdre aged 11

Everybody loves baby Jesus even my uncle and both my bruthers but I don't. I love the
three wizmen best becas they broat presense. John aged 6.

My big sister fell in love And she went to this place where they sell you holy matrimony
but I Don't think she paid them all the money because she said it was'nt woth it.
Malcolm aged 7

Their spelling - not mine!

Daybreak - (a prose poem)

Slim and sable clouds, a brooding shroud over the dark vale,
a fringe of cream edges slowly over the ridge of hills.
Above, the clouds align, like stacked blades of knights' long swords,
awaiting the day's tournament.

A flash of sunlight fires the nearby fields.
The clouds flesh out, now swordfish, a misty pink,
swimming in the pale blue sea.

The hills soften to benign curves of mottled greeny grey.
The valley's chessboard of trees and hedges is laid out for play.

The clouds swab the sky with great cotton blobs.
Day breaks over the Vale of Clwyd.

Vera Lamb.

Clwb y Pentan - November 17th.

(sorry for delay in this report-will do better in future SvdB)

Friends gathered in the Chapel Vestry on November 17th to hear a very interesting talk by Mrs. Pamela Evans.

In 1976 Mrs. Evans, her husband Adrian and two small children James and Andrea decided to go as Missionaries to the Kingdom of Nepal.

Her talk about their way of life there was fascinating. Conditions were extremely primitive. She described the people, their different religions and customs. The food was mostly curry and hygiene was most important if the family were to remain healthy. *Mrs. Evans is writing in great detail in the Newsletter about their experiences in Nepal.*

At the end of her talk Mrs. Evans brought out two beautiful coloured silk saris. She demonstrated how this very long piece of material should be put on, and a member of the group modelled a sari for us all to admire. She looked very elegant indeed.

Delicious refreshments were served and Mrs. Val Payne informed us of the next meeting.

Pamela Roberts.

Computer Courses.

A Computer Course is run in Denbigh Library, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

I would like to recommend it to anybody who feels that they need to 'polish up' their skills, or even start to use a computer.

Carole, who runs the course is prepared to take everyone at their own pace and it is possible to study, internet use, e-mailing, word processing and desk-top publishing.

If you have an hour and a half to spare, and are interested I suggest you try. Two of us are doing courses at present, and enjoying it. It certainly stirs up the grey cells!

SvdB.

Answers to Christmas Quiz.

1. 145 Kilometres.
2. 1588
3. Richard Walter Jenkins.
4. 13th January.
5. Catrin o Ferain.
6. 4. John Salisbury, Richard Clough, Morris Wynne, Edward Thelwall.
7. Llanilltyd Faerdref.
8. John Hughes (1873-1932)
9. Cardigan and Pembroke.
10. Bont Newydd caves Cefn Meiriadog.
11. Four Thumbs.
12. 6721.
13. Author.
14. Llewelyn ab Gruffydd.
15. Cartographer.
18. 1947.
19. Photography.
20. John Jones, Coch Bach y Bala.
21. Dic Aberdaron.
22. The Ladies of Llangollen.
23. 290 kilometres.
24. Formula/Car Racing.
25. Road Tolls (toll gates).
26. Astro Photography.
27. Dr. Kate Roberts.
28. Boer.
29. John Rowlands.
30. She won the Crown at the Eisteddfod.

Dr. Samuel Johnson & Some Local Myths.

We in The Vale of Clwyd have found the entire subject of Dr. Johnson's excursions to Denbigh with Mrs. Thrale of great interest. But, although much has been written on the subject, I have yet to read anything which attempts to dispel certain myths surrounding the visit. This brief article is written in an attempt to rectify this omission.

The myths arose from a period of a matter of days which the great man spent as a guest of Colonel Myddleton at Gwaenyog, near Denbigh. Myddleton would seem to have been easily flattered by his association with Johnson. This was demonstrated in an unfortunate way, for during Johnson's lifetime his host erected a memorial urn on the banks of the river Ystrad, a few fields away from the house, which was intended to commemorate the visit. It remains a tourist attraction in the Denbigh area. On it are inscribed the words: "This spot was often dignified by the presence of Samuel Johnson, whose moral writings conformable to the Precepts of Christianity gave ardour to virtue and confidence to Truth".

During his very brief stay, it is fair to assume that Johnson would not have had time to stand on the river bank 'often', for his published account reveals that Mrs. Thrale, who was directly responsible for bringing Johnson to Wales, attempted to show him as much of interest as possible in the period available. When Johnson learned of the erection of the Grecian memorial he was disgruntled and wrote to Mrs. Thrale: *Mr. Myddleton's erection of an urn looks like an intention to bury me alive..... Let him think for the present of some acceptable memorial"*

His sensitivity may well have been a manifestation of his well known fear of death.

Two fields away from the urn are the final crumbling remains of a cottage which has always been known as Dr. Johnson's Cottage, and is marked on OS maps as such. Earlier in the century picture postcards were sold in the Vale of Clwyd featuring the cottage. The claims linking Dr. Johnson with this spot should, however, be treated with healthy scepticism for these would seem to be an elaborate attempt at early tourism embroidery. However, it is true that to some extent, the cottage does have one literary feature. In my childhood, when the cottage was still standing, I clearly recall a slate plaque which had been erected over the front door. On this were inscribed the following lines of verse: -

*Around this peaceful cot, this humble shed,
If health, in confidence, if virtue tread,
Though no proud column grace the gaudy door
Where sculptured elegance parades it o'er;
No pomp without, nor pageantry within,
Nor splendid show, nor ornament is seen:
The swain shall look with pity on the great,
Nor barter quiet for a king's estate.*

A late nineteenth century edition of Ward and Lock, *Illustrated Guide to North Wales*, makes the bold claim that "the lines were written by the learned doctor" This can easily be disproved by the fact that underneath was appended the year of their composition - 1768 - six years prior to Johnson's visit. Wildly false assumptions can be found not just in purely tourist information but in the work of a prominent nineteenth century local historian. In *Ancient and Modern Denbigh (1856)* John Williams abandons any attempt at truth when he writes of:

A lovely cottage, which may be called Dr. Johnson's study, where he frequently passed several days together, and from whence he doubtless gave the world much that is now read with delight. His chair and table grace the cottage to this day and over the door are inscribed beautiful lines which may be ascribed to his pen.

A very much more recent writer tells us that the cottage was provided for Johnson by his host.

I find all such claims unconvincing, but would very much like to discover the authorship of the inscribed lines. They are elegantly and formally written in the style of the period. I am hoping one of our readers may be able to shed some light on this subject. I recently read an item in which the author maintained that ".....topographical pundits have tended to gloss over the theme of Dr. Johnson in Wales...." Far from glossing over the subject I would maintain that too served him with a dish of peas at Lleweni she was very anxious to please: "Are they not nice?" she asked. "Pmuch has been made of it, as I have tried to show.

I am a little surprised that there is, to some extent, an illusion that Johnson was overwhelmingly fond of Wales and her people. That he was not entirely impressed can be ascertained from a conversation with Boswell: "Cambria will complain if you do not honour her with some remarks" said Boswell, to which Johnson replied: "Wales is so little different from England that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveller." Later he commented in writing: "Apart from the woods at Bach y Graig, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance or quench the thirst of curiosity?"

So the belief that Johnson was consumed with affection for Wales and the Welsh, which is still surprisingly widespread, should be finally put to rest. In fairness, however, we should remember that he was not an easy man to please. When Mrs. Thrale served him with a dish of peas at Lleweni she was very anxious to please: "Are they not nice" she asked. , " Perhaps they would be to a pig madam", was his gruff reply. C.E.Vulliamy achieves a balance in his 1948 study of Johnson but, writing of Bryn Bella, states that ".....the ghost of Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi is to be seen occasionally in the garden". - yet a further attempt to stretch credulity.

At a time when associations with the famous are highly prized, such myths will surely remain with us.

Dewi Roberts.

FEBRUARY QUIZ. NO. 3. (BY VERA LAMB)

1. Icon.
 - a. a camera viewfinder
 - b. a pilot house.
 - c. a sacred image.
2. Caldera .
 - a. volcanic cavity
 - b. a large pot.
 - c. a Spanish leader.
5. Simile.
 - a. an imaginative comparison.
 - b. an Easter cake.
 - c. a smirk.
7. Clematis.
 - a. a crisis.
 - b. a climbing shrub.
 - c. mild weather.
9. Wheatear.
 - a. a small bird.
 - b. a stalk of corn.
 - c. a boxing injury.
2. Dessert.
 - a. a pudding.
 - b. a waterless region.
 - c. to abandon.
4. Sepia.
 - a. an Indian soldier.
 - b. a brown pigment.
 - c. blood - poisoning.
6. Precept.
 - a. a walled space.
 - b. a musical director.
 - c. a maxim.
8. Cornucopia
 - a. an early word for a barn.
 - b. exotic spice from New Guinea.
 - c. horn of plenty.
10. Half Nelson.
 - a. a lowered flag.
 - b. a measure of rum.
 - c. a wrestling hold.

Answers next month.

Llanrhaeadr WI.

The first meeting of 2011 was held on Monday 10th. January and was well attended. The theme for the evening was 'Ask the Panel', the panel consisting of Cheryl, Stan, Jesse and Mike. All of whom had put in a great deal of effort with their answers; answers that ranged from amusing, serious and ones that left us thinking. Many thanks to the team for their effort. The next WI meeting is on Monday February 14th at 7-30pm, the subject 'Ladies of Llangollen by Lowri Williams. The competition is 'a limerick'. A warm welcome awaits new members.

Mothers' Union.

A delayed Christmas meeting was held on Wednesday January 12th. At the home of Mrs Helen Jenkin Jones. An excellent tea was provided, featuring Poppy's fantastic sponge cakes, Pam's well known scones , little sandwiches, sausage rolls, Buck's Fizz provided by Glenys. A lot of hard work had gone on behind the scenes, we exchanged presents, had a most enjoyable afternoon. Thanks to Helen for providing the venue, and many thanks to the hostesses.

Next meeting February 2nd. To be held at 14 Pont-y-Bedol, when Bishop John will speak to us.

Out of the mouths (or pencils) of children: -

HISTORY; In wartime children who lived in big cities had to be evacuated because it was safer in the country.

MATHS; If it is less than 90 degrees it is a cute angel.

THE ARTS; ...and at the end of the show we all sing away in a manager.

In last year's Christmas concert, Linzi played the main prat. I played one of the smaller prats and I would like to have a bigger prat this year.

SCIENCE; Helicopters are cleverer than planes. Not only can they fly through the air they can also Hoover.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES; I asked my mum why we said old men at the end of prayers at school, I don't know any old men apart from Grandpa.

HOLIDAYS; On an activity holiday Dad wanted to ride horses, but mum said they were expensive.

MATHS; I would like to be an accountant but you have to know a lot about maths.

GEOGRAPHY; The closest town to France is Dover. You can get to France on a train or you can go on a fairy.

MATHS; The total is when you add up all the numbers and a remainder is an animal that pulls Santa on his sleigh.

HISTORY; Sometimes in the war they take prisoners and keep them as ostriches until the war is over. Some prisoners end up in concentration camps.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES; A mosque is a sort of church. The main difference is that the roof is domed.

The Knights Templar

Just off Fleet Street in London, seemingly tucked away from the hub bub of the city, one finds the Inns of Court. It really is like stepping back in time here, very Dickensian with an atmosphere of a different era in the legal history of our land.

I recently attended a service in the Inner Temple church. It is a very beautiful building, a mellow golden stone, warm and welcoming with a vaulted roof sheltering the tombs of the Knight Templars. The Templars established themselves in London after a visit in 1128 by their founder Hugh de Payen. The Templars were funded in their building projects by wealthy patrons, including the grants given by various properties in the city.

Temple Church was built in close proximity to the Thames which was ideal for trading purposes. It is now surrounded by tall buildings which are the major centre of the legal profession. Temple Church is the only remaining Templar building in the city.

The Order of the Knights Templar was a military and religious brotherhood. They dominated medieval Europe for nearly two hundred years. It was suppressed in the early 1300's.

It was the first standing army since the days of the Roman Empire. It was multi-national. The Templars were great landowners, industrialists, traders and bankers. In fact the Knights introduced banking as we know it to-day in our modern world. They rose swiftly in their 12 century world. They had huge wealth and their leaders considered themselves as important as the Kings and Emperors. They were in favour with the Popes but in less than 200 years the warrior monks has disappeared into myth and history.

To-date there seems to be a renewed interest in the history of the Knights Templar. Research is taking place which is revealing that modern people, especially authors and academics write about them. The material traces they have left us can still be seen. Their sites are in diverse places in the world. They shone throughout the medieval world but are obvious more in fiction, myth and fantasy. Sometimes the words we read about the Knights Templar are twisted into prejudice, superstition or just to make a good story.

The Knights Hospitaller, their fellow fighting monks exist to-day in bodies such as The Red Cross and St. John Ambulance. They are admired by us all for the work that they do.

The sudden end of the Knights Templar was as sudden as their rise. The Order was denounced and suppressed. Its property was seized and given away. The members were scattered, imprisoned in dungeons, subjected to torture, executed by burning at the stake, or fled abroad to seek refuge there.

Their beginning is shrouded in mystery as they kept no records, which only came into being long after the Order was founded. We do know however, that the Templars were founded for the purpose of providing protection for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land after Jerusalem was captured by the Christians in 1099.

The Holy Land has long been a battle ground between Christians and Moslems. The sites protected by the Knights were the pilgrimage trails which western Christians were eager to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Centuries before the Da Vinci Code phenomenon linked the Templars to ancient mysteries, they were present in medieval romances and morality tales.

Pamela Roberts.

Poem for G.D.B

Granddad Bob or G.D.B

As he was often known to me,
Has left us now and works on high,
In the workshop in the Sky!
Things need mending up there too!
And he's the man, as you all knew,
Who'd take your broken chair or table,
Or half a door from your old stable.
Cut and carve, glue and screw,
And give it back all good as new.
The memories still in my head,
Are lemonade and homemade bread!
Lots of jam and Harris Tweed,
And more maps than you'd ever need.

Thank you Granddad, G.D.B.

For all the gifts that I received.

The tools, the toys, the memories,

Will always mean SO much to me.

Written by Rod and Franklin Jolley

FORMATION OF SEWING GROUP

We are looking to form a sewing group for the church.

The white altar frontal is in need of some attention but to have it professionally restored is prohibitively expensive. It is proposed that it is tidied up and repaired where possible, then covered with conservation net to try to prevent further breakdown of the fabric. This will extend its life for a period, and maybe in the future, funds will become available to enable conservation work to be carried out.

Initially the group will undertake this work but afterwards it will be open for discussion for further projects e.g. banners, or a new altar frontal.

If you are interested please contact Susanne Owen telephone 01745 890477 or add your name and telephone number to the list in church. This is an open invitation to anyone interested and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the project and ideas.

Susanne

And finally - Saint Dwynwen

Saint Dwynwen's Day is celebrated in Wales on 25th January - but who was she? Well she is the patron saint of lovers, which makes her our equivalent here in Wales of St Valentine.

Dwynwen lived during the 5th century, she was the prettiest of Brychan Brycheiniog's twenty four daughters and fell in love with a prince called Maelon Dafodrill - but that's another story - for you to find out about!

She founded a convent on Llanddwyn, off the west coast of Anglesey, where a well named after her became a place of pilgrimage after her death in 468 AD.

Remains of Dwynwen's church can still be seen today.

In 2003 the Welsh Language Board had bi-lingual English / Welsh cards printed. So why wait until St Valentine's Day to make your romantic feelings known, when you can wish your loved one - 'dwi'n dy garu di (I love you) three weeks earlier!

February

When the cat sleeps in the sun in February, she will creep behind the stove in March

Of all the months of the year, curse a fair February

If it thunders in February, it will frost in April

If February give much snow, a fine summer it doth foreshow

Signed – Ever Hopeful!