

# St. Dyfnog's Church Newsletter.

Llanrhaeadr.

February 2012.

**From the Vicar**

**Candlemas**

*Deep sleeps the Winter, cold, wet and grey;  
Surely all the world is dead; Spring is far away.  
Wait! The world shall waken; it is not dead, for lo  
The Fair Maids of February stand in the snow!  
( The song of the Snowdrop Fairy )*

This note is written at Candlemas, forty days after the birth of Jesus, and at a point in our liturgical year when we can look back, upon Christmas and Epiphany, and forwards towards Lent and Holy Week.

It is a time to perhaps reflect upon our own lives - where we have journeyed, where we are at present and to remind ourselves that the future is in God's hands. We are challenged to travel with Jesus, just like that ramshackle collection of fishermen, tax collectors and religious zealots who were called by Jesus to travel with him on a surprising journey that would take them to the depths of their being and the ends of the earth.

Some useful information follows, from a contributor to our Newsletter, about Candlemas, which we will celebrate at our Holy Eucharist on 5<sup>th</sup> February.

Candlemas, in one sense, marks the true end of the Christmas / Epiphany Seasons and points us already, towards Lent and Easter. To commemorate what old Simeon said, we will bless candles in Church for people to take home, perhaps to light before an evening meal, and provide a focus for an evening prayer or two.

Simeon took the infant Christ into his arms, praised and thanked God that this Child would be a light to all the world - a light that would enlighten all.

**Michael**

## **Postage Stamps**

We can still collect stamps, apart from the new self-adhesive British stamps, which have two perforations, when the stamps are steamed off two holes are left, making them useless to stamp collectors. But, please continue to collect other stamps, and leave in the box in church-thank you.

## **Candlemas Day February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Candlemas Day takes its name from the blessing of candles on this day for use in church throughout the year. It is the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple when Simeon hailed him as a 'light to lighten the Gentiles'. In some areas, snowdrops, much in evidence at this season, are known as Candlemas Bells or Mary's tapers.

'If Candlemas Day be fair and bright  
Winter will take another flight.  
If Candlemas Day be cloud and rain  
Winter is gone and will not come again!'

There is the old belief that all hibernating animals, and in particular the badger, (or in the case of America, the groundhog) wake up on Candlemas Day and come out to see if it is still winter. If it is a sunny day, the animals will see their shadows and go back to earth for a further 40 days. If it is cloudy, they will not be frightened by their shadows and will stay above ground. Thus, if it is cloudy, people believe we shall have an early spring. The Americans actually call Candlemas 'Groundhog Day' for this reason.

### **Mothers' Union**

It was a merry party of eighteen members, husbands and friends who travelled on the parish bus - 'Cart y Plwyf' to Rhyl on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January to see "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". We certainly got our moneysworth that afternoon - attractive stage settings, costumes and singing. The seven dwarfs were real dwarfs and the final scene an extravaganza in red and gold.

The whole event was certainly helped by the presence of about five rows of local schoolchildren in the front seats, who responded wholeheartedly to every twist and turn of the plot and the jokes of the funny man. We too got caught up in the whole show!

The afternoon ended with high tea at the Table Table restaurant in Rhuddlan where Glenys was thanked for making such excellent arrangements and Marian for driving us so expertly in the little bus.

The first meeting of the New Year will be on February 1<sup>st</sup>. At 2pm at Poppy's when the Vicar will be answering our questions. Please hand in your questions to the Vicar in good time before the meeting.

**H.J.J.**

### **Women's Institute**

The January meeting was held in the comfortable Chapel Vestry, Pamela Evans gave an interesting demonstration of collage using tissue paper, glue and candle wax. After her expert demonstration we were let loose to create our own masterpieces! Which actually looked fairly presentable when framed!

**These are some sentences exactly as typed by medical secretaries in the NHS.**

- 1.The patient has no previous history of suicide.
- 2.Patient has left her white blood cells at another hospital.
- 3.The patient's medical history has been remarkable insignificant with only a 40 pound weight gain in the past three days.
- 4.Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
- 5.On the second day the knee was better on the third day it disappeared.
- 6.The patient is tearful and crying constantly. She also appears depressed.
- 7.She has no rigors or shaking chills, but her husband states she was very hot in bed last night.
- 8.Discharge status:-- Alive. But without my permission.
- 9.Healthy appearing decrepit 69 year old male, mentally alert, but forgetful.
- 10.Patient had waffles for breakfast and anorexia for lunch.
- 11.She is numb from her toes down.
- 12.While in ER, she was examined, x-rated and sent home.
- 13.

**Gardening hints**

- 1.Plastic water/squash bottles with their bottoms cut off make ideal minicloches for young plants. Push them well into the ground to protect them from cutworms and slugs. Later unscrew tops to acclimatise the plants to the air.
- 2.Old stockings or tights cut into strips make useful ties for plants. Because they stretch, they won't restrict growth.
- 3.Old potato peelers make useful gadgets for removing weeds from a lawn.
- 4.Plastic food containers-yoghurt pots, cottage cheese tuba etc. with drainage holes- are as good as shop bought plastic flower pots for cuttings.
- 5.Don't buy supporting canes for young plants. Use lengths of twigs and branches, which look less conspicuous as the plants grow through them. Winter is a good time to start collecting these.

**January Quiz set in Wales.**

*All creatures great and small.*

- 1.*The Welsh name for Snowdonia suggests an association with what creature?*
  - 2.*Upon what kind of creature is the Mari Lwyd based?*
  - 3.*A major colony of what bird lives on Grassholm off the Pembrokeshire coast?*
  - 4.*What animals were first 'tried' in Bala in 1873?*
  - 5.*What sort of insect was first lame and then grateful in the tale of Culhwch and Olwen?*
  - 6.*Which waterfall takes its name from a bird?*
  - 7.*What edible creature can be found in beds in the Menai Straits?*
  - 8.
- 1 What are referred to by the categories Section A Section B Section C and*

*Section D.?*

*9 Who had friends named Spottyman, Bulk and Skeleton?*

*10 which large bird, until recently confined to mid-Wales, has increased its population sufficiently for its territory now to extend into England?*

*11. What is a gwyniad?*

*12. Which animal is the regimental mascot of the Royal Regiment of Wales?*

*13. Which long-running Welsh language programme children's magazine programme was named after a bird?*

*14. What breed in the Sargasso Sea and come home to the River Wye?*

*15. What kind of animals are Hill Radnor, Clun Forest and Kerry Hill?*

*16. One third of the world's grey seal population is found on which stretch of Welsh coastline?*

**Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd - cont.**

The church was not above prescribing its own punishment on moral grounds. In his book 'The Old Stone Crosses of the Vale of Clwyd' Elias Owen relates how these unfortunates would be expected to stand in church during services, covered in a white sheet. This custom was commonplace until 1810.

Close to the War Memorial stand a row of former almshouses known as the Elizabeth Owen Houses. They were taken over by the Knights of St. John some years ago.

Of the fine mansions in the area, Ty Mawr should be mentioned. It was the home of Llywelyn Adams, a clerk of the peace in Denbighshire.

Sir Henry Puleston was born at Plas Newydd in 1829. He became the Member of Parliament for Davenport and a leading member of the Tory party of his day. He was also Constable of Caernarvon Castle.

In 1631 the village stocks were erected near the White Horse Inn; it was known as the 'Repentance Seat'. A variety of misdemeanours were punished here. There was a whipping post where vagrants, those without work and fixed abode, would be thrashed.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the postal delivery was in the hands of Edward Jones of Rhuthun who would deliver a bundle of letters and leave them at The White Horse. These would be placed in a window, with the name of the recipient facing outwards so that the envelopes could be read from the street. Each day a crowd would gather outside in order to find out whether anything arrived for them.

A very popular festival was Gwyl Mabsant (Patron Saint's Festival) celebrated in September. It was an occasion of great jollity. 'Wakes' would be held which would continue for a week, and work was, where possible, abandoned. Elaborate preparations would be made beforehand and farmers kept 'open house' for their friends. Boxing, donkey racing and other sports would be held. The tradition was observed up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the same period the cruel 'sport' of cockfighting was commonplace throughout Wales and Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd was no exception. It was not until 1849 that an Act of Parliament made this activity illegal.

At its height, the population of the parish was 1,227, but by 1911 this had declined to 900. This was due to the introduction of mechanisation in agriculture, which drastically reduced the amount of labour required; scythes and sickles were a thing of the past for many.

During the period of the Napoleonic wars the population was reduced for a different reason. Uniformed soldiers arrived in the parish with the objective of compelling every able-bodied man to enlist in their ranks; all protest was in vain.

There is also an account of an incident which occurred during the Second World War. A Lockheed Hudson transport plane with thirteen aboard was flying over the area when it was struck by lightning. The pilot lost control of the plane, and it plunged down engulfed in flames and crashed close to a farm.

All the men on board perished. Although the Lockheed Hudson was American built, it was being flown by an R.A.F. Squadron, the 24<sup>th</sup>. This occurred on 17<sup>th</sup>. July 1942 and an eye witness related his memories of that day to me:

'On the day in question I was out on my bicycle with my life-long friend Mr. R.J.Jones (Jack). We were in the vicinity of Llanfair and the day was fine and clear when we heard the plane. Then we saw it and we could clearly see the descending trajectory which could only mean one thing - that it had to crash- and crash it did! There was utter carnage, and it would not be proper for me to detail the scene. One of the occupants had made an effort to bail out but the plane was too low and his parachute failed to open. He landed in the lane and was still alive when we arrived, but died in our presence. The plane itself fell into the field alongside the lane, and was burning with such ferocity no one could get near it, but it was obvious that there were no survivors.

The fields nearby were used by Barn Stormers during the nineteen-thirties, when for a few bob you could have a bird's eye view of the village.

In my opinion, on that fateful day God gave Llanfair a few split seconds of his time. If he hadn't, Llanfair would have predated Lockerbie by forty years, and that is why the crash is important in the history of the village. It was later rumoured that the plane had come from Northern Ireland and had been sabotaged by the IRA. This is not as silly as it sounds, for the IRA had been active in Britain in the nineteen thirties and gave succour to our enemies through out the war.

The accident was also witnessed by the vicar at that time, the Reverend Williams, and on the following Sunday he held a special service, his text being from St. John V, verse 13; 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

A few months later the vicar's only son, who was a wireless operator/air gunner, was accidentally killed on an airfield, aged twenty one.

*Dewi Roberts.*

## **A story told by the Archbishop of Paris some years ago.**

*Many years before, he said, three youths had entered the Cathedral of Notre Dame, scornful of all it stood for. They notice a priest hearing confession and two of them bet the other he would not approach the priest and make a false confession.*

*The youth accepted the bet but the priest realised what was happening. He waited in silence until the youth stopped speaking then he told him that for every confession there must be penance made. "Your penance," he said "Is to go to the high altar, kneel before the great golden cross there and say to it three times 'All this you did for me- and I don't give a damn!'*

*The young man wished he had never started out on his prank but his friends kept him to his word. Hesitantly he approached the cross and sank to his knees. In a whisper he began to repeat the words the priest had made him speak. But so full of shame was he, he could say them only once. His words of penance became a prayer for forgiveness and he rose, a changed person.*

*That is the story the Archbishop told but it is only half the story. For, after a moment's pause, he said simply, "My friends, the youth who knelt at the cross that day is the man who is speaking to you now".*

*H.J.J.*

## **The Christian and the Buddhist**

This is the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh, a Hindu convert to Christianity who became a missionary in India.

One late afternoon, Sadhu was travelling on foot through the Himalayas with a Buddhist priest. Night was coming and the monk warned that they were in danger of freezing to death if they did not reach the monastery before darkness fell. As they passed a fearsome precipice, Sadhu heard a cry. Down the steep face of the cliff lay a man, fallen and badly hurt. The monk looked stolidly at Sadhu and said "God has brought this man to his fate which he must work out for himself. Let us hurry on before we, too, perish". But Sadhu, the Christian, replied, "God has sent me to help my brother".

The monk made off into the whirling snow while the missionary clambered down. The stranger's spine was broken and Sadhu, by intricately knotting his blanket, tied him on to his own back. Then bending under his burden, he began the body-torturing climb back to the path. By the time he reached it, he was drowned in perspiration and in this exhausting state he must plough on through deepening snow. Faint and overheated from exertion he finally saw before him the lights of the monastery. Then for the first time Sadhu stumbled and nearly fell, but not from weakness; his feet had touched the body of the monk, lying in the snow, frozen to death.

*There are people, however, who whilst believers, are like the man who was lost in the desert:*

*Later, when he described his ordeal to his friends, he told them how, in sheer despair, he had knelt down and cried out to God to help him.*

*" Did God answer your prayer, " he was asked.*

*" Oh no," the man replied, " Before he could, an explorer appeared out of nowhere and showed me the way home! "*

