

The New Times

December/January 2021/22

The Parish Magazine of Llantilio Crossenny,
Llanvetherine, Llanvapley and Penrhos



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas



From the Vicarage

These days, before leading a service in Church, I have to double-check (for some reason once is never enough) that I have my reading glasses to hand.

Without my specs the words appear blurred and out of focus, and my arms are nowhere near long enough to help me out.

The print hasn't changed but eye(s) have!

The specs sharpen my vision and help me to see what is already there.

I can't help thinking that, in a way, Christmas has a lot in common with my reading glasses.

For the birth of Jesus, his life and teachings, his death and resurrection, brings things into focus, and helps us to see more clearly the deeper reality of life.

Jesus brings God into focus; he shows us what God is like.

Faith is not an escape from this world, it is entering into a deeper dimension of it.

So next time you reach for your glasses, remember the one who gives us the vision to see more clearly, whose light will guide us through the darkness, and in whose love we are forever held.

Wishing you all a very blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Heidi



Prayer for Christmas

O God,

Let there be a little brightness, a little warmth radiating from me, a little epiphany of love and holiness as I kneel before the birth of Jesus, grateful for what it tells me of you and for what it does within me.

Let me be as simple and humble as the shepherds, as wise and worshipping as the wise men in the stories of that birth, and let the Christ child be born in my heart to make me with him a child of yours, a brother or sister of him and so a lover of all,

O Eternal Light,

O Infinite Love.

Amen

One of the special things about going to church is listening to the sermon. A sermon is in many ways different from how we normally listen to other people. If we are listening to the TV we can switch over. If we are on the computer we can skip along to the next bit. If we are listening to a friend we can interrupt and make a comment or ask a question. A sermon, however, is different – you have to sit there and listen! Despite this, there is a real pleasure in listening to a good sermon. In case you missed it or are not convinced then try reading this sermon from our very own Revd. Peter Cobb.

A sermon for Advent Sunday 2021

Luke 21 xxv “There will be signs in the moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world.”

Every generation has had its prophets of doom, for whom a text like this announces that the End is Nigh.

Sometimes there has indeed been a disaster of epic proportions to be faced up to: the Black Death, Hiroshima, the Holocaust.

Sometimes more temporary disasters have threatened the world order: the execution of Charles the First, the machines of the Industrial Revolution, the air raids of the Second World War.

But somehow humanity has managed to survive them all, so far.

But looking at today, the prophet of doom seems to have his hands more than usually full.

We may think of Covid, unpleasant as it is, as a passing disaster; we may deplore the gradual swallowing up of face to face human contacts by the Internet;

But what are we to make of climate change and the end of our world that it seems to be foretelling?

In the past people found it possible to shift the blame for famines and massacres and the like on to God; but we know only too well that this last crisis, like most of the rest of them, is our own plain fault. Those who are unwilling to shoulder the blame, instead of blaming it on God, take refuge now in the great army of disaster-deniers.

Yet another international (or almost international) conference has just ended in Glasgow. And what has it achieved? Precious little, beyond talk. The thermometer climbs, the ice disappears, drought and fire and tempest get worse every year; but the best that India could find to do was to try to cut down a bit on its consumption of coal. And when the facts are finally added up, not only India, but most of the rest will, yet again, have been found to have fallen far short of their agreed targets.

There's another text , later on on this same gospel which applies here: 'Take heed....lest your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly, as a snare.'

The cares of this life: what are they? Too often, they are the cares that we take to ensure our own self-preservation. The urge to make money, the urge to control, to hang on to the creature comforts that we feel are our right. All the alternative philosophies like 'make hay while the sun shines' and 'the devil take the hindmost', the philosophies that surely lie at the heart of the Donald Trump ethic.

This ethic, if it looks beyond its immediate goals at all, is apt to console itself with the thought 'It'll all work out right in the end. Someone will come along with a way of getting cars to run on tap-water.' And even if not, your big businessmen can say "Well anyway, this is going to last out my time". But today's prophet of doom is faced with a challenge that unless it is met, may even compromise civilised existence on the entire planet.

We do live in perilous times, times when taking is widely seen as life's guiding principle, not giving, and where my rights are what must be maintained, not my duty done.

We are here today because we have been taught by the Lord Jesus to see differently from all that. We have been shown how to see further, to know that it is more blessed to give than to receive, to love our neighbour as ourself, even beyond ourself. And in the midst of all this worship of Mammon it is easy to feel helpless and isolated. Is there anything useful that little me can do?

Time, yet again, for that immortal quote from Edmund Burke: 'No man made a greater mistake than he who, because he could do little, did nothing.'

So are we going to solve the planet's problems by switching lights off, rejecting junk foods and buying an electric car if ever we can get round to affording it? Maybe not, though in the well-worn words of that TV ad, Every Little Helps.

Here we are, set down in this little corner of God's wonderful world. This, the here and now, is our reality. All these opportunities, and we have the freedom to choose: to get what we can out of them, or to put what we should into them, to accept the divine principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive, or to look the other way altogether.

I do believe that our remit as Christian folk is to use our world well and not to exploit it. Almost it makes you wonder whether we should all be voting Green.

Perhaps our civilisation is set on a course of destruction, in which, because of our fault, those coming after us, will be the sufferers. If that is in fact what is to be, never forget that we are still here, and that the opportunities for kindness, and giving, and sympathy, and sharing in suffering, remain as

real as ever: just as real as they were in those times of war that we were remembering only a few weeks back.

We won't, alone, solve the world's crises, but we can live in the here and now, responsibly and caringly and in hope.

All week, a word from early childhood has been coming to mind: a verse from a Sunday School hymn:

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,
Like a little candle burning in the night
In this world of darkness so we must shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine.

I think that is what has made me want to speak like this, this morning.

Llantilio Crossenny News

On 14th November the annual **Service of Remembrance** was held in Llantilio. The half muffled bells rang out on a beautiful sunny November morning before the annual service for Llantilio and associated parishes which took place at St Teilo's Church. We gathered at the preaching Cross at 11 am where Revd. Heidi Prince read out the names of the fallen of both world wars from all our four parishes. Wreaths were then laid by Nick Hoyle on behalf of the parishioners and Ruth Edwards on behalf of the community council. The service continued in Church with hymns and readings relevant to Remembrance Sunday. Thank you to Revd. Heidi for conducting the lovely service and to all who took part in it.

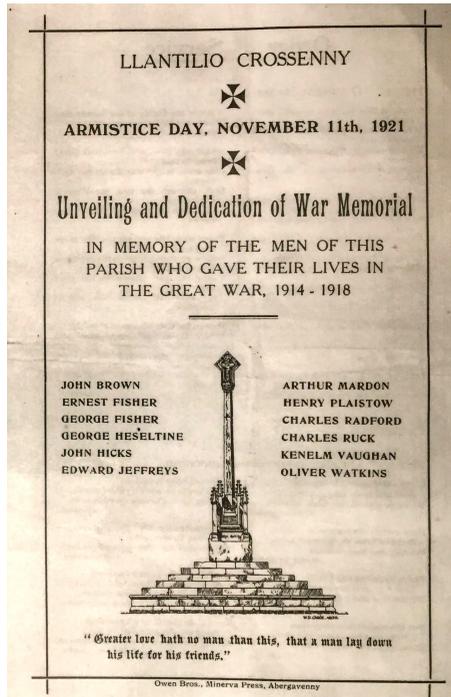
Elsie Latham

The names of the fallen read out at the Remembrance service included twelve names from the the plaque on the memorial. These included George and Ernest Fisher who are still remembered in the parish. Thanks go to Ray Fisher who sent in the following report.

“My grandfather Allan Fisher, served in the First World War with his three brothers who were William, George and Ernest. William served in 275 Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery and survived. George was in the Royal Welch Fusiliers and died in Flanders on 30th May 1918. Ernest was a lance corporal in the 1st battalion Monmouthshire regiment and died in Flanders on 4th October 1918. I can imagine Allan standing alongside his eldest brother, William and their parents attending the unveiling ceremony of Llantilio Church War Memorial in 1921”

Ray Fisher, White Castle





It is interesting to note that of the twelve names on the service sheet only ten appear on the plaque. John Rick and Kenelm Vaughan are not included. Is there a reason for this? Does anyone know? The memorial also looks different from the one on the service sheet. The full service sheet can be seen on our website by clicking the picture above.

Llantilio Bellringers practice every Tuesday evening and ring the bells before the service on the first Sunday of the month and for special services. New ringers are always welcome – beginners or experienced.

The bellringers will be having their Christmas meal on Wednesday 15th December at the Foxhunter Inn, Nantyderi.

The bellringers are all members of the association of church bellringers. We were recently contacted by the association to update us on some important arrangements. The message read

“following further consultation with the Royal Household and Lambeth Palace the Central Council has updated its guidance for ringers regarding arrangements for Operation London Bridge, the death of the Monarch. I've attached (it) here for your information but the key message is to liaise closely with church authorities in advance to ensure that appropriate ringing takes place.”

The bellringers have discussed this matter and are ready to ring when needed – hopefully not for a long time!

Llanvapley News

Llanvapley Church The church has decided this year to support Abergavenny Town of Sanctuary through its carol concert collection. Sarah Foster from The Carpenter's Shop is closely involved with this movement and will explain the work which the group does at the carol concert.

The parochial church council is delighted to announce it has accepted a quotation to upgrade the churchyard paths. The work has been funded by the Community Green Energy Advisory Group and the work is scheduled to start in the new year.

The PCC is also delighted to announce that Storm Arwen didn't do any damage to the trees in the churchyard. No news is good news. Only one service was held in the church in November which was the service on Advent Sunday which was very well attended. As part of the service the first of the advent candles was lit. Thanks go to Flossie for creating this beautiful advent wreath. It was really appreciated by everyone and Revd. Heidi even exclaimed "Wow!" when she entered the church!



Many of you may have watched the 69-3 victory for England over Tonga in their Autumn Nations Series game at Twickenham. Before the match the teams were introduced and the national anthems were sung. **Alicia Lowes** from Llanvapley was asked to sing England's national anthem. Judging by the final score Alicia clearly did a very good job of inspiring the England team. There is no truth in the rumour that she was asked to sing the national anthem of Tonga. "Ko e fasi 'o e tu'i 'o e 'Otu Tonga" is the Tonga national which would be a bit of a mouthful for anyone!



Llanvapley Walking Group A useful and interesting walk took place on Saturday November 13th as ten of us went up through Llanthewy Wood and back down the B4233 road to Llanvapley. The group included county councillor Sara Jones and her son. Along the road we picked up a

significant amount of litter. It's such a shame that people choose to throw their rubbish out of car windows and ruin the beautiful countryside but hopefully our actions might deter them as well as improving the environment. Another clear-up is planned for a few months time. Thanks to all who came and helped.



In the meantime we will be walking again on Saturday December 4th at 10.30 from Llanvapley Pavilion. Our walk will take in some of the new 'kissing gates' that have replaced the old stiles on some local footpaths. Come along and find out more – all welcome. You can contact the walking group at llavapleywalkinggroup@gmail.com.

Phil Allsopp

LSSA News The next afternoon tea is on Monday 13th December at 2pm. This is a great opportunity to get together before Christmas. Covid guidelines are still in place so please use a mask before taking a seat. Please contact any committee member if you would like to help in the organisation of this event or can bake a cake or donate a raffle prize. Everyone from the four parishes is welcome!

The LSSA is delighted to be asked to provide a **village Christmas tree**. The plan is to place it next to the entrance to the playing field and to purchase a small live tree from Red Castle Nursery. It will be set up ready for a grand switch on Thursday 9th December at 6.30pm. Thanks to Neal and Joe who has offered their help and to the community council which has donated £50 to the project. The LSSA is inviting everyone in the village to the switch on which will be conducted by a local celebrity followed by singing a couple of carols and a chance to pop into the pub.

As one tree goes up another one comes down! Storm Arwen visited the village over the last weekend in November and managed to blow down one of the trees next to the stream. The tree was very old and probably dead. Luckily it didn't do any



damage to the existing cricket club container. The clear up operation will hopefully begin soon. The good news is that the tree fell down on the place which had been allocated for the new LSSA container which luckily hasn't yet arrived!

Llanvapley Cricket Club are delighted to announce the installation of a new artificial wicket on the cricket square. The work took place during the dry spell in November and the club are looking forward to using it throughout next season. The artificial grass has been laid on a granite sub-base which was compacted using a wacker plate. The work was done by a company from Nottingham. The contractor had to drive the wacker plate from their van to the square. This journey took 25 minutes there and 25 minutes back!



CPRW's kissing gates project takes off.

Monmouthshire County Council's countryside team have recently been busy around Manor Farm in Llanvapley. The team have installed six kissing gates on the footpath which runs through the solar farm. The project was funded by the Community Green Energy Advisory Group which distributes £70,000 every year from the solar farm. The project was run by the



Monmouthshire branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales which wanted to improve countryside access so that more people can enjoy walks in the area. There are still four more gates to be installed before the project is complete and the council aims to do this in 2022.

It's the end of our first season at Orchard Acre Market Garden

Winter has arrived quite suddenly, with storm Arwen sending the remaining leaves to the ground, (and knocking over some of our outdoor crops!). Temperatures have dropped after a mild autumn and the garden is mostly going into rest mode. It's the time for mulching, clearing and composting before wither fully sets in.

We sent out our final veg boxes of the season on the 18th of November, feeling pleased to of shared so many colourful harvests with our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) members this year. We will now pause our retail sales too, until the lengthening days and returning light stimulate the plants to start growing again come mid February.

There has been much to celebrate this year, with so many crops doing well, lots of happy customers and us gaining more experience so as to grow our business. We were able to increase our veg box customers for the summer and harvest season and feel sure we can take on more CSA members next year. The new veg beds have mostly been made already and we are about to begin crop planning and seed ordering.

We're so grateful for all the support we have received and we hope we can supply more households in the parish next season, so watch this space. If you would like to go on our mailing list to be given a first opportunity to join for next season please get in touch. We will also be sending out details in the parish magazine of how you can sign up in early spring. With the Climate Crisis somewhat more on the agenda after the COP26 talks, its good to be working on a key part of part of the necessary transition to a low carbon future, with local food once again being at the heart of rural communities. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network, of whom we are members, have out together a short article on why joining a CSA can help us transtion to a low carbon future.



We hope you can get some hibernation time over this winter period, as well as time to connect with family and friends at Christmas.

The Orchard Acre Team, Jonny, Alice, Penny and Lyra.



Llanvetherine News

On Sunday 21st November Llanvetherine Church held a special service of Christ the King. The same service was delivered at all the churches in the Monmouth Diocese on that day with the sermon written by Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth. Each church was given a candle from the bishop which was lit at the beginning of the service. At the end of the service every member of the congregation lit a candle from its flame.

Sally Dawson



WI News

The WI choir are doing very well, even though they are a little disappointed that the carol concert at Newport cathedral has been cancelled. However, the choir will be singing in St Teilio's Church Carol Service in Llantilio Crossenny at 6.30pm on 19th December. As usual Revd. Heidi welcomes everyone to come along.

The choir will sing a few songs for the WI Advent Christmas Party, on 8th December. There will also be a chance to make some Christmas origami cards and simple Christmas decorations. As ever there will be food and drinks supplied. Members are asked to bring an inexpensive Secret Santa present, costing no more than £5 - or better still homemade!

The annual dinner will take place at the King's Arms, Abergavenny on 19th January 2022. We have used this venue before and the committee felt it was spacious, and so as safe as possible. Any past or present members, or friends of WI. wanting to attend should contact Jan Currie regarding their choice on the menu. It will be wonderful to be able to relax together and enjoy a fun evening.

There will be Tai Chi on the following dates;

1st December

15th December

12th January

26th January

We are also trying to book Annie Gordon Harting again.

For more information contact;

Lin Morris 01873 850 939/ 07840641856

Llanddewi Rhydderch There will be a coffee morning on Wednesday December 15th from 10am in the village hall. The village hall committee extend a warm welcome to everyone from the four parishes. The photo below was from the 2015 Christmas coffee morning.



The Garden in November

I cannot believe that 2021 is almost over, time has flown by so quickly. Our beekeeper says he has had the best year ever. He has five hives in our garden and it is a win win for us as the bees pollinate the fruit trees and the flowers, and we get some honey as a bonus. Did I help the bees by not mowing the lawn at the top of the garden? Nothing special in the way of interesting plants appeared but next year I will try to put in some plugs of yellow rattle and knapweed – if I can get hold of them. We already have copious quantities of bird's foot trefoil which I have decided to live with as the bees love it. The roots creep underground all over the place and it can be a menace in a flower bed.



There is still a lot of colour in the garden. Rosa Bonica is still flowering away and there are more buds to come. Bonica was introduced in France in 1984, the parentage was not recorded. It has coppery to light green coloured foliage which seems to be resistant to mildew and black spot. Its only disadvantage is that it has no perfume. It comes under the banner of 'Modern Shrub Roses' and I would not be without it. Neat and trouble free, you can prune it hard in the spring and it will continue to please and earn its place in any garden.

Iris unguicularis (Stylosa to some) is another winter joy. Its flowers are a beautiful lilac about 6 – 9 inches high. I cut back the leaves in October to tidy the clump up. Divide it in September when it looks too congested, otherwise it is trouble free. It comes from Algeria and likes a really hostile position. I. unguicularis 'Mary Barnard' is darker blue and Walter Butt is very pale. I have bought some Iris reticulata from Parkers wholesale and am planting them in various places in the garden to see if they will settle down and stay. They are a bulbous iris and are hardy but since they come from Turkey, they do not like too much wet so it is important to find a spot that is well drained - I shall add some horticultural grit - and has enough sun. I am told that they should be planted very deep.

The last winter 'Joy' is Camelia Sasanqua which I am sure I have written about before. My shrub has grown huge and is rather lanky so after it has finished flowering, in February, I shall give it a hard prune. For the time being it is covered in beautiful white blooms and there is a fragrance in the air.

In the Spotlight

In this month's edition of The New Times the spotlight has fallen on one of our church treasurers. But how well do we really know **Margaret Parry** who counts the pounds and pennies at Llantilio Church? TNT tried to find out more by putting her 'In the Spotlight'.



How long have you been the treasurer for Llantilio Church?

Probably long enough, twelve years.

Where were you born and where did you go to school?

My home is in Penrhos where my brother still farms, and early school was in Overmonnow Infants in Monmouth. The 11 plus exam was still very much part of secondary schooling and I was fortunate to go on to the Haberdashers, Monmouth. I learnt a great deal, but I did not particularly enjoy the school.

What is your earliest memory?

Being very impatient one icy cold morning and running out to the milking shed where Dad was hand milking and dipping my cup into the bucket for some delicious warm milk, straight from the cow. I was probably about five and can still remember the taste.

As a treasurer you have to be good with money. What is your experience of doing accounts?

I have always loved maths; Mum took me to the whist drives she ran, to check the scores! When I left school, I went to work in a local bank and through a correspondence course, took my bank exams. It was very unusual for a girl to sit those exams at the time and I kept the booklet of those who became Associates at the same time as me and there were just two females listed, and over two hundred men.

What are you doing for Christmas?

Failing miserably at keeping to a diet.

Do you enjoy gardening and what do you enjoy most about the garden?

Absolutely love it, love grouping plants, different shades and forms. We have just planted eight new trees and hope they can survive the ferocious winter and spring winds. We are quite high and exposed, there is not much between us and the Brecon Beacons.

Cooking - what is your favourite dish?

A good Sunday roast.

How do you keep fit?

I don't, but do try and walk a mile every day but am very much a fine weather walker.

Do you sing or play an instrument? What sort of music do you enjoy?

The WI Choir has been practising lately and I have really enjoyed singing rather than being their accompanist for a change. I love all sorts of music but Country and Western still gets the foot tapping, and of course the old songs are the best!

You have plenty of animals on the farm but do you have any pets?

We have no pets, we brought the old cat up to the bungalow when we moved, but she took herself back to the farm the following day!

Who is going to win Strictly?

No idea, but I wish Dan all the best.

If you could invite three famous people to a meal at your house, who would they be?

Just one would do for me, David Attenborough.

Do you have a favourite drink?

Coffee

What is your favourite place to eat?

At any seaside with fish and chips. Why do they taste so much better when you can smell the sea?

Do you enjoy shopping, or do you prefer to buy things online?

Hate shopping. Online is now so easy unless you want to match colours, a few disasters on that front.

Lockdown. What was the best and worst thing about it?

The worst thing was not being able to meet with family and friends, and the telephone calls became almost the same conversation every time because no one was doing anything very interesting. The best thing was having time to sit and watch. Once a weasel chased some young rabbits through a flower bed, and I would have missed that if I hadn't been sitting by the window looking out towards the mountains.

What is your favourite place to go on holiday?

We revisit various places in Wales, but if we venture further, particularly if flying, it is always to somewhere new.

Do you follow any sport?

No, but thank goodness for TV, there is very often someone else watching football! Love the Olympics and try and watch the second week at Wimbledon but have never been there.

Do you have any special skills?

No, but limited ability with music and crafts.

Describe the view outside your kitchen window.

We are so lucky, we look straight onto the Skirrid with the Sugar Loaf and Deri off to the left. Amazing colour changes throughout the year, the Sugar Loaf looks wonderful in the full sun on this winter morning.

If you could go back in time and give one message to your younger self, what would it be?

Appreciate this moment.

Church Services in December / January

5th December Advent 2

9.30am Llanvetherine
11am Llantilio Crossenny

12th December Advent 3

9.30am Penrhos
11am Llanvapley

19th December Advent 4

No services in the morning
4pm Llanvapley Christmas Carols and Readings
6.30pm Llantilio Crossenny Christmas Carols and Readings

Tuesday 21st December

7pm Llanvetherine Christmas Carols and Readings

Thursday 23rd December

6pm Penrhos Christmas Carols and Readings

Christmas Eve

11.30pm Midnight Mass Llantilio Crossenny

Christmas Day

9.30am Llanvetherine
9.30am Penrhos
10am Llanvapley
10am Llantilio Crossenny
Please note that in Llanvapley and Llantilio Crossenny the Christmas morning services are at 10am and not the usual time.

Sunday 26th December

St. Stephen's Day

6pm Evening Prayer Llantilio Crossenny.

Services in **January** will follow the usual pattern and will take place at the usual times.

Overheard in The Hog's Head

It looks like Boris has been doing it again.

What do you mean?

Well it looks like we will have to wear masks from morning till night. Holidays cancelled. Another variant. More jabs. We won't be able to invite anyone around and who knows they may be closing the pubs and then what will we do?

I know what you mean - It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!



You can keep in touch with what is happening in our church communities via our website www.llantiliogroup.info Our website has the latest news as well as information about all our churches. We are also on Twitter @LlantilioG

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