



HEART OF MONMOUTHSHIRE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 10 – EASTER '25



Letter from the Vicarage

Just as the sun rises and sets, so the church calendar continues to turn, and we find ourselves in the Easter season. This is a time of great joy and hope for Christians, as we reflect upon the encouraging concept of an eternal life, surrounded by the love of God.

I recently had a conversation with a child who wanted to know how Easter could come so quickly after Christmas, because it had only been a few weeks and surely Jesus was a grown up not a baby when he died because how else was he able to do all those miracles?!

It's a fair question, if you're little isn't it? So, the child and I thought about how this Easter is really connected to the Christmas of 1992, or thereabouts. Now that's something to think about, isn't it? What were you doing in 1992? What have you done, what has changed in the last 33 years?

One of my own children once said to me, when I was procrastinating about taking on a large project, that time would pass whether I took on the project or didn't, and that in ten years' time, ten years would have passed and what would I like to be able to look back on? That I'd given the project a try? Or that I had simply let 10 years pass and the project was still a pipe dream? Oh, how I wish that children weren't so wise and so challenging!

Where am I going with this? Well, I am left reflecting that time passes, we have a responsibility to use it wisely, just as Jesus did, so what are our dreams and hopes during this season of celebration? Have we been kind to those we have met today? Have we done our best to look after the planet with the choices we have made? Have we been generous with the gifts we have? Have we given thanks to God for all he has given us? Because tomorrow, we will have to look back on today, and I suspect, like me, you will want to be able to look back and know that you did your best.

Kindness, generosity, and making good choices - not bad principles to live by - and all rooted in God's love for us.

I hope this season offers you hope for the future, and an opportunity to use your time, your talents, and your money, with generosity, with wisdom, and with God's abundant love for you, at the heart of the choices you make.

Oh, and that project I procrastinated over? Whether to risk offering myself to God for ordination? How did that work out? Haha!

With love,

Sally xxxx

The Reverend Canon Sally Ingle-Gillis, Rector and Area Dean

News and Views from around the Ministry Area



St Aeddan's Bettws Newydd

After almost a year, the reroofing of our church was finally completed, and after a safety inspection of the barrel ceiling our first service was held inside the church on 2nd February which was not only Candlemas, but also the nearest Sunday to St Aeddan's feast day. We had a

wonderful service of Songs of Praise, and one of the members of the village community who is not a regular attendee at our services came and played the organ for us. The church was well filled and everyone enjoyed it very much.



Since then, work has been going on to replace the lathe and lime plaster of four of the panels in the barrel ceiling, and several coats have been applied. We are now waiting for this to dry before we can have the ceiling painted to complete this, although there still remains some work to be done to the vestry ceiling.



We are now hoping to hold an afternoon on 7th June to commemorate the death of Pilot Officer Douglas Berrington who lived at Bettws Lodge and died on 7th June 1942 when the Halifax aircraft he was flying crashed at Welsh Newton after a fire in one of the engines. He was flying a top-secret test flight testing airborne radar. As well as the crew of the aircraft, four civilian scientists were on board including Alen Blumlein a scientist with 128 patents to his name. Sir Bernard Lovell should have been on board too. Our aim is to have a talk about this work followed by afternoon tea, and we plan to invite people from all the trusts who have helped us with financing the roof work.

The next project will be to get the walls repointed as this has been earmarked as urgent in our latest quinquennial inspection.

Clare Bradly



Christchurch, Coed-y-paen

We were all delighted to learn that Rev. Bill Savage will be our 'go to' clergy. Rev. Bill has already made a significant difference to our small community with his wonderful friendship, getting to know people and taking time to visit and care for some of our members who are unwell. We all feel very Blessed to have Bill and Lynn playing such an important part in the Village.

This is the best time to see our Churchyard, daffodils, primroses, violets, celandines it's looking stunning and we hear a wonderful chorus from many of our resident birds.

The mourners at Pamela Savva's funeral remarked how lovely it was as Pamela was laid to rest with her husband George on 29th March.



We were also pleased to have a Service of Compline on Wednesday during Holy Week for the Ministry Area lead by Rev'd Bill at which were pleased to welcome friends from other Churches.

Thank you to everyone who supports Christchurch in so many ways,

Cilla Davies



St Peter's Goetre

A Spring Supper and Quiz Evening was held in Goetre Village Hall on March 21st to raise funds for Goetre, Llanover, Mamhilad and Monkswood churches. This was a sociable and entertaining



community event. Special thanks to Jane Whitfield for running the quiz and to all who helped with the catering – the puddings were wonderful!

A well-attended Lenten lunch took place in St Peter's church on March 26th in aid of the Bishop's Lent appeal. The Bishop herself led the service at Goetre on March 9th.

On Saturday May 31st a Wedding Dress Exhibition will be held in St Peter's Goetre. The church will be beautifully decorated for a wedding the previous day so it will celebrate nuptials past and present.

The annual Strawberry Tea is planned for Saturday June 28th.

The Wellbeing Café continues to open in Goetre Village Hall on the first, third (and fifth) Mondays of the month between 10.30am and noon. There has been a visit by the Citizen's Advice Bureau to offer help and to distribute advisory leaflets. Recent treats include a fish and chip lunch and a doughnut day. On May 5th the café will celebrate VE Day – plans are "under wraps" at time of writing! The café is run by members of St Peter's together with the wider community.



St Bartholomew's Llanover

The beautiful gardens of Llanover House were opened to the public on March 30th and members of St Bartholomew's church provided teas – as delicious as ever! Over 600 people enjoyed the ambience on a glorious spring afternoon.



St Illtyd's Mamhilad

Together with Monkswood, Mamhilad runs a church lottery which makes a valuable contribution to the funds of both churches. Forms for the new Lottery year are available from the two churches. Closing date April 27th.



St Matthew's Monkswood

On Mothering Sunday Bishop Cherry Vann conducted a special service at St Matthew's church Monkswood at which the Revd Canon Dr Stephen James was



licensed as an Associate Priest in the Heart of Monmouthshire Ministry Area. Formerly incumbent of Goetre and Llanover, he is a welcome addition to the team and is looking after the group of churches in the Goetre district until a new member of the clergy team is appointed. It was a delight to welcome over 60 people into one of the less well-known churches in the group for a vibrant and uplifting service. Many thanks to Gregory Lippiatt for allowing the use of his field for parking.

Lesley Evans



St Madoc's Llanbadoc

We are pleased to say that our heating problems have been solved and we can now extend a "warm" to our congregation. We have a few forthcoming events to announce - Palm Sunday and Easter Day our 9.30 a.m. services will be taken by Reverend Bill Savage, we are pleased that at the end of May we have a wedding taking place, and at a date to be finalised in July we hope to hold a silent

art auction. We shall be placing small vases of Spring flowers in the porch for anyone to take for a loved one at Easter.

During the next couple of months scaffolding will be erected around the church for repair work to be carried out on St. Madoc's.

The sales at the Parish Hall (aka the Red Shed) continue to be very popular, with donations of goods still being brought to us on a Wednesday morning. We were particularly pleased to receive a service book and hymn book with plastic cover and stamped St. Madoc's Church Llanbadoc! We have started to collect items for the Link to Hope shoe box appeal, some children's books have gone to a primary school in Peru and we are hoping to find items relating to the VE celebrations to be held in Usk and Llangybi.

Rosemary Evans



St Tegfedd, Llandegfedd

Palm Sunday was once again celebrated with a procession up to the church, singing All Glory Lord and Honour accompanied by the local warden on his accordion. 'Jesus' rode on a colt who sported a magnificent crown and the service was enjoyed in glorious sunshine in the churchyard



Robert Aitken



St. John's Church, Llandenny

During Lent members of our congregation have participated in the Lent Soup Lunches in St Cadoc's Church, Raglan as part of the group of churches providing the lunch. As always all have enjoyed the company and the new soup recipes as well as contributing to Bishop Cherry's Lent Appeal.

Graham and I have returned safely from our two-month trip to Australia and New Zealand to visit family and friends, and were blessed in both countries with two significant visits that brought us together.

When living in Sydney we met when attending St Andrew's Church, Summerhill. On returning this year we found it as welcoming as it had been many years ago.

New Zealand also brought back happy memories as we attended a service in the Nelson area on the north coast of the South Island where we had worshipped during past visits to family here.



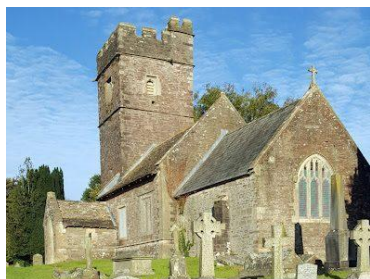
One of the highlights of our visit was to drive towards Farewell Spit, the most northerly remote point of the South Island and to see black swans swimming in the sea!

Abel Tasman in 1642 was looking for safe landfall and after rounding Farewell Spit anchored in Golden Bay.



As you can see, we experienced beautiful blue skies, an appropriate name for the area as well as joyful memories of this beautiful natural place.

Sue Russell



St John's Llanhennock

We have sad news and good news. The sad news is that we have lost two stalwarts: Jim Muir died in January, just short of his ninetieth birthday, and we lost Ailsa Morgan more recently. Of Jim, our churchwarden Gerry wrote, "Jim was a real gentleman, and such a supporter of all the activities in the village ...we will all miss him dearly". Ailsa was also a prominent member of our community.

On a happier note, we are in the midst of our Holy Week and Easter preparations. We have additional services on Palm Sunday and Good Friday and following the success of our 'Trainers and Tiaras' Walk last year we have planned an Easter Walk on Saturday 26th April. This will be followed by tea in the Village Hall, with tombola and plant stall, served by those unable (or unwilling) to walk. Dogs will be welcomed.

We are also planning an 'Open Gardens' on Saturday 14th June, with flowers and music in the church. Additionally, we have begun to collect provisions for the Eastern Valley Food Bank for our Easter donation, which we hope to be a bonanza. A start was made with donations from members of the Llanhennock Ladies, as you can see in the photograph.



Chris Edwards



St Cybi's Llangybi

It's been beautiful in St Cybi's and other local churchyards to see the tradition of flowering family graves for Palm Sunday (in Welsh, Dywsul y blodau, 'Sunday of flowers' - no mention of palms or donkeys!).

Reverend Sally remarked recently that attendance at Sunday services here is now regularly at least 20, and often including one or two children. This is despite several of our most faithful members currently being incapacitated, including both John and Pamela Love, who are greatly missed. Carole Kinsey generously volunteered to play the organ immediately she heard about John's broken hip: Diolch o galon, Carole! Before the Pandemic, attendance was often in single figures. Statistics aren't everything, but are sometimes surprising and can be encouraging.

The church was predictably packed, with many standing and even populating the stairs and organ loft, for Goff Weare's funeral on 17th March. It was inspiring to hear family members read, pray and speak so beautifully in his memory.

Peter Foden



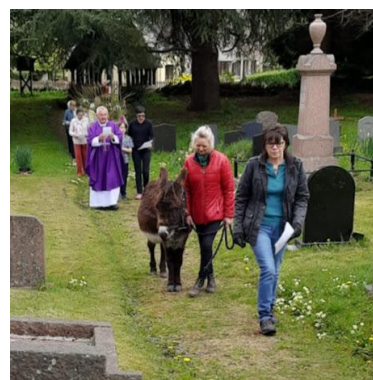
St. Peter, Paul & John, Llantrisant & Llanllowell

The first impression is to think there's not a lot to say about the first quarter of the year. The building is in good condition and still dominates our small hamlet physically but without apparently being of much relevance to the lives of the local community. Despite this however some of them contribute financially and others ensure we do not have to employ contractors for grounds maintenance. This community support helps to keep us solvent: just. In return our church makes a particular effort to involve the wider community in special services for Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas and usually Easter. It is disappointing that this year it has not been possible to stretch the rota to provide a Service on Easter Day: probably the first we have missed for many years.

Our worship continues fortnightly and whilst we are definitely low church, we have been blessed to have some of the Church hierarchy lead Services: two Canons and the Bishop in recent weeks. We are also blessed that our Services are attended regularly by friends from other churches which bolsters our commitment to maintain worship in Llantrisant. At the risk of blowing our own trumpet it is important to stress that of three of the five Llantrisant residents in our congregation regularly support Tredunnoc church and help with their Services.



Finally: good news, the recent Quinquennial has not identified any urgent substantial repairs; bad news, still no firm progress on the sale of St Lowell's Church; possibly alarming news, we had a donkey leading our Palm Sunday Procession



Sandy Blair



St Cadoc's Raglan

2025 started with us waving goodbye to Rev. Sarah and wishing her well in her new position serving the people of the Caldicot and Magor area in her ministry.

St. Cadoc's welcomed Rev'd Dr. Will Ingle-Gillis in her place ably assisted by Rev'd Dr. Canon Stephen James, Rev. Helen Rees and Rev. Bill Savage who have enjoyed (I hope!) getting to know us.

Our Tuesday morning Coffee mornings at the Beaufort Hotel continue with numbers averaging around 2 dozen per morning with a variety of interesting speakers arranged by Rev'd Will and Clare Bradley and have included an interesting talk by Rev'd Rufus Noyes, Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers who gave a fascinating insight into the lives of seafarers worldwide. Rev'd Will devised a light-hearted interesting quiz about Wales, during which we all learnt a lot about our home country. Someone from Age Concern gave a useful insight into the benefits and help that is available to older folk. These coffee mornings run from 10-11.30 in the lounge of the Beaufort and all are welcome.



During this Lenten season we have again been hosting our Soup Lunches when the churches at this end of the Ministry Area supply a delicious array of soups, cakes, tea and coffee, the proceeds of which will be donated to the Bishop's Lenten Appeal.

We continue our close links with the school with our regular Open the Book sessions during morning assembly, when members of our congregations act out bible stories for the children. Both children and participants enjoy these sessions and we would always welcome new people to join us.

St. Cadoc's Millennium Chimes, our local Handbell Ringing group continue to meet in church on a Thursday afternoon and would welcome anyone to come along to see and hear what we do. You would be guaranteed a warm welcome and would have a good laugh.

The Raglan Branch of Mothers Union meet at 2.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month, enjoying fellowship, being part of a worldwide Christian organisation and despite its name, men are welcomed as members.

The Food Bank at St. Cadoc's continues to operate and is well used. Donations are always welcome; however, we are not in need of pasta or chickpeas – we have a surplus of both items.

Jenny Swattridge

The Priory Church of St Mary, Usk



It has been an exceptionally busy time at St Mary's particularly in March starting with a wonderful St Davids Day service led by Branwyn with members of the Welsh Group contributing to a bilingual service and with a little practice even Sarah Byford our resident English representative was encouraged to read in Welsh!

The Social Group organised a very popular and successful Lent lunch enjoyed by over 50 members of the congregations and friends with everyone looking forward to a strawberry tea in the summer.



The History Group opened the church to share their research as we stepped back in time to celebrate the first community Priory of Benedictine nuns to worship and work at the church.

Glimpses of the medieval past can still be seen in the church and the history group shared their research through an interactive experience that included a rare opportunity to see an early wax copy of 'The Priory Seal'

with the original at held at the British Library, fragments of the original chancel floor from the church and the Altar that is believed to have been the original refectory table.





During the day our visitors were encouraged to dress as medieval members of the community and learn more about the daily lives of the nuns. In addition to sharing information about the building, members of the history group shared details of the nuns' prayers, available food, gardening practices and bee keeping. Visitors particularly enjoyed tasting local mead and medieval baking.



The day was a real community event with members of both St Mary's and the St. David Lewis and Francis Xavier Church coming together with support from local groups including the Roger Edwards Educational Trust, Usk Castle Friends.

Watch out for future events in 2025 as we continue to bring to life the community living and worshipping around the church.

Debbie Harper



St Thomas à Becket, Wolvesnewton

Worship continues in Wolvesnewton and we are very pleased that Rev'd Helen Rees has been asked to take responsibility for our services and community. We look forward to her continued involvement with us. The churchyard is looking beautiful in the Spring sunshine with a host of wild daffodils planted by Mrs

Marlow as well as a carpet of primroses. The sunshine is also highlighting the beautiful stained-glass windows in the Chancel. These were commissioned in memory of William Hood - a wealthy industrialist who fell from a train in 1923. It is not known if it was an accident or suicide.

The windows were designed and made by Florence Camm who was a very well-regarded stained-glass artist and a pioneering woman in a previously male-dominated field. She incorporated many colourful animals and plants into her designs. Her window showing Sir Galahad has a charming rabbit and in a tiny section far away from Sir Galahad we can see his horse - a little secret joke.

The faces of the angels in the main window were modelled on the children of the Hood family and have typical 1920's haircuts. Please come and see for yourselves one day!

Julie Alexander

More HoMMA Information, Activities & Events

Ministry Area Council

Your MAC meet every other month alternating between afternoon and evening meetings so that everyone gets the opportunity of attending whether they are working, have family commitments or other reasons for preferring one or the other.

Much of what we discuss is routine and deals with everyday issues in our churches such as each church requiring a health and safety policy, displaying a "one minute risk assessment" and possibly attending a first aid course as well as the essential safeguarding.

We heard that the Lent Courses have been well attended and enjoyed and that Lent Lunches have been very well received with proceeds going to varying charities including the Bishop's Fund for abuse against both women and men in our Diocese and that in the Highveld.

Finance naturally looms largely as we debate Parish Share, expenses etc and note the importance of financial sustainability and that some of our churches are struggling. The importance of good stewardship was highlighted and your MAC are looking into providing a stewardship course later this year. The benefits of Gift Aid were also pointed out.

Several churches have had Quinquennial reports lately and have used a structural engineer to determine the most urgent works. Requests to support works were received from Llanbadoc and Usk churches. I will leave the individual churches to tell you the detail!

Considerable time was taken over the role of Treasurer; Sandy Blair who has been treasurer for the last three years, since the inception of the MAC, is standing down at the AVM. Some of the work he does for us will be taken over by staff in the Diocesan office but we are looking for a local person to act as Finance committee chair and to liaise with the various treasurers in the area. Please look out for more information on this important (but not over taxing) role.

Glascoed Church, which was under threat of closing, may be having a new life and talks are being held with local people as well as within the MAC and the Diocese, about what may be able to be done to make it into a community facility while keeping its Christian presence. Watch this space!

Some dates for your diary:

Big Breakfasts will take place on Saturday 26th July; Saturday 27th September; Saturday 22nd November

The AVM (Annual Vestry Meeting) will take place on Sunday June 29th as part of the whole MA joint service.

Kay Spencer
Lay Co-Chair

Missions to Seafarers

Following a talk from Rev. Rufus Noyes to both the Tuesday morning Coffee Group and the Raglan Afternoon Teas Group, about the work of the Missions to Seafarers of which Rev. Rufus is Chaplain, Raglan ladies set to work knitting 'beanie' hats – knitted hats which seafarers wear under their hard hats for warmth and protection. I am delighted to say that we have received 65 hats, knitted with love, and nineteen teddies of varying shapes, colours and size, some traditional, some knitted. Again, these are for the Seafarers who often take them home as presents for their children.

Various toiletries, soaps, shampoos, shaving kits, combs and various packs of biscuits, chocolates and sweets have also generously been donated. As Seafarers often spend eight or nine months on board ship, treats are very welcome.

All these items and more will be given to Rev'd. Bill Savage and Rev'd. Rufus to distribute amongst the ships that may dock in Newport, Cardiff or Swansea.

We are delighted that when Bishop Cherry came to Raglan on Palm Sunday, she was able to bless these items - which makes the donations even more special.

The knitters of Raglan have taken this project to their hearts and this will be an ongoing project, so if anyone wants to knit or contribute to this project, we can furnish you with knitting patterns.

Jenny Swattridge



Henry James South (Harry)

On March 15th a moving Memorial Service was held at St Peter's Church, Goetre for a much-loved member of the community. Harry's longevity was remarkable: he reached the great age of 102 years and 9 months. It was a long life well lived.



Harry was born in Llanellen in April 1922. He attended King Henry Grammar School in Abergavenny followed by an apprenticeship in the family carpentry business. During World War II he served in the RAF as a wireless technician, first in the Spitfire factory in Southampton before being posted to Burma with 211 Squadron. A modest man, he spoke little of his war exploits, but was awarded the Burma Star for his distinguished service.

After the war he worked as Clerk of Works on the Tredegar estate before training as a teacher of Building Science and Construction. He became a valued member of staff at Pontypool College of Further

Education, where generations of students appreciated his expertise and kindness. Harry also put theory into practice by building his own family home in Goetre, followed by a bungalow for retirement, constructed on eco-friendly principles (before they were popular!).

Throughout his life Harry was a stalwart member of his local church, serving as Churchwarden of St Peter's, Goetre and an ever-present member of the congregation until very recently. Parts of the church fabric bear witness to his skill: he made a wooden aumbrey and even mended the bishop's crozier using skills that had defeated another craftsman. He was also renowned as a keen gardener, tending his beautiful garden with great care. Harry was laid to rest with Edith, his beloved wife of 65 years. He leaves behind a daughter, Dianne, grandson Jonathon and great grandson Alfie, together with treasured memories for many.

Lesley Evans

Girls on Tour visit to Ireland

After submitting the article on the MAC to Sarah, she asked me to also tell you a little of my trip to Ireland. A visit to the Ring of Kerry has long been on my bucket list of "things to do before I get too old"! Mentioning this to three friends from the NFU Ladies group they immediately set about making it work and off we went.

I won't bore you with all the details of where we went and what we ate etc but tell you some of the interesting things we saw and learned about. (after all we were Girls on Tour and as you know what happens on tour stays on tour!).

Needless to say, the Ring of Kerry lived up to its reputation and we had the most beautiful weather with clear skies and nonstop sunshine. The scenery is honestly the most spectacular and I recommend it to anyone. We also toured the Dingle Peninsula and although it too has great scenery it is far more rugged and has the most amazing amount of stone everywhere. This, throughout centuries has been used for building, from the most rudimentary of beehive shaped huts for the monks who inhabited the area and the famous Skelling Islands, to the miles (kilometres!) of stonewalling everywhere.

We visited the first known church from the 4th century monks, with just one small window where we would expect the altar to be! and then a 12th century church with its more ornate designs, set in an churchyard with graves and stones going centuries.



You can just make out the shape of a cross on this gravestone. This is a contract stone!

You may have your wedding blessed in the church but then the "contract" is made by the couple touching their fingers through the hole at the top!

The same method was used for the sale of sheep or horses well before people could write!

There were many more interesting scenes and sights but of course no visit to Ireland would be complete without a visit to Blarney and kissing the famous stone!!



ancient
back



Kay Spencer (our hard-working Lay co- chair is allowed a little time off! – editor)

Many thanks to all who have contributed to this insight into the many and varied aspects of HoMMA - including well-earned holidays! I look forward to your contributions for the Summer edition– in 'Word' format please - to usksarah456@gmail.com.- no later than **30th June 2025**

I wish you all a Happy and Joyful Easter

Sarah Byford Editor

