

Letter From Lisvane

Christmas 2024

Well then...

Big news of the year is that David finally retired. Come the end of September he was no longer on the Church in Wales payroll as an employee, but a fully fledged pensioner. He still 'left' a week earlier than that due to untaken annual leave, and even so had to be recompensed for even more untaken annual leave. One early plan was to take all the leave at the end, but as that entailed stopping working in August, a number of people blanched at the thought (not David) and so a compromise was agreed on. Since then there have been a number of trips – Norfolk and the Lake District – but he's letting things settle down before planning more adventurous stuff.



We did venture back up to the Lake District – twice this year, once in February (as per usual) and once in October (our 'summer' holiday, delayed due to retirement stuff). For a change, we went self-catering, and found a great cottage on the Borrowdale Road, about 20 minutes' walk from Derwentwater. Deer Close Cottage is/was the kennels for the gillie's house on the estate that used to be part of the land round Derwentwater. It's been extended and converted into a lovely one bed retreat with good views of Blencathra and Catbells, and a semi-tame pheasant who stalks the adjacent field and parades on the boundary wall.

We both acquired new bicycles this year – both 'electrically assisted' to help with hills etc, and in David's case to assist in getting a bit fitter after four and a half years of sitting around with a 10 second commute. They're grey Ridgebacks, good for about 70km of assist depending on the level of that assist. They're both of the step-through variety, but we're not interested in the looks, just the ability to do some more vigorous exercise

than walking the 50 yards up to the shop and back. It does seem to be paying off, as there was less of the "I thought you said this walk was flat!" moaning off a certain recently retired gentleman on the October Lake District visit. David had a rear-view mirror fitted to his – 25 years of motorbike riding leave their mark. Bran has a substantial lock and panniers fitted to hers for shopping trips.

The autumn trip to Norfolk took place as per usual, but the start corresponded with a period of dreadful wind and rain that required the emergency purchase of some waterproof trousers. Beach walks were somewhat curtailed for the first few days, but after the weather blew over much time was spent in the usual haunts. A couple of museums were visited for the first time. There's an old RAF station at Neatishead that's now a museum of all things radar related from the Second World War on till the station was partially decommissioned in 1994. There's quite a bit to see, and a rainy morning is a good time!

The drive home was interrupted by a visit to the Imperial War Museum Duxford, an old WW2 airbase, now home to six hangers' worth of static aircraft displays, some outside static planes, and an active runway... The day David was there, a Catalina was doing the rounds, a Bristol Blenheim taxied around and took off, a DH Dragonfly also did the rounds, and a Messerschmidt bf109 took off. David was a bit annoyed that he missed that last one taking off (was in one of the hangers) but got a few shots of it climbing away in the midday light. There was a lot more there to see that David had time for, so a proper trip next year, staying somewhere close by, is on the cards.



The Close has been fairly active too. We've new next-door neighbours – Siân, Oli, Elsie and Aggie the dog – and new people at no 1. Sadly, our attached

neighbour passed away in September, and his wife has moved to a care home in Leatherhead to be nearer their family. Their children, based in Epsom and Dorking, still keep in touch and come down every few weeks to keep eyes on the house.

We held a street party in July to celebrate the end of the Olympic Games, with games of our own – mostly races, egg and spoon, three-legged, floor routines, that sort of thing. There was also a BBQ and all sorts of food to have. Best overheard line was from one of the kids – ‘I’m not racing with him – he’s got Crocs on!’



We also light up the Close for Christmas – strings of lights from house to house, light sculptures in front gardens and so on, and there’s a big switch on party – again with food – no BBQ this time but there was a marshmallow toasting firepit. Santa makes an appearance, and there are fireworks.

Bran’s been quite busy with Ty Price, the church resource centre on the corner of the Close. On Thursday afternoons she’s been running a drop-in café, serving up tea and home-made cakes. There’s a regular clientele, and some irregular people that drop by when they are in the area. Come Monday evenings she helps out with the Youth Group, helping organize all sorts of activities. There’s also the small matter that Bran is one of the few people that understands the mysteries of the dishwasher...

She’s also taken on the task of sorting out the gardens at Ty Price. The back garden, enclosed, is

gaining in its maturity, and is a nice haven for quiet, safe, outdoor activities. The front garden is more of a challenge, and Bran is determined to turn it from a builders’ work area into a space for tranquil contemplation and reflection, and has dived in elbows deep. Sometimes knees deep judging from the state of her when she comes home. She’s been given the nickname ‘Pigpen’ (after the Peanuts character – and not by David) in full recognition of her earth working activities.



A few days a week, she volunteers at the local library, helping out with the checking in and out, and with the toddlers’ book groups.

In the lead up to Christmas, Bran is acting as a donkey wrangler. The Christmas story is taken round primary schools in the Cardiff area in the form of a puppet show, complete with real miniature donkeys. Her role is to keep the donkeys safe from the children, and the children safe from the donkeys. This is where teacher training comes in very handy...

Sadly, David’s Godmother, Margaret Grant, passed away in October. The funeral was held in Gillingham, Dorset, on a bright but cold November day, and was attended by a good number of her friends, and at least one Roseberry old girl. Roseberry School in Epsom, Surrey, was where Margaret spent the vast majority of her teaching career, having taken up the post vacated by David’s Mother when she became pregnant with David.

Rather astonishingly, on the way back from the crematorium in Salisbury, we drove straight past Stonehenge without spotting it. Our excuse – it was dark and it’s not lit up...

Best Wishes to you all for Christmas and for 2025

Our address remains unchanged at
7 Church Close, Lisvane, Cardiff (Wales) CF14 0SL

The phone number is still 0(+44)29 2075 5253

Our email addresses are branwena@gmail.com and dpabbott@gmail.com
and David’s website is still <http://www.dpabbott.com>

Gwen’s internal clock is a force to be reckoned with. It even accommodates the hour changes in March and October.