

Letter From Lisvane

Christmas 2025

Now we're both retired, things have settled into a comfortable rhythm. Wake up, get the paper, have some breakfast, read the paper, have some coffee, do some puzzles, have some lunch, have a nap, watch Countdown, do some more puzzles, have a drink, have supper, watch some telly, and repeat.

Interspersed with all that is more exciting and active stuff, like volunteering at the local library (Bran), getting some sense of fitness on a bicycle (David), and invigilating exams (Bran).

We've also had some good days out, one of which meant that we are now members of Cadw – Wales' equivalent of English Heritage. This covers a good number of castles and other sites of antiquity in Wales, and also allows us reduced (if not free) entry to various English Heritage sites. We'll be making use of that this coming year!

We had a break in the Lakes again in March – back at Deer Close Cottage, this time for a full week. That we had a week meant we weren't rushing from place to place, but could take our time over where to go and what to see, and we could take in events at the end of the week that we'd been missing in previous years. The weather was especially cooperative this time, and we had some good walks into Keswick, along Buttermere, round Tarn Hows, and up the Honister Pass. There may have been some shopping also.

Come April, David had an extra break in Norfolk, this time with the specific aim of spending a full day at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford on the way home. It was a glorious day, and flying around were a pair of (two seater) Spitfires, as well as a Messerschmidt bf109 doing engine and taxiing tests. There's great deal to see there, and the site is about a mile and a half from one end (the great and the good British planes) to the American hangar (there's a B52 in there, and all the rest of the planes are really cheek by jowl), so he did a lot of walking. And a lot of picture taking.



We decided to revisit France in June, this time focusing on Normandy and Brittany that we'd only passed through on the way to or from ferries before.

Things didn't quite go according to plan though. We'd found (and booked up) a second floor apartment, overlooking a marina, in a town called Redon (department of Ille-et-Vilaine). Two weeks before we were due to leave, we got a phone call – the apartment was no longer available, as the apartment above had suffered a fire, and the roof was in the process of being replaced. The letting company found us a replacement let – a four bedroomed house in a village called Allaire a few kilometres to the west of Redon.

Well – it was perfect. Just by the sign that indicated the start of the village, off road parking, large gardens front and rear, all mod cons. Allaire itself had all the necessary; two bakeries (one good for croissants, one good for cakes and tarts although both sold both...), a good butcher, health food shop, cheese shop, and tucked away round the back of the village, an Intermarché.

Allaire is well placed for day trips, and we visited the submarine pens in Lorient, the Arzon peninsula, Le Croisic, Redon itself, and some stone alignments. And all this in the first heat wave of the year.

One bizarre highlight of our week there was the velocette rally. Over 500 2-stroke bikes went for a tour of the countryside, not many kilometers, but it took them near on four hours, given that the top speed can't have been more than 30kph. There may have been some wine/refreshment stops along the way...

We broke our trip home in Caen again, visiting the Abbaye aux Hommes for a sight of William the Conqueror's tomb, and the sound of the organ being practiced. Caen was gearing up for its highlight of the summer – a start of a stage of the Tour de France. It started right outside an Italian restaurant where we had an evening meal – the Tour had more taste...



In one of those “they really asked that?” moments while we were in France, David was asked if he’d become a trustee of the pension scheme of the Church in Wales that he was a member of. Having been reassured that this was not a conflict of interests (as in it was the scheme that was paying his pension...) and having had a good few fact-finding chats, he agreed. One meeting survived (David had Covid at the time, met remotely), so that went well!

In another ex-work related turn of events, the CinW has appointed a new Director of IT (that’s not his actual title; that’s the role he is undertaking amongst others). This new appointee has asked David if he’d be willing to assist in drawing up a strategy for the CinW’s future IT provision and direction. That was an interesting discussion, but basically, he said yes.



Steve and Diane Walker were over from Ontario again this summer, braving a canal trip on some of England’s (and Wales’) finest waterways. We met up with them at a fairly out of the way pub near Bridgend for a super meal, and as a few years ago, just talked and talked and talked...

Bran has been invigilating exams for Glantaf this past year, culminating in a practical chemistry exam – for which David would be more qualified, but Bran was duly issued with safety glasses and a lab coat, and was in the company of a qualified chemist, so all went well there!

Next year, she’ll be going back into the classroom to help out while a previous colleague is on recovery leave – much revision of Chaucer has been taking place.

Bran’s also been very much involved in our local church activities; a stalwart member of the choir, helping out with the monthly ‘Soup Days’, a youth work

assistant, and still getting the garden at Tŷ Price in shape. For the first part of the year, she was running an open access café each Thursday afternoon for people to drop in and chat. Sadly, this didn’t appear to attract the breadth of clientele that was the original idea, and is currently on hold pending a rethink.

In the summer, Bran won a prize at an Eisteddfod (not the big one, one just for Cardigan) for a limerick. Spurred on by that win, she’s now taking lessons in proper Welsh Cynganedd!

Gwen is still very much interested in birds, and given that we’ve got some feeders in the damson tree just outside our patio, she finds this fascinating, chattering away where thankfully the birds can’t hear her. Even more thankfully, her ‘acquiring live prey’ days seem to be behind her, though every now and again she displays an unusual interest in something behind the sofa...

There are also plans for Bran to knit David a Gansey – these are sailors’ sweaters very much in the Guernsey style, but this one would be to a Norfolk pattern. Apparently this isn’t a straightforward ‘knit a back, a front, and two sleeves and sew them all together’ thing, so this may take a while...



Best Wishes to you all for Christmas and for 2026

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>