

Rhosgoch Gossip

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£1

JOHN HERDMAN

1942—2022

John came to Painscastle with his family in the early 1950s and he soon became part of the community. Whether it was during his wild boyhood days, or in later life he was always an important part of the village. Passionate about farming and the local community, he spread his influence and ideas, not just locally, but also to a much wider audience. He had a special place in his heart for Ireland Moor, protective of the ancient graziers' rights and maintaining the native Welsh Mountain ponies in their natural habitat.



John had suffered with Parkinsons Disease for many years, however he still managed to remain part of the Painscastle community, thanks to a large extent to the support of Margaret and the family, as well as friends and neighbours. As the large funeral at Llanbedr indicated, he will be greatly missed by the community.

The Herdman family would like to say a huge thank you for all the kindness and support shown to them following the loss of John, and also during the last few years when his Parkinsons had so worsened. The visits and chats were a great comfort to him and he cherished every one of them.

Thank you also to all who attended his funeral service, as well as for the donations so kindly given, the messages of sympathy, flowers and all the offers of help.

From us all.

Thank you

RHOSGOCH YFC NEWS

With more restrictions being put in place this halted our plans for any meetings in January. So to start the year we decided to host a quiz to raise money for The Bracken Trust. We had a great turn out and raised an amazing total of £207. Congratulations to the winning team "red lorry yellow lorry"

A big thank you to Tim East for being our quiz master for the night and thank you to Rebecca Lloyd for writing the quiz.

We have a few things planned to look forward to and are always on the lookout for more members so if you are aged 10-28 and are interested in joining a young farmers club please get in contact with us.

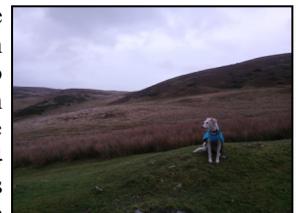
Radnor YFC Rally day will be held on Saturday 11th June at Cwmfeardy Farm, Abbey Cwm Hir.



INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE FOR CHARITY

In January 2021, during lockdown, the agricultural community from the four UK nations and New Zealand encouraged everyone to run/jog/walk/shuffle as many miles as they could in January as part of #run1000, with all miles recorded on Strava. Wales was represented by the DPJ Foundation and, as it is the FUW President's chosen charity, the idiot dog and I thought we'd give it a go as we quite like walking and, let's face it, nothing much else was going on at the time. As travel restrictions were in place, we wandered about Llandeilo Graban Hill, visiting Twm Tobacco's Grave countless times (it's a 6 ½ mile round trip from ours) and generally mooched about, helping Wales to beat all the other countries for the most miles travelled by supporters.

When it was announced that the RSABI were running the competition again for 2022 the dog persuaded me to sign up, with our donation once again going to the DPJ Foundation. This time round we managed 143.4 miles, the 0.4 being very important to us. Most of it was walked in the dark, so if you saw blue



flashing lights (the dog's collar) being followed by a bobbing white one (my head torch) on the hill over January it wasn't an alien invasion, just us getting the miles in, as well as recording the steps taken while feeding the stock and shopping.

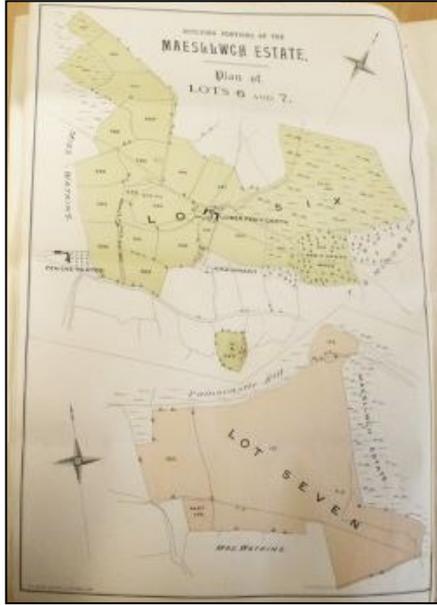
While Wales didn't win the most miles competition this year, it was certainly fun watching the distances build up on Strava and working out where our nearest competitors were located. It was also interesting watching well-known names in farming racking up the miles and trying to beat them.

Our 143.4 miles (remember the 0.4) got us third place in the FUW staff competition, winning a lovely long-sleeved t-shirt and a £15 voucher to spend at our local butchers. Thank you to everyone who donated to support us after I posted a picture of the dog looking sad and appealing for more donations on Facebook, we'll be back and trying harder next year!

Katherine Shaw

A NEW WOOD AT LOWER PENGARTH

Some of you might have noticed the forest of plastic tubes sprouting on the slope at the far end of Lower Pengarth, adjacent to Llanbachhowey. Yes, they do look unsightly but in five years' time they will be removed and recycled. And in ten years there should be a decent wood on that slope. This is not so much a new wood as a replacement wood. A sale brochure from 1903, when the farm was put on the market, includes a map with blobby trees in exactly the location we are planting now. The Luxtons, our predecessors, told us these trees were felled in the First World War.



The area that we are planting is four and half acres.

That is a lot of trees: 4600, to be precise. Too many for me and Robert to plant. So we contracted Pryor & Ricketts from Brecon to undertake the preparation, planting, fencing and maintenance. They also procured the plants. This was a huge relief as there is a great shortage of plants this year. Pryor & Ricketts order millions of trees annually so they have great purchasing power and were able to get what we specified, at a good price.

The trees are all native broadleaved species, of which 35% are sessile oak and 15% are silver birch. There is no ash on account of the dieback. The oak will provide continuity from the great oak wood above, while the other species will grow more quickly, give shelter and offer different habitats for wildlife. But as much as we value wildlife, we detest the grey squirrel, which in ten years' could damage the young oak trees. It isn't easy to keep the squirrel population down: shooting seems to be the answer. With vigilance and determination, it can break the breeding cycle.



The other challenge is grass and bracken, which will inhibit the growth of young trees. Pryor & Ricketts are using a technique called 'hinge moulding',

in which a skilled operator, undaunted by our 45-degree slope, scoops out a depression for each tree. In doing so, he removes the turf and creates an earthy bowl that will retain moisture.

Bracken, as readers of the *Gossip* with know, is almost indestructible. We are reluctant to put down herbicide so instead will use manual control, knocking it twice a year with a hook. This apparently is more effective than cutting the stems.



Jessie Jones-Morris planting trees

To fund the project, we got a Woodland Creation grant from Glastir. There is a large payment in year one, followed by diminishing payments through to year thirteen. If the figures are to be believed, by the end of the period the grant will have covered all the costs, other than the manual bracken control

(our choice) and special gates at either end of the footpath (no longer funded by Powys CC).

Our agent in doing the application was Peter Jackson, of the Farming Connect network. He lives in Machynlleth so it was quite a drive for him to get to Painscastle. On one memorable visit, his clutch packed up, so the ever-resourceful Peter drove back to Machynlleth entirely in the second gear.

To celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, there is the beautiful concept of the Queen's Green Canopy. Everyone is encouraged to plant a tree for the Jubilee. We hope that our modest four and a half acres will be part of this nationwide patchwork. Other environmental initiatives on the farm include hedge laying and planting, a restored pond and various meadow projects, all planned around the needs of the sheep and cattle. You can find out more in June, when Mo has scheduled a LIG visit to Lower Pengarth. Lucy Trench

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IN YOUR GARDEN

A time of frosts, snow, gales, tempest: is it spring or is it winter? But the feel of the gradually warming sun, lengthening daylight, the change in the quality of the light as the lichen on the still bare branches glows; those days when we feel the difference, when we know that the worst is perhaps behind us: admittedly a frustrating but inspiring time.



Among the earliest plants to come into growth are the shade lovers. These are plants of the woodland floor, which have to make their main growth and flower before the leaf canopy shuts off much of the light. Erythronium or Dogs Tooth Violet is a striking plant, which is readily available in various forms. The species dens-canis has a pinkish-purple flower, while the variety Pagoda is pale yellow. Epimediums, sometimes known as Barrenwort, all have beautifully delicate sprays of flowers in various shades of pink, yellow or white. Whilst these are relatively fleeting, the foliage of the gently spreading clumps, often intricately veined, remains decorative throughout the summer into winter. It is as well to cut off the foliage in late winter so the unfurling flower buds can be better displayed. This operation can be applied to ferns and herbaceous plants, when, if left too late can have their new growth damaged.

Seed sowing starts in earnest now, inside and out. As always, don't rush things. We're often urged, for instance, to sow sweet peas indoors in late winter. There seems to be not the slightest point in planting them out early. Unless you've got a very warm, sheltered, place for them, they'll just sit and sulk, before finally agreeing to grow when the the soil has warmed up.

Be as lavish as you can with humus; all soils benefit from it. Start digging when the soil conditions permit. And when it's enjoyable.

A recent study from Bristol University has highlighted the importance of gardens for conserving bees and other pollinators. Bee and insect populations are declining rapidly, and we are hugely dependant on them for so many food crops. Gardens can be remarkably diverse habitats, supplying insects with food throughout the year. Do bear this in mind when buying plants, or, very importantly, when 'tidying up'. The researchers, for instance, specifically mention the daisy as being a pollinator friendly plant!

May the dunnock be with you (what an overlooked but lovely little bird this is!).

John the Gardener

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LIFE AT LUNDY



The author - Sweep

Last time I told you about the puppies that my mother Gyp had got. I don't know why she wanted more babies although they are now big enough for me to play with. Gyp doesn't let me play with them when they are very little, I really don't know why, perhaps she thinks I might eat them by mistake. There were 6 of them to start with, and they took a lot of looking after

but now there are only two left so they are much more manageable, and in fact they are great fun. Although I am a grown up dog I still like to play, I don't think anyone should be too old to have fun!

Of course I do work as well, most of my work is around the yard, although I would work in the fields as well but somehow Mo doesn't always trust me to do a good job. She takes me but often puts me on a lead if there are tricky jobs to be done. One of those the other day was when we were helping Ken to move the cattle for him to clean out their shed and then to help Matthew with the sheep. Because Ken had the cattle on the back yard, we had to take the sheep on a longer route through the meadow to get them into their shed. Matthew was giving them an injection, Mo said it was to help keep them alive, because as anyone who knows anything about sheep will know, they do quite like to die.

So the first sheep job was to clear the meadow and move those sheep who were not wanted into another field. Us dogs are a good team, well I think so, and that is also the opinion of Joe and Gyp, however Matthew very often seems to have a different view. The sheep in question did not seem to want to move to the next field, despite Joe and Gyp's best efforts. So I tried to help, Mo held on to the lead, but all of a sudden it broke - freedom, now I could make those silly sheep move! However they couldn't seem to see the gate and they scattered in all directions. I was now in trouble, although I don't really think it was all my fault - why are sheep so stupid? I returned to Mo to help her to calm them down and eventually we got them through the gate.

The second sheep job was to get the sheep that Matthew wanted into the shed to be injected, this didn't prove much easier, they ran into the shed that Ken was cleaning out. Eventually we got the right sheep in the right shed and then the work could begin. My speciality is to move the sheep through to the operation site, as I have found that sheep just want to stay at the back out of the way. Joe does not help with this, he says he needs to guard the quad just in case it runs off. Gyp will help me as long as Mo is there to keep us company.



I think it's rather unfair that these two steal the limelight all the time.

Sweep

RHOSGOCH JUBILEE CLOTH PROJECT

I'm delighted to say that I can now restart the workshops!

All workshops 2-4pm in the Painscastle Hall as before, note that I've scheduled two in May so we can catch up a little.

Dates are: Wednesday March 30
Wednesday April 27
Wednesday May 11
Wednesday May 25

Over these 4 workshops we will focus on turning each of your designs from workshop 1 into coasters, so carding/spinning/dyeing and weaving. Everyone will be able to try everything or choose to focus on just one or two processes. As a group we will be able to produce and dye enough wool for everyone to weave at least one coaster in your design.

This takes us to the Jubilee weekend so there will be one further workshop afterwards to decide on the final cloth to be woven on my floor loom. I'll also be inviting anyone interested to come and see the floor loom in action. It's the size of a small room so I can't transport it!

Hope to see you on March 30, please bring your yarn wraps etc with you. You are very welcome to join us. For further details please contact: Jackie.stephens@me.co



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I will continue to offer pre-recorded classes via email or private Facebook group as well as a weekly timetabled Zoom class.

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HAYDAYCAFE

HayDay Café is restarting Wednesday 30th March



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Last Wednesday of every month at Clyro Village Hall. 12.30-3pm
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We are Dementia friendly and welcome anyone who is lonely or living with dementia.



Hay Theatre Outdoor Wonderland Project

We are now embarking on our exciting new Lottery funded Community project. Janine, our Artistic Director, is currently adapting and writing the script for our site-specific promenade "Alice in Wonderland" that has been booked to be performed at Cusop Church from August 17th to 21st.

We will be holding a free Mad Hatter's Day community event on Sunday April 10th at Glasbury Village Hall for anyone aged 7-16. There will be a Hat Making Workshop at 10.30-12.30, BYO Mad Hatter Lunch at 12.30-1, followed by an Alice in Wonderland Drama workshop at 1-3pm. To book a place, call Janine on 07733 055430 or email haytheatre@gmail.co.uk



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COFFEE BREAK TIME

Kington Writing Group

Kington Writing Group, aka Kington Scribblers, was formed around ten years ago, initially as part of Kington U3A, but soon detached itself (probably because the members at the time were too stingy to fork out for the annual subscription). Until two years ago, it met monthly at its members' homes, when the offerings from the homework were read out over cups of tea and fig rolls. For obvious reasons, this was discontinued, and now the "homework" (I hope that term doesn't strike chills), set in rotation by the members once a month, is sent out by email. Comments are invited, and these are almost entirely words of encouragement, as everyone is far too polite to criticise (no bad thing!). An upper limit of 600 words is recommended, although this is sometimes exceeded when the writer gets carried away with enthusiasm. The themes of the homework are as wide ranging as the interests of the members, and are always suffixed with "or anything else!". It's fascinating how different and distinct each submission is.

Current membership is 8 strong, and there are vague plans to get together again more regularly as the year progresses. New members are welcome. Please contact Lesley at sleepyleafy47@yahoo.co.uk if you're interested

The Bucket List

"Elsie! Wot ya doin'?"

"Well, I was 'avin' a doze till somebody yelled, nearly givin' me an 'eart attack!"

"Look Elsie. Over there!"

Elsie put her glasses back on, squinting in the dazzling sunshine to where her friend was pointing.

The Spanish sea, blue as sapphire, cradled its eager visitors in its long sinuous arms. Some swam, some were on pedal boats; toddlers hanging on to mum and dad's hands screamed with delight, jumping the spent waves on the sandy beach.

Older siblings, also whooping in delight, peered into rock pools, as yet another hapless baby crab found its way into its host's made-in-China bucket.

"Wot!"

"Over there, that parachute thing bein' pulled by a boat! That looks really amazin' we could do that for our 'excitin' and death defyin' adventure. Ya know, from our bucket list!"

"There's no death defyin' with them things luv, death'd be a certainty with us two mad women glidin' along the Spanish beach, landin' upside down, legs in the air. Somebody'd be bound to 'ave a phone and videoin' us. Then we'd go virus!

No thanks Doris. I'm keepin' my feet on terrafirma or whatever i's called.

Doris, disappointed by her friend's reaction, reflected on whether or not she was brave enough to go it alone.

"Right Else, if you won't I will."

"Wot? Will Wot?"

"To be honest, you didn't sign up for this, (it's only just occurred to me), so I will go on my own, if you don't mind, of course."

"No, this is our bucket list, so I'm comin' too. Elsie announced.

Dorothy hugged her brave friend, as she knew this was Elsie's worst nightmare. She hated heights.

Business was brisk as the ladies lined up for their instructions on what and, perhaps more importantly, what not to do 'in flight' and Dorothy's heart beat very fast, as did Elsie's, but for a different reason.

Geared up in safety harness and parachute, the ladies waited for the boat they were following to start up. Elsie thought she would faint but put on a brave face for the sake of her friend, who you'd think was about to ski down Everest as she adopted a semi-squat, ready for take off stance.

At last the boat roared into action and the ladies, hanging on for dear life, were very soon airborne.

'Wow! This is wonderful! Look over there, the coastline perfectly floating on the blue sea. And there's the couple from our hotel! Yoo-hoo! They can't hear me of course. Wow this is absolutely amazing! I'm so glad we did this!'

'I feel sick. Get me down. Whose daft idea was this?'

Later, as the ladies sipped their drinks at the beachside cafe, Doris took a couple of paracetamol out of her handbag and drank them gratefully down with her tea.

'You was right Else. It was awful!'

AD - Kington Scribblers

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At our discretion the winning poem will be published on the Hay Writers' Circle website. Original, unpublished poems, 40 lines maximum and on any subject will be accepted. Any poems submitted after the closing date may not be considered.

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CULINARY COLUMN

The New Crown, Merthyr Tydfil.

'Going off'. Before I came to Painscastle if I had heard the phrase 'she's going off again' I would have wondered if someone had a particularly nasty foot complaint or maybe a gammy leg. Now of course I know it means going somewhere other than home, maybe a trip or into town. 'Going off' is a necessity if you are farming because the work never ends and these farmers can forget that there is life outside of the farm (except at lambing time. Then there is no life apart from the small woolly kind). It doesn't take much of a change of scene to refresh the mind, and the ordinary can become exciting if you look at it the right way. We took a family trip to Merthyr Tydfil, mostly because we were in that direction to start with, but what a lovely day! Looking up the top recommendations of things to do in local towns can sometimes yield unexpected finds.

Merthyr has been built on industry and it was the largest town in Wales in the mid 19th century because of its booming ironworks. You can learn the genuinely fascinating history of the town at Cyfarthfa Castle, and explore the eclectic museum collection. There are many interesting walks in the area but for an easy option head to Garwnant Visitor Centre where you can have a wander in the woods and go to the café after for tea and cake. If you have children hankering for adventure then you can choose Bike Park Wales for a day or half day's activity, or a wet day favourite is Vertigo, the trampoline park. We visited the musician and composer Joseph Parry's cottage which is a little pocket of history set amongst the busy modern urban sprawl. The cottage is tiny and a beautifully preserved example of a 19th century Ironworker's home.

Covid has meant that my parents' mealtime requirements include eating out in the open air, which can be a bit tricky in the middle of winter in Wales. We chose 'The New Crown' because it has outdoor seating, but it is worth noting that for some people this means that the fresh air is blowing away the possibility of Covid but for others it still means outdoor smoking. The New Crown is one of the oldest pubs in Wales but has a new extension with wooden booths and heaters that managed to make us feel quite cosy on a filthy wet night. The food is a mixture of traditional pub fare and Portuguese food with a contemporary twist. I chose a mixture of tapas dishes which included Portuguese cod pasties with a chilli dipping sauce, olives, warm bread with pate and a chorizo that was set fire to at the table. We resisted warming our hands over the flaming sausage, and I fended off little hands who thought it was a sharing platter. My Gentleman Friend had a mixed grill which was amazing value for money, with a great selection of farmyard favourites to satisfy the most committed carnivore. My Mum went for homemade corned beef pie which seemed to go down a treat. The little darlings are hovering on the cusp of children's meals but the prices are reasonable so the older two picked burgers from the adult menu, and only the small fry had children's chicken nuggets and chips which were generous and tasty. Merthyr is a friendly town with a fascinating history. The New Crown is a welcoming and popular pub which is well priced and good for a family get together. With the Welsh valleys accents lilting around us we didn't realise that our own accents had been noticed until a friendly lady came over and said that she loved the way we spoke- it was 'like listening to Mary Poppins!' Luckily Merthyr had something for everyone and she had caught us on a good day- otherwise it might have been more Miss Trunchbull than Mary Poppins!

Food *** Service ***** Value **** Atmosphere ***

Portuguese Custard Tarts

These custard tarts are always an absolute treat from the Hay Market but I have never tried to make them before. I don't think I will ever be the sort of person who has time to make their own puff pastry so shop bought takes away the fuff factor. Double the ingredients and then give some to your favourite people because if you are making 12 you may as well make 24, and your favourites will certainly thank you!

Ingredients

1 whole egg (large)
2 egg yolks (large)
115g golden caster sugar
2 tbsp cornflour
400ml full fat (creamy) milk
2 tsp vanilla extract
1 sheet ready rolled puff pastry

Method

Lightly grease a 12 hole muffin tin and pre-heat oven to 200C/180C fan/Gas 6
Put egg, yolks, sugar & cornflour in a pan and mix well together then gradually add the milk until mixture is well mixed and smooth.
Place pan on medium heat and stir constantly until mixture thickens and comes to the boil. Remove pan from heat and stir in vanilla extract.
Put custard in a glass/ceramic bowl to cool and cover with cling film to prevent skin forming.
Cut pastry sheet into two pieces and place them on top of each other. Roll the pastry tightly, from the short side, into a log and cut the log into 12 even sized rounds.
On a lightly floured board, roll each round into a disc (approx. 10cm) and press the pastry discs into the muffin tin.
Spoon in the cooled custard and bake for 20-25mins until golden on top. Leave to cool in the tin for 5mins then move to a cooling rack to finish cooling although they can be eaten warm.

From www.bbcgoodfood.com

GARDENING CLUB NEWS

Thursday 10th March - "Beyond the Garden Gate" with Gail Jones from the NGS
Saturday 9th April - Easter Bingo
Thursday 12 May - OPEN TO ALL - Keeping Yourself Safe - A talk by our local community police officers
New members are always welcome; subscription is £5 per year. For more information please contact Edwina Griffiths, Pat Harley or Allison Joyce.

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My Christmas Goodreads

It's always good to have a lovely new book to read and Christmas 2021 was kind to me.

My first book was "Small Things Like These" by Claire Keegan, published 2021.

This book was also featured on BBC2 "Between the Covers" as a Book Club pick and also abridged for BBC Radio 4's "Book at Bedtime."

The book with its well spaced 114 pages could, I suppose, be called a Novella. However, despite being a short story it is a real page turner, easily read in one sitting. Set in the Irish town of New Ross in the lead up to Christmas 1985, it tells the story of unforgettable links between Irish Society and the Catholic Church. The main character is Bill Furlong and the author tells of his difficult past, his happy present family life and his decision to take a stand on principle, no matter what.

Bill was born in 1946 to a single mother who was a domestic servant to a widow who let them stay with her in the big house. Bill's mother died when he was a young lad and so he was fostered by the widow and her farmhand. When he was old enough, she helped him start up a coal and timber business. He married and had five daughters but he always got upset by the poverty around him especially when, on his delivery rounds, he saw the plight of young girls at the local convent. What was going on behind those doors was never challenged by the wider community but Bill couldn't look away. He thinks about his own past and how different his life might have been had he not learned the value of kindness and standing up for what is morally right. Bill could no longer turn a blind eye.

Exposing the Magdalene Laundries, it is a powerful story of courage, heroism and defiance and I loved it.

My second book "Secrets Never To Be Told" by Fiona Chesterton, published in November 2021, is a true story of a windfall inheritance that had been under investigation for the best part of two decades. After initially thinking that it was all a scam, the author sets out on her own voyage of discovery. After contact from an heir hunter she learns about her inheritance from a distant cousin called Jessie who lived in Canada. Not knowing of a Canadian branch of her Leicester family, she just has to find out more.

The author decides that she would trace Jessie's life journey from her early life in The Midlands to the rest of her life in Canada. She finds out as much as possible in the UK before making several trips to Canada to follow in Jessie's footsteps. She learned how to navigate the many records/archive offices, learning the history of women in the 1900s and Canadian history along the way. She discovered that Jessie had emigrated to Canada before WW1 and was a domestic servant exported as "surplus."

In parallel with Jessie's story, the author takes us back to the 1960s when she was a child and living her own life of social isolation. She reveals that her own personal story has much in common with Jessie's some 100 years earlier.

It is a wonderful story of tangled secrets and how being born illegitimate shaped both their lives. This story is so well researched and if you like both genealogy and history you will thoroughly enjoy this compelling story, as I did.

A little while after I had read this book I heard Fiona Chesterton on "Women's Hour" being interviewed about her story and her five year quest to unlock Jessie's life story. It was so fascinating to hear from the author first hand. She explained that first and foremost she is a television journalist, editor and producer for the BBC and Channel 4 and this was her first full length book. Cherry Williams



HOW WILL YOU SPEND YOUR TIME THIS SPRING?

Did you know clumps of snowdrops that have finished flowering can be lifted in March, while still in leaf; carefully split into smaller clumps, then replant to the same depth in their newly chosen positions, naturalising in time into spectacular drifts.

Our first Powys opening is on Mother's Day 27th March, Oak Cottage, Welshpool SY21 7JP 2pm - 5pm. A visit to a National Garden Scheme garden makes a wonderful gift for garden loving mums. For all gardens opening over Mother's Day Weekend go to ngs.org.uk/mothers-day-gardens

Planting a tree for the Queen's Jubilee? This time of year is a great time, so long as the ground is not waterlogged or frozen. With our partners at the Woodland Trust, find information on choosing trees, tips and hints to get you planting or simply enjoy a woodland walk at ngs.org.uk/woodlandtrust

Our new ambassador is Jo Whiley, the Radio 2 presenter, and Arit Anderson, a presenter on BBC Gardeners' World, has joined the team of trustees. We have also announced a new partnership with the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust, aimed at promoting a wider understanding of the importance of wetlands and wet spaces in nature and in our gardens. This is similar to our partnership with the Woodland Trust. These links make sense to me as gardeners can make small changes that will have a positive impact on our natural landscape. More at ngs.org.uk/wwtpartnership

To end with two local names - Deborah Evans and Sarah Wheeler, Queen's Nurses (QN), have taken on the co-chair role for the Welsh Queen's Nurse Regional Group. Both are practicing nurses for Powys Teaching Health Board. This brings to over 65 QN in Wales. Their Strategic Plan (2021-25) underpins the central mantra of driving forward improvements in nursing care for people in their homes and the community. The National Garden Scheme funds the Queen's Nurse programme and a wide range of other activities. A final fact - The Queen's Nursing Institute is the Oldest Nursing Charity in the world recorded by the Guinness World Records at 134 years old. Thank you to everyone, look what the supporters, volunteers, garden owners and visitors have helped us achieve. For more information, please contact: Gail Jones (South Powys) gail.jones@ngs.org.uk 0797 410 3692



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SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thrs Mar 31st LIG Painscastle Village Hall 7.30pm
 Fri Apr 8th School break up for Easter holidays
 Mon Apr 25th Back to School
 Thrs April 28th LIG Painscastle Village Hall 7.30pm
 Sat April 30th—Mon May 2nd Talgarth Walking Festival
 Sat May 21st Concert at Erwood Village Hall 7pm —
 Rhayader Male Voice Choir

HERMON CHAPEL RHOSGOCH

SERVICES EVERY SUNDAY AT 2.30pm
 April 15th Good Friday Service 7pm
 April 24th United service at Rhosgoch
 May 1st No Service—Painscastle Reunion

**PAINSCASTLE BAPTIST CHAPEL
 REUNION SERVICE**

To be held on
 Sunday May 1st at 2.30pm
 Speaker: Rev Brian Reardon, Builth Wells
 Afternoon tea to follow.

Like so many others, the chapel has not held a meeting for two years. With only a few members they are looking forward to welcoming both old and new friends to help maintain the future of the chapel. Please come and support

**MORIAH BAPTIST CHAPEL,
 LLANDEILO GRABAN**

Sunday March 20th Communion Rev Gordon Bingham
 Sunday April 10th Joint service with church Rev Andrew Wyton
 Good Friday April 15th Sankey Evening at 7pm
 Easter Sunday April 17th Rev Steve Wallis
 April 24th Combined service at Rhosgoch
 May 1st Painscastle Reunion Service
 May 8th Special service Rev Gareth Evans
 Services at 2.30pm

EBENEZER CHAPEL, NEWCHURCH

Sunday March 13th Brian Reardon
 Sunday April 10th Palm Sunday Brian Reardon
 Sunday May 8th Brian Reardon
 All services at 3pm
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**ERWOOD & PAINSCASTLE
 CHURCHES SERVICES**

Sun 13th March 10.30am	2nd Sunday in Lent Llandeilo Graban	Eucharist
Sun 20th March 10.30am	3rd Sunday in Lent Bryngwyn	Eucharist
Fri 25th March 7:00pm	The Annunciation Crickadarn	Eucharist
Sun 27th March 10:30am	4th Sunday in Lent Aberedw	Eucharist
Sun 3rd April 10:30am	Lent 5 Gwenddwr	Eucharist
Sun 10th April 10:30am	Palm Sunday Llanbedr	Eucharist
Thurs 13th April 7:00pm	Holy Thursday Aberedw	Lords Supper
Fri 15th April 2:00pm	Good Friday Llandewi Fach	Stations of the Cross
Sat 16th April 7:00pm	Easter Eve Aberedw	Easter Vigil
Sun 17th April 10:30am	Easter Day Gwenddwr	Eucharist of the Resurrection
Sun 24th April 10:30am	2nd of Easter Llanbedr	Eucharist of the Resurrection

May the Risen Christ dwell in your hearts and your homes, bringing joy and peace to you and those you love now and always.
A Happy Easter to you all!
Paul and Carolyn XX

GLADESTRY CHURCH

Sunday 17 April, Easter Day, Holy Communion 9.30am St Mary's Church, Gladestry.
 Rev Rachael Storer 01544 360760

GLADESTRY NEWS

GLADESTRY SHOP & PUB

The shop is open at the Royal Oak, from Tuesday to Saturday 11.30am to 2.30pm The pub is open:-
 Tuesday to Friday 11.30am - 2.30pm & 5.30pm to close
 Saturday 12noon to close
 Sunday 12noon to 5pm Tel: 01544-370586 for bookings
 Portuguese Night Wednesday March 16th
 First Saturday of every month - brunch 11.30am to 1pm

Pop-Up Café at Gladestry Village Hall every Monday 10.30am to 11.30am. Bring your own drink, come and enjoy a chat.

FOOD BANK

There was a wonderful response for the Kington Food Bank.
 A big 'thank you' to everyone who gave. The F B is ongoing throughout the year and St Mary's, Gladestry, has a box in the porch for donations of non-perishable foods, and toiletries. Monetary donations are also welcome and can be left in Church Barn post box. For further info contact Ann Dean 07976097171 or anndean91@yahoo.com

Tablet Foil Recycling

There are now several options for the recycling of Tablet foils. You can drop off your bags of foils at:

- Hay on Wye Library:
Monday- 10.30am-12.30pm and 1.30pm-6pm
Thursday- 10.30am-12.30pm and 1.30pm-6pm
Friday- 1.30pm-6pm
Saturday- 10am-12.30pm
- Clyro Church porch
- Llangorse Church porch
- Squirrels Nest Rhosgoch on the following dates:
4th-7th March
1st-4th April
6th-9th May

W.I.

Bryngwyn WI cancelled its January meeting which should have been willow weaving. Our instructor needed to put the willows to soak to make them pliable before Christmas, at a time when lockdown rules were still uncertain. Our February meeting was a great success when we went to the home of Sue Ievers for a cookery demonstration. Three delicious dishes were prepared - and sampled with great enthusiasm! Sue also gave us many helpful hints.

March's meeting will feature member Heather Pink who will share her knowledge of wool processing and dyeing. We will all have a try at dyeing with natural dyes. It should be a colourful evening. Our April meeting will be the delayed willow weaving class with Cherry Williams.

Bryngwyn WI meets in Painscastle village hall on the first Monday of the month at 7pm. New members are always welcome. For further information contact Helen on 01982 560492.

WINTER SCHEDULE FOR AUTUMN COMPETITIONS on SATURDAY 15th OCTOBER 2022 IN PAINSCASTLE VILLAGE HALL THEME- SEASIDE

OPEN

1. A Jar of Chutney
2. 5 Pieces of Homemade Fudge
3. A Sea Creature— Any Medium
4. Handmade Birthday Card—Any Medium
5. Photograph of the Seaside with a caption
6. A Seaside postcard
7. A picture depicting the Seaside—Any Medium
8. My Favourite Souvenir from the Seaside
9. 1 A4 side Short Story titled A Day at the Seaside

GRANDPARENTS

1. Jar of Jam
2. An item using Sea Shells
3. My Favourite Fridge Magnet
4. A Ball—Any Medium

MEN ONLY

1. A Coastal Photograph
2. An Item made from String or Rope
3. A piece of Driftwood

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Gaynor on 01497851243 or Gwyneth on 01497851264

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EDITOR'S NOTES

I hope you enjoy this edition of the 'Gossip'. Thanks to the many people who have sent contributions in. Special thanks for all the photos.

There are a few events happening and most of the local groups and clubs are now up and running so please support them if you can. This time the Kington Writing Group have sent us a coffee break item; I hope you enjoy it. We also have a holiday report alongside our usual contributors. We are always looking for pieces large or small to make this a good local read.

I would like to thank our delivery team for their outstanding efforts. Deadline for next issue [May/June 2022] is 30th April 2022. [mlloydlundu@outlook.com or 01497-851609].

Subscriptions run from September each year and are £6 for local delivery, £12 if posted or pick up a copy from Clyro Filling Station, Boughrood Shop or Gladestry pub.

Articles are the opinion of the respective writers. All errors and omissions excepted (E&OE).

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POWYS PRATTLES

by County Councillor James Gibson-Watt

WARNING: This article contains a blizzard of figures and some content may offend!

By the time you read this Powys County Council will have set its 2022/23 Budget, taking its net revenue budget to over £300 million. At the start of this Council in 2017/18 its net revenue budget was £240 million. That £60 million increase in just 5 years has been funded for the most part by you, the long-suffering Council Tax payer. Until the coming financial year, the grant received from the Welsh Government (which makes up about 70% of the county council's budget) had increased by only modest annual amounts. In total, Council Tax in Powys has increased by over 27% between 2017/18 and 2021/22. Have you noticed? Council Tax only ever increases – it never goes down. Funny that.

However, for 2022/23 the Welsh Government recently announced that the county council would receive a whopping increase of £18.5 million to its grant, up 9.6% on last year, which has been followed by further significant funding since then. Yet the council's Cabinet was initially intent on increasing Council Tax by a further 3.9%, then suddenly changed that to 3.4%, both rates that I and my opposition group colleagues found unacceptable. Indeed, at one point during the Council's chaotic original Budget meeting in late February, an amendment from opposition group members to introduce a Council Tax freeze (nil increase) in Powys from April was passed (just), only for it to be overturned (just) later in the meeting on the recommendation of the Cabinet Member for Finance! A mess; so the Budget meeting was adjourned to try to sort out that mess before a further Budget meeting could be held. That Council Tax figure has since been whittled down somewhat to I-don't-know-what figure at the time of writing (the Editor needed this article before a final decision had been made!) Such are the agonies of budget setting, but if ever the county council wanted to assist its residents at this time of extraordinary increases in the costs of living, now was the moment. The extra funding made Zero % possible and fully justified.

On the 5th May you will have a chance to elect your next county councillor, but the county council ward boundaries will change. The area of Glasbury ward that currently lies to the north of the Bachawy river, including the villages of Painscastle and Rhosgoch, will move in to the Llanellwedd Ward and join with the communities of Aberedw, Hundred House, Cregina and Franksbridge. Personally, I am very sorry about these changes because representing the people of the Bachawy Valley has been a rare privilege. But if I am re-elected to represent the Glasbury Ward I will no longer enjoy that privilege.

However, if the Editor will allow it, I hope I am able to contribute to *The Gossip* on occasions in the future.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWS

Chairman, Sian Powell, Lletycoed
Vice-chairman, Bruce Evans, Lower Pentre
David Nicholls, Castlefield Close
Jenny Smith, Penrhiw
Becky Miles, The Cwm
Iris Lloyd, Caemawr
Andrew Ritchie, Castle Brook
Russell Bowkett, The Fferm
Clerk: Marion Hughes, Waun y Pentre 01497 851628
Minutes are on the Painscastle-Rhosgoch website:
www.painscastle-rhosgoch.co.uk

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NEWS FROM WELSH ASSEMBLY

It has been a busy and varied couple of months as your Senedd Member for Brecon and Radnorshire.

In early January I was delighted to meet with Sharon Hammond and Stella Owen at Newbridge on Wye as part of NFU Cymru's #GrowingTogether campaign. It is crucial that we plant more trees which will enhance our local habitats and protect our environment for future generations, but in doing so we must ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places.

I've been out and about throughout our communities and recently visited PAR Homes development site in Brecon. With many residents now moved into finished homes, and more houses still under construction, it is good to see house-building in the constituency creating much needed housing stock for all ages and providing employment for local traders. This could be the last major housing development in our constituency for some years given the restrictive phosphate regulation requirements. We need to encourage house-building and new developments – great for our communities, it's good for the local economy to have a diverse housing stock for the people of Brecon and Radnorshire.

It's always a pleasure to catch up with CFFI Cymru Wales YFC and in January I met with Phil Ellis to discuss young people's mental health and the amazing work YFC organisations do up and down the country for their local communities. As your Senedd Member, I'm determined to listen to the views of local people and organisations in our area.

I recently visited the Windfall Centre in Llandrindod Wells. It was great to see this fantastic facility in the heart of Mid Wales. They support the emotional health of children and families and I heard some heart-warming stories where young lives have been transformed by the centre.

I visited Hay on Wye to meet Hay's very own "Mr Dial-A-Ride". The service offers a lifeline for many residents, enabling them to get out and about – for social, shopping, doctor's appointment and so much more. Services like dial-a-ride play an essential role in combatting social isolation and loneliness, for all age groups. It is reassuring that support from organisations like "Mr Dial-A-Ride" is available.

I recently met with Environment Minister Rebecca Pow and Natural Resources Wales & Welsh Water to discuss cleaning up Brecon & Radnorshire's rivers. What is needed is action and greater resources for Natural Resources Wales. The Westminster Government has introduced some tough targets for the water companies but in Wales, all we have is the finger of blame pointing at Welsh farmers.

To keep up with my work please follow my Facebook page @JamesEvansMS and my website – www.jamesevans.wales James Evans MS



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CONGRATULATIONS

Best wishes to Jess (nee Fromant) & Jay Bailey on the birth on 25th January of Maisie-Rose Shân Bailey a little sister for Oliver (6) and Rowan (3).

Congratulations to Sophie Box and Marc Brown on the birth of a baby boy, Alfie Jake Brown, on 6th February, 2022. He is the first grandchild for Wynn Brown and a first great grandchild for Ruby Bagley. Best wishes to all the family.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER

Some personal news to begin this edition of the gossip is my appointment (following the Government reshuffle) as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the new Leader of the House of Commons, Mark Spencer MP. Having served as PPS to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for two years and sad to leave the team but at long last it gives me the chance to talk about farming in the House of Commons Chamber!

Last week, I welcomed the Australian High Commissioner, The Honourable George Brandis, to Brecon. During the visit, the High Commissioner toured the Barracks in Brecon and met with Brigadier Andrew Dawes, Head of the Army in Wales. He received a comprehensive briefing from the Brigadier about Wales's role in the UK Armed Forces and the support the Army has offered during the Coronavirus pandemic. With events around the world taking a tragic turn, it was a vital chance to discuss the close defence and security partnership between the UK and Australia. We also visited a family farm in Talgarth where a group of local farmers discussed number of issues affecting the UK farming sector, not least the recently agreed trade deal between Australia and Great Britain.

As well as a historic partnership between the two countries, the deal is the gateway towards the UK joining the CPTPP (the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership) – an alliance of emerging economies in the Pacific Rim. It is so important that Welsh farmers benefit from these new markets and for the UK to regain its place as a leader in global trade.

James and I continue working with colleagues across the border in finding a solution to the condition of our precious rivers. We recently welcomed the Environment Minister Rebecca Pow to Builth Wells to discuss water pollution on the Wye & Usk. Discussions continue with a number of stakeholders from Welsh Water, Natural Resources Wales, the Environment Agency and DEFRA to our farmers and builders across Brecon and Radnorshire. All too often our farming community is blamed but we are clear that all polluters will pay and we won't stop until our rivers are cleaner.

Lambing season is my favourite time of year but it provides us with an important reminder of the need to uphold the Countryside Code. Attacks on livestock are too frequent and many new dog owners do not understand how their dogs can cause extreme distress to a pregnant ewe. The NFU have super downloadable graphics on their website which are excellent for sharing with your friends and family. Do share them on your Facebook pages so that everyone understands the need to close gates, take their rubbish home and, above all, keep their dogs under control. If I can help in any way please get in touch.

I can be reached on Office 029 2233 8545 Mob 07515-034124 or Email Fay.Jones.MP@parliament.uk



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PAINSCASTLE RECYCLING & RUBBISH COLLECTION

Recycling is collected every Monday, **rubbish** collection is every three weeks and the next dates for rubbish are:
March 28h April 18th May 9th May 30th

Garden waste is collected every fortnight on Mondays from March to November for an annual fee,
March 15th March 29th April 12th April 26th

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Help in the Well

Have you noticed that the Well in the centre of Painscastle has become rather overgrown? Although it only needs a couple of tidy-ups a year (one in the Spring and one in the Autumn), due to health problems, Brenda and I have been unable to attack it during 2021 and it is beginning to look rather unloved. Could anyone take on the responsibility for arranging a community get-together one afternoon to cut back the rubbish? It could also do with the ministrations of a chap with a chainsaw to take out some boughs – and probably the conifer that is obscuring the signpost. In the past, Roy and James have kindly provided a couple of dumpy bags for the rubbish and I expect they would do the same again if asked nicely. Any volunteers?

Sue Farmer

PAINSCASTLE VILLAGE HALL

It is so great to have Painscastle Village Hall busy again after a sustained period of closure for Covid and renovations.

There are plenty of things happening, from Tots Group on a Tuesday morning to Bowls on a Wednesday evening. It has been great to have YFC back in the Hall and the hybrid Local Interest Group Meetings too, making the most of the Wi-Fi that has recently been installed. Thanks to all the different groups who continue to use and support the Hall.

We hope that everyone has approved of the renovations that we have been able to undertake using Covid grant money. We have used local suppliers and with still more that we want to do, we are now looking for grant funding and fundraising. The first step towards this was a successful Race Night on Saturday 19th February, a massive thank you to all who attended, bought horses or sponsored races. If you have any ideas for other community events that you would like to see at the Hall please get in touch.

Over the weekend of Thursday June 2nd to Sunday June 5th, the whole country will be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. As in previous years, we are looking to arrange a beacon up at the Roundabout on 2nd June and a celebration in the Hall beforehand.

The Hall Committee and the Community Council will be holding an initial meeting to discuss plans on Tuesday 8th March at 7.30pm in Painscastle Village Hall. Please come along if you want to get involved or have any ideas for the day. We would appreciate any support that anyone is able to give.

If you can't make the meeting but would like to be involved please let either Meg (meg_171@yahoo.co.uk) or Sian (sianpowell87@hotmail.co.uk) know. Thank you!

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PAINSCASTLE BOWLING

The club is looking for new members to come and join in this fun activity in Painscastle Village Hall, every Wednesday at 7.30pm. For more details ring Ruby Bagley 01982-560616 or Sue Farmer 01497-851651

PAINSCASTLE BUS SHELTER

Just lately the bus shelter has suffered a little from a lack of love. Please if you take books to the shelter can you put them on the shelves so that they are easily available for people to choose from. Anything left on the floor will get wet so please only put items on the shelves. We want everyone to use the shelter as a hub for lending and borrowing books and other items of interest. We would like to preserve it as a tidy place where people can sit wait for school transport, enjoy the local information and illustrations and browse the books, so please help with this when leaving your very welcome books for others to enjoy.

We are still collecting old postage stamps or old bras which help raise funds for The Bracken Trust in Llandrindod Wells.

Old printer cartridges are also required for re-cycling, to raise money for the Centre of Alternative Technology. It must be a virgin cartridge ie an original cartridge eg HP, Lexmark; a cartridge that has not been refilled previously and a cartridge that does not carry any other branding than the original (Cartridge World, Tesco, Asda not allowed).



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**VIV MARRIOT
1952—2021**

Viv Marriott taught in the 'middle class' at Rhosgoch School from 1985 to 1992. This report was taken from the eulogy which Jim, her husband of 42 years prepared for her funeral in January this year.

Viv was brought up in North London and met her lifelong partner Jim on a blind date arranged by some friends. They set up home together in Barnet. While Viv began her teaching career with the Inner London Education Authority working in Kentish Town, often apparently being given some 'dodgy' gifts from gangster parents. It was Jim who introduced her to a love of the outdoors and from there in 1985 they discovered Herefordshire. Viv applied for a teacher's post at Rhosgoch School having assured the governors that she could speak Welsh, she joined the team. Here Sheila McGough introduced her to yoga, which became a lifelong passion.

After seven years it was time to move on and they moved to Derbyshire. Viv took up the headship at Hague Bar, New Mills a small school that suited Viv perfectly. She then took up a headship in a bigger school in Stockport at All Saints School in Marple. Viv was a great communicator and storyteller.

After another headship this time in Sheffield, both Viv and Jim retired in 2007 and moved into Special Needs Support. While on the outdoor front they trained as walk guides and spent many happy years leading walk all over the UK and Europe. This led to ski hosting, hosting bespoke ski holidays in the Swiss Alps.

They moved several times living in Cressbrook and Litton in the Peak District where her love of wildflowers came to the fore. When they moved to Buxton, Viv really had come home, so much to do within a short distance. A home where she made cakes for everyone and a garden where she could plant to her heart's delight. Then spend the evenings with Jim relating the ever essential stories.



Thanks to Sheila and Robert MacGough who kept up the friendship which began when Viv taught in Rhosgoch School.



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COFFEE, CAKE, TEA AND CHAT

Starting on 3rd March for people from Hay and all surrounding areas.



I would also be very grateful if anyone has any spare jigsaws, games such as Scrabble and dominoes, art and craft supplies, knitting wool and needles, scraps of fabric for patchwork etc. puzzles and adult colouring books etc. If anyone is able to come and help at any of the sessions they will be very welcome. Sylvia Illingsworth

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Notes from New Mexico

In the US each state has a slogan that is displayed on car number plates. (Why don't we have that in Radnorshire? And what would it be? Answers on a postcard please...)

Anyway in New Mexico the plates say 'New Mexico, Land of Enchantment', and that is about right. It is a most beautiful, empty and undiscovered region. Santa Fe, the state capital, itself not much bigger than Hereford, has no high-rise buildings, is largely constructed of adobe mud brick or adobe look-alike materials, coloured the earth-red of the stony arid landscape. Just north of Santa Fe the Rocky Mountains divide into two sub-ranges giving the city spectacular snow covered back-drops to the west and east, and then dying out into the vast deserts of the South West. These continue, just like the landscape of every Western movie you've ever seen, across southern New Mexico to the border of Mexico itself where the high sierras rise into the clouds.

The altitude of the Santa Fe is about 7000 ft so the air is thin and clear. Brilliant sun and blue skies greeted us as we stepped out of the plane at the tiny friendly airport, which has a terminal building smaller than Hereford station, and is operated almost entirely by one cheerful and hardworking woman, who staffs the check-in desk, loads and drives the baggage train, pushes the passenger steps and waves the aircraft to its stand.

Our son Patrick has lived and worked in the SW USA for six years so we feel quite at home there, with friends of our own and a growing familiarity with the city and its setting. In December 2021, we finally managed a joyful reunion with him, after a three-year gap. Being there for a month allowed us plenty of time to explore, as well as very nicely fast-forwarding the British winter. Mo asked for something for the *Gossip*. Here are two very short somethings that I wrote for friends.

BORDER CROSSING

Crossing borders can be a hassle. For us, going to the States, it wasn't too bad. Just much bafflingly complicated Covid paperwork and a lot of queuing. Or standing in line as they say over there.

But how much worse for the cocaine smugglers, as we were reminded when we took a trip to the sleepy border town of Douglas, Arizona, which is separated from its much livelier Mexican neighbour



Agua Prieta by an 18-foot fence, and a heavily fortified border crossing. Driven by curiosity and desperation for a decent cup of coffee, we walked through the checkpoint into Mexico, past a large notice reminding us that 'Ammunition and Firearms are prohibited in Mexico', into a bustling town, popular with narcotic and people smugglers, and prosperous from their activities. At least, guns here would probably be in the adult hands of a few strictly disciplined Cartel members rather than every crazed schoolkid as in the States.

But the other reason to feel safe on the streets of this supposedly lawless town is that actually most of the

lawlessness takes place underground. What Agua Prieta and Douglas are really famous for are the tunnels constructed by the legendary Mexican drug cartel boss, Joachim 'El Chapo' Guzman. We were shown the site of one of these by a veteran American journalist, long settled in Mexico, who had covered the story.

On the Mexican side of the frontier, across the road from the border fence, a pleasant looking villa boasted a pool table which, with a turn of a valve, rose hydraulically to reveal the entrance to a concrete lined tunnel, 30 feet below the road. On the American side the tunnel emerged into a small modern industrial shed, which housed a truck wash facility. Perfect cover for an endless flow of empty trucks to come and go, the cargo concealed below their false bottoms.

Our journalist friend explained that the site had been owned by an American Justice of the Peace who was happy to sell it for 30 times its market value to an unknown Mexican businessman. Douglas, he reckoned, was the most corrupt town in the USA.

Hundreds of tons of cocaine entered the American market via this route.

El Chapo himself proved a tricky customer to catch and detain. Every time the police closed in on one of his safe houses, he would make his escape by – you guessed – a tunnel. And then when finally imprisoned he escaped

through, yes, a tunnel from the shower compartment of his cell. Eventually he was caught and, for the time being, is in a high security prison. Watch this space.



After sampling the cheap and delicious cafes, shops and restaurants of Agua Prieta, we made our way back to Douglas and continued our exploration of the wide, empty American South West with a 450-mile drive through red deserts fringed with lines of mountains to find Santa Fe, Patrick's home town, under crisp snow and sparkling sunny blue skies.

A TRIP TO CLIFTON

We have just been to Clifton! Not the posh suburb of Bristol, but Clifton Arizona: a small mostly abandoned mining town in a gorge by a river. A broken down, unpaved main street with some once rather grand shops still standing, windows boarded up. Some gaps. Some collapsing buildings. A couple of really classic American cars rotting away beside an abandoned workshop. A busy railyard and sidings in the middle of it all where half-mile long freight trains are being shunted and assembled with the usual five locomotives. A friendly old hotel, under reconstruction, where the locals were playing pool and working the jukebox in the bar when we arrived, late and tired from a long drive. They greeted us warmly, pulled beers and switched from Beachboys and Doors to the Kinks and Fleetwood Mac in our honour while the landlady rustled up chicken and corn soup for us. Two gas stations. Two diners. A few houses still occupied, many clearly

not. Quite a few maybes. A new Family Dollar store where things don't all cost exactly a dollar but not a lot more. A smart new marijuana dispensary, confusingly called the Clifton Bakery. No bread there. A closed museum. An abandoned town jail. That's about it. What was that all about?

All becomes clear when you drive five miles down the road through a winding gorge between steep orange cliffs which you eventually realise are manmade. You climb into a huge valley full of strange equipment, massive conveyor belts criss-crossing above the road, ranges of metal sheds covering a whole hillside, huge tanks of nasty looking, frothing liquid. By now all the hillsides are stepped and the valley floor has disappeared out of sight below you. Round the next corner and the scale doubles again. The road continues. This is the Morenci mine, one of the largest copper mines in the world. Eventually you find a place to pull over. The scale of the excavation is vast. A procession of 250-ton dumper trucks grinding very slowly up a temporary road that spirals to the rim of the hole look like ants. It is raining today and they are churning the surface. Every 10 trucks or so a large grader follows on, restoring the surface. The grader is the sort of thing you see making motorways over here, but then the temporary road is easily the width of four-lane dual carriageway.



Right at the bottom of the pit, so far away that it looks like a speck, a massive electric mining shovel scoops up rock and earth in 60-ton bucketfuls. In three or four scoops that dumper is full and moves off, making way for the next one.

The town of Clifton grew up and prospered with the Morenci mine. Copper prices rose and fell. In the 1980s during a world copper glut the mine became unprofitable and output had to be cut. A bitter battle developed between the mining unions and the mine management. Violence erupted on the streets of Clifton. It was America's equivalent of our miners' strikes, but with a slightly different outcome. The miners unions were weakened, but the industry continued. But Clifton, the seat of the trouble, was allowed to decline and a new company town was developed nearer the centre of the mine. Leaving Clifton's ghost a haunting sight.

Robert Collingwood

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RHOSGOCH AND PAINSCASTLE TODDLER GROUP

Springtide greetings from Toddler Group! It's been a busy start to 2022 for our little ones with many special calendar dates falling on Tuesdays.

At the end of January, the children celebrated Dydd Santes Dwynwyn and enjoyed painting salt dough hearts and sprinkling them with glitter and most recently the children came to group wearing Welsh themed clothes and they made leeks out of kitchen roll and wool. Other craft activities have included polar bear and snowdrop collages along with rolling out and cutting lemony yellow play dough. The kitchen, shop, dollies, ride-on vehicles and soft play have all been big hits this term!

Our sessions have been busy with at least double figures of children each week. It is a pleasure to see them all interacting happily with one another again. It all goes quiet at snack time when the munching commences. The children all wash their hands and sit at the table together to enjoy their elevenses. We are still currently asking parents and grandparents to bring a healthy snack for their little person/people. As always, hot drinks are available for adults to enjoy throughout the session.

Our Facebook page is updated weekly with 'what's on' and confirms if the group is running that week. Pam, Becky and I are still in a position of being the only committee members so occasionally, the group can't run weekly due to us having our own work/life commitments. We are so grateful for all of the help that we have received this year with packing away at the end of sessions and washing up. It makes such a difference! Please get in touch if you feel you could help setting up (needn't be every week, could be on a rota) or would like a place on the committee.

Toddler group runs in term time on Tuesdays from 9.30 – 11.30am in Painscastle Village Hall. For £1, your child can have lots of fun playing, crafting and singing. We are still asking that parents, grandparents and toddlers only attend if they are feeling well.

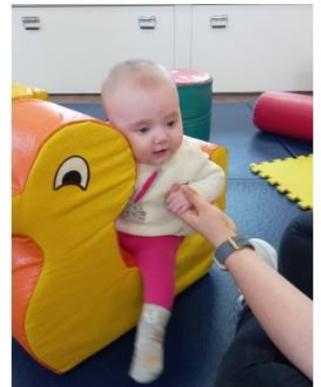
We are crossing our fingers for improving weather so that we can start playing outside and digging the garden. Come and join in the fun!

Caz Phillips
 See overleaf for the evidence of Tuesday fun.

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