

CONNECT

The Magazine of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit

Autumn 2017

Working Together in Penlan

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The Methodist Church in Swansea has formally agreed to work with the Grace and Truth Church in Penlan. Pastor Carl Roberts who leads Grace and Truth as well as Step by Step (Wales) along with his wife Vivienne are now leading regular Sunday morning services at the Methodist Church on Heol Gwyrsoydd. Joint services with the Methodist, United Reformed Church and Grace and Truth will take place once a month in the evening.

The Superintendent of the Methodist Circuit and minister of Penlan, Rev Howard Long said, 'This is a really positive development for Penlan. We have a church building in very good condition that is used extensively throughout the week by various groups but with only a few members we have only been able to hold monthly worship services in the evening. Working with Carl and Vivienne will mean the church is open every Sunday morning and will put worship at the heart of everything we do.'

Throughout the summer friends from Mumbles and Wesley churches have been helping maintain the grounds at the church which has generated plenty of interest in the community. This quickly turned into a weekly gardening project which has benefited from a £2000 grant from Grow Local Swansea. We are very grateful to Swansea Sail (Action For Children) for applying for and securing this important funding.

Things look really hopeful for Penlan.

Find out more about Step by Step (Wales) and turn to page 22

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news in brief

Uniting Church Sketty

Friday 29th September and Saturday 30th September –
Two one act plays by Madcaps.
Saturday 7th October – coffee morning 10.00 a.m. to
12 noon – proceeds for Operation Christmas Child
Saturday 4th November – coffee morning and craft
fayre 10.00 a.m. – 12 noon.

Brunswick

FAN 'Friends and Neighbours' every Wednesday at
10.30 a.m.
Intercessory Prayer Meeting every Wednesday at
4.00 p.m.
Coffee mornings on the last Saturday of every month.

Mumbles

Theo's Coffee Shop open daily 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.
Wednesday Lunchtime Worship – 12.15 p.m.
Thursday 5th October Mumbles Got Talent with Phoenix
Choir and Kevin Johns.
Saturday 2nd December Christmas Fayre

Wesley

Bible Study every Tuesday 10.00 a.m.
Lite Bites – every Thursday 12 noon – 2.00 p.m.

Penlan

Special Sunday evening services:
8th October
4.15 p.m. Come and learn about the new circuit Ogof
Adullam
5.15 p.m. Bring and Share Tea
6.30 p.m. Evening Service led by the Circuit Mission
Group – preacher Pastor Carl Roberts
12th November

Morrison

30th November the Phoenix Male Voice Choir
Christmas Fayre – date tba

Murton

Thursday 12th October at 7.30 p.m. Launch of Stable
Trail 2017
Saturday 9th December Stable Trail 2017

Tell us all your news

Keep us informed with news of people, activities
and special events by sending your contribution to
the Editor or sending her an email.

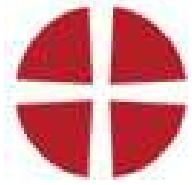
***Deadline for the next issue is Monday
6th November 2017***

The first duty of love is to listen.

Paul Tillich



Message from the Superintendent



Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Connect magazine. I hope that you enjoy reading all of the interesting articles concerning the work of the Methodist Church here in Swansea and the wider Methodist Connexion.

As many of you will know the Methodist Conference met in June at Birmingham. You can read all about what happened and the important decisions taken in the special Conference digest found in the centre pages.

You will see that the Conference is calling all Methodist members to enthusiasm in prayer and acts of personal evangelism and calling all Methodist churches to direct their work and wealth to the priority of making new disciples. Each year, every Church Council is encouraged to address and answer the question 'Do you have a growth plan or an end of life plan?'

The challenge of the Conference reminds me of Jesus' teaching of the Barren Fig Tree recorded in St Luke's Gospel Chapter 13.



A fig tree had been planted in a vineyard where grapes were the main crop. It had been planted there presumably because the owner of the vineyard wanted to enjoy some figs each year. The problem was that it hadn't produced any figs for three years which left the owner a little exasperated. He looked at the tree along with the gardener and said that it was probably best

if it was removed. It was taking up too much valuable space, using up moisture in the ground and producing nothing – it looked healthy enough but it was useless.

Instead of destroying the tree the gardener makes another suggestion "Let me take care of it. If it bears fruit next year all well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

Looking a little closer at Jesus' story we see that the fig tree is planted in a vineyard and not on some waste ground. It had the advantage of being planted in a place where all the conditions were right for a fig tree to produce fruit. It even had the care of a professional gardener.

Jesus originally intended this to mean the people of Israel who with all their privileges were still leading barren lives but we can equally apply it to the Christian church.

If the church is seemingly barren and producing no fruit then you could argue that just like the fig tree we are useless to God and yet he offers us hope by saying that if things are stirred up and we are fed and if some branches pruned with tender care then we will blossom once more.

As you will have read on the front page a group of us have been gardening at our Penlan church over the summer months. We discovered some small fruit trees that had been planted years ago but had since been covered by long grass and thistles. After hacking everything back we discovered that these were healthy trees producing fruit. I picked one of these apples the other day and I have to say it was the best apple I've ever tasted and it was grown in Penlan soil!

The Penlan apple taught me a great lesson. There is no such thing as a lost cause especially when it comes to churches and even more so when it comes to people. New life is there if we can be bothered to find it and growth will come if we are prepared to change in order to nurture it.

(continued on page 4)

All great virtues bear the imprint of self-denial.

William Ellery Channing

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There are no hopeless causes just people who have grown hopeless over the years because they have lost sight of the God of restoration and resurrection.

The term 'end of life plan' is very provocative and one that I do not like at all but it should cause us to take a good hard look at ourselves and ask what we are about as churches. I guarantee that if we look hard enough we will see areas of new life and opportunity. They may be hidden and not there for all to see but they are there. It's these areas of growth and opportunity that we can build upon. We may need to leave some of the old familiar ways of doing things behind when through prayer we discern where God is leading us.

The parable of the barren fig tree is hard hitting and Jesus certainly doesn't pull any punches. Someone once wrote 'Where God has extended to us His privileges then he expects returns but he is very patient and gives us every opportunity to change and do his will,

All of us live under God's judgement but those who turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as Lord and Saviour live in a state of grace. The parable says that there is time to change. All that Christ is asking of us is that we repent and turn to him.



The Penlan Apple tree

Howard

The Stable Trail 2017



It's Back! The StableTrail. Reynoldston's live re-telling of the Christmas story, to rival Oberamagau's passion play!

The Stable Trail is booked to take place on Saturday 9th December (with another possible performance day t.b.c.!) But we need your help, please! We're inviting friends in the village, the local churches and chapels, friends from the Circuit, anyone who is interested, to come along and get on board. We need teams of set designers, props gatherers, make-up artists, cake bakers, tea pourers, craft-cutter-outers, parking marshals, actors, lighting and technical experts, greeters, guides, lots of tidy-uppers and general helper-outers.

Please save the date of Thursday 12th October, and come along to the Methodist Chapel at 7.30 pm for the grand launch of The Stable Trail 2017, an initiative of Gower Churches Together and our local community.

Please plan to come along on Saturday 9th December, and look out for all the details that will be with your churches by early November.

Rev.Andy Walker

Christianity is a battle, not a dream.

Wendell Phillips

“Reflections” on the Hebridean Isle of Eriskay

For many years, I just loved listening to, through the medium of radio, tapes and CDs, the hauntingly beautiful, but also somewhat sad “Eriskay Love Lilt”. Some readers may also recall that it has been sung by the “late” Kenneth McKellar, and perhaps even by others unknown to me. I never tire of playing this piece of music over and over again on my piano!

In this vein, I was determined that one day Doug and I would visit the island referred to in the song, and my “dream came true” some years ago, in June, 2006, when we set out from our home in Swansea, to visit the “Outer Hebrides”, also referred to as “The Western Isles”. The Isle of Eriskay is part of this “Island Chain”, so was definitely included in our Itinerary. We’d already visited the Islands of Harris and Lewis the previous year, and have also been a few times since, but this would be our first-ever visit to Eriskay and Barra.

Eventually, on our adventurous journey, bound for the Isle of Barra, (the most Southerly island of the “Chain”), with the exception of the Isle of Vatersay now “joined on” to Barra by a causeway, we “booked in” to a friendly “B and B” in Lochboilsdale, South Uist, situated only approx. 10 miles from Eriskay. The following day, we thought we’d have a “preview peek” at the Isle of Eriskay, as we weren’t due on the Isle of Barra for a few more days. This was it – my “dream trip” to Eriskay was about to be realised! But, guess what? The famous “Scotch Mist” decided to enfold the island. However, onward we went, undaunted, approaching the Eriskay Causeway, one mile long, opened on 11th September, 2002, by their Royal Highnesses Earl and Countess of Wessex. What a wonderful feat of engineering! Also, what a major difference it must have made to commuting between islands! Some of the mist lifted hazily, allowing us to read the wonderful signpost “Welcome To Eriskay”, and see more effectively what this enchanting island had to offer.

Stepping on to Eriskay soil, we decided that the village store at Haun, would be visited first, which provides the basic necessities for the islanders. A few souvenirs were purchased,

before we made our way to the famous “AM Politician Pub”, named after the ship “Politician” which went ashore at Eriskay in 1941, laden with 20,000 cases of whisky, destined for the American market. This incident prompted Sir Compton MacKenzie to write his script for the popular film “Whisky Galore”, and later, the book of the same name. An inevitable “cuppa” was taken at the pub, while admiring the many artefacts “rescued” from the stricken ship.

We next wanted to see the interior of St. Michael’s of the Sea”, the Catholic Church standing on a hill, which was originally opened in 1903, but since then has been renovated. This church displayed some very interesting items, both inside and out. The unique alter-piece is the bow of a lifeboat from “HMS Hermes”, washed overboard while the ship was engaged in exercises off St. Kilda. It came ashore at Pollachar, South Uist, in a damaged condition. However, the bow section was saved sufficiently for it to be used in this particular church. Outside the church, on a grassy plateau, behind the church building, stood a large ship’s bell, salvaged from the German Battle Cruiser, “Derflinger”, scuttled at Scapa Flow in 1919. So we were certainly uncovering a wee “piece of History” that day on Eriskay!



The bow of a lifeboat from “HMS Hermes

As an “aside”, History also tells us that it was here, on the Hebridean Isle of Eriskay in 1745, that “Bonnie Prince Charlie” first set foot on Scottish soil.

Unfortunately, our time for the moment was sadly at an end on this small but very beautiful island, leaving us with unexplored territory which we envisaged we could rectify on the way back from our visit to the Isle of Barra.

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They that deny themselves for Christ, shall enjoy themselves in Christ.

John Mason

(continued from page 6)

We did stop at Eriskay for a wee while on our return journey, but had to “move on” rather quickly to enable us to “catch our ferry” for the Isles of Harris and Lewis!

“Fast Forward” to June 2017! As we’re rather “intrepid travellers” these days, we decided to have a “return visit” to “The Western Isles”. In 2006, we sailed from Uig, Skye, to Lochmaddy, North Uist, and so to Eriskay and then Barra. On our trip this year we chose “another route”, namely sailing from Oban to Barra first, planning to make our way up the “Chain of Islands to Harris and Lewis”. The “sea journey” from Oban turned out to be a rather “rock ‘n’ roll” crossing, taking approx. 5.1/4 hours. However, we eventually got safely to shore!

After spending 3 nights on beautiful Barra, we caught the ferry for Eriskay, and were able to reminisce as we visited the “AM Politician Pub”, again, this time having a lovely “snack meal” there. Afterwards, we just had to re-visit the “Church on the Hill”, namely “St. Michael’s of the Sea”. The day was rather windy, to say the least, but eventually we made it halfway up the hill in our car, and were again in awe of the beautiful interior. The large ship’s bell, mentioned above, salvaged from the German Battle Cruiser, “Derflinger”, was this time situated in a more prominent position, just outside the front of the church, not at the back as previously seen in 2006! Perhaps the reason for this move was to give the bell more protection from the high winds experienced on this island.



St. Michael of the Sea, Isle of Eriskay

I trust I have “whetted some folks’ travelling appetites” by this indulgent reminiscence, so let us leave **Eriskay** by quoting the magical and beautiful words of the “**Eriskay Love Lilt**”:

Chorus:

Vair me o ro van o,
Vair me o ro van ee,
Vair me o ru o ho,
Sad am I without thee.

Verse 1

When I’m lonely, dear white heart,
Black the night or wild the sea;
By love’s light my foot finds
The old pathway to thee.

Verse 2

Thou’rt the music of my heart,
Harp of joy, oh crootch mo cree; *
Moon of guidance by night,
Strength and light thou art to me.

* “crootch mo cree” – “Harp of my heart”

The chorus of this gentle Gaelic melody is the lover’s call and the girl answers in the verses.”

NB: The only piece of information I’ve been able to glean, pertaining to the “Eriskay Love Lilt”, is that in the year 1905 a certain lady by the name of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1 October 1857 – 22 November 1930), a singer and pianist, visited the Isle of Eriskay, namely because of her interest in the Celtic Revival. It wasn’t therefore surprising that while on the island, she came across the “Eriskay Love Lilt”, a traditional tune with Gaelic words. She went away with this, and later, Rev. Kenneth MacLeod (a long time Church of Scotland Minister on the Island of Gigha), translated the words into English verse, and this in turn was incorporated into Marjory’s three-volume “Songs of the Hebrides” (in the years 1909, 1917 and 1921, with a fourth volume “From the Hebrides”, following a few years later). One of these songs became widely known with the title “Eriskay Love Lilt”. The original Author remains anonymous!



Bell from the German Battle Cruiser, “Derflinger”

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Be thankful that God’s answers are wiser than your answers.

William Culbertson

(continued from page 6)

Probably, as a matter of interest to some readers, this tune has now been incorporated into the new Methodist Hymn Book, namely "Singing the Faith", hymn No. 651, with different words of course, penned by (Catherine Walker b. 1958). I'm always delighted when some of our preachers choose this tune. I wonder why? Yes, the answer is very obvious from the foregoing, isn't it?

**Mrs.Irene Dendle
Morriston Methodist Church**

Morriston Methodist Church

As one of their Christmas events, Morriston church is hosting a concert by the Phoenix Male Voice Choir on Thursday 30th November 2017.

Further details are available from Mrs.Jean Powell tel: 77382.

Mumbles Methodist Church

presents

Mumbles Got Talent

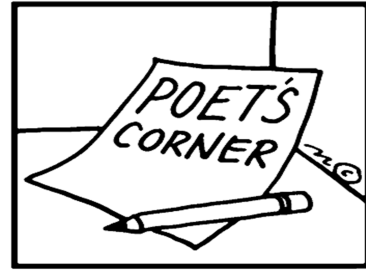
**Phoenix Choir
Kevin Johns
& friends**

Thursday 5th October 2017 at 7.30 p.m.

In aid of local Family & Youth Work

Registered Charity no: 1129281

Ticket: £8



Writer's Block

No words come to me today.
I wait, pen poised over my pad –
a sad feeling that no words will ever come
again
to be born through joy and pain
onto my empty page.

Memories come and go of
life and love,
war and peace,
breath and death.
but nothing stirs in me to write
what might have been
or should have been.

No journey lodges in my mind,
no thought stands out about the years
I've lived,
the fears and tears forgotten
for a time while joy is within me.

Maybe when gladness comes
there is no need to wipe it out
with words upon a page.
Nothing describes an inner peace -
that may cease tomorrow.

But today, no words will come.

Diane Norton © 2017

Prayer is exhaling the spirit of man and inhaling the spirit of God.

Edwin Keith

Pennard Carnival

It was a privilege and a great joy to be invited once again to host the annual Carnival Celebration in the marquee on Park Fields, Pennard. The Saturday of the carnival itself had attracted huge crowds to see the myriad of floats and stalls, marching piper band, dancing displays and the ever popular 'scruffs' dog show; not forgetting some fine cakes served with tea in proper china cups, splendidly served by the W.I.

Our Sunday celebrations were to be equally memorable. Our local churches, including Murton, had arranged not to hold their own Sunday morning services, but to come together, as Churches Together, proclaiming the love of Jesus to our community. This year we had our own youth worship band, ably supported by friends from the community, itself a great form of witness to those friends willing to just 'come and play'.



On what was 'Sea Sunday' the book of Jonah provided a fitting and familiar reading. But how to dramatise it without props? No problem! Involve the adults in becoming the 'bow' and the 'stern' of the boat, and the sides of course, and let the younger people come aboard. A few choruses of 'rock, rock, rock the boat' and Jonah was soon overboard... into the mouth of a whale, ably improvised by other 'volunteers' the congregation of assorted sizes and ages!

After lunch we arranged an informal 'open mic' afternoon for young musicians and

performers to share their talents. This proved to be a really inspiring event, with myriad of gifted performers sharing their music and song with us.

It is a real joy to be so involved in this annual community celebration. We do not have a solid 'church building' as such in Pennard or Southgate, but opportunities like this enable us to be the Church, the people, being involved with our community, 'out and about' where they are. After all, where would we most expect to find Jesus?



Rev. Andy Walker

Sponsorship of Tanzanian children

As some of you know, I'm involved with a couple of projects in Tanzania, and visit that country twice a year. If anyone is interested in sponsoring a primary school student, please contact me for more information. The approximate cost would be £300pa, and this would obviously be a long-term commitment.

Alan Cram

Christianity helps us face the music even when we don't like the tune.

Phillips Brooks

Brunswick Praise and Worship Service



Our Praise and Worship Service held on July 30th 2017 was taken by a group of people, who in the 1990's, were studying and working in Swansea. They joined Brunswick Methodist Church and became an important part of our Fellowship. They belonged to what was then known as the SAS (Sunday at Seven) which was founded and lead by the late Brian Watham. This group on hearing (via the internet, etc) of the uncertain future we face here at Brunswick Methodist Church they passionately asked if they could take a service of "Thanksgiving and Gratitude" for the way our congregation and Fellowship welcomed and nurtured them in the Faith during those years.

This service was well received by the congregation and members especially those who were there during the period when these youths or young adults were at Brunswick Methodist Church. Some of the youths gave inspiring testimonies of how they had received their Faith.

Jonathan, who was the main preacher, spoke about the net fishermen use. He said that this net gathers everything that comes its way such as crabs, cat fish, salmon, snails etc. But it is only God who intervenes and has the power to

select and separate the good from the bad. He also talked about the precious pearl whose owner sold his whole land in order to get the money to buy that precious pearl and the small seeds that were sown at an early age and have now grown to become big trees where the birds of the earth come and find shelter in their branches.

Most of these youths or young adults are now leaders in their own churches wherever they are today to show that the spiritual seed which was sown then here at Brunswick has grown and is still growing and expanding far and wide.

To crown it all there was a Fellowship meal that was shared after the service. People stayed behind enjoying the meal together and talking about the good memories of what happened then. Especially what these youths and young adults used to have, "a bring and share meal" during their time.

May God bless all who are working for His Glory.

Liz and Siperire

No man ever prayed heartily without learning something.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Murton Youth Club Sleepover

One of the highlights of the Youth Club calendar is our Saturday night 'Sleepover' in Murton Hall. The success - or otherwise (!) - of such a venture depends on certain factors: a significant number of club members who want to come, a sufficient number of Leaders willing to be involved, the right weekend in the calendar to ensure it doesn't clash with other significant events.

If those factors come together, then running the sleepover is the easy part. Tiring, yes, but with a tried and tested programme, a good time can genuinely be had by all. We begin with some games and free time, indoors this year, as the weather had not been kind. Then after a welcome and run-through the programme it is tea time! Freshly cooked pizzas and lots of chopped fruit and veg.

Then it was time for 'Den Making'! Everyone was asked to bring some extra sheets and blankets and pegs. In small groups the young people worked together to create their sleeping spaces. Blankets and sheets – and whatever else could be found - were draped over tables and chairs to create indoor camping pods.



Then it was time for the 'Talent Show'. We had an array of songs and sketches, and jokes old and new, dancers, magicians and even a violin duet. We are always amazed at the talent on display by these creative young souls!

At around 9:30pm it was supper time, and we said farewell to those who were not staying overnight. Then as the young people got into their camping pods and got ready for bed, out came an assortment of sleeping bags, as like a parade of colourful caterpillars they settled down to watch our late night film the moving and brilliant, 'Hotel for Dogs'.

It was a gradual drift off towards bed, but surprisingly perhaps the hall fell silent at around 1 pm. The earliest murmurs were not heard until around 6:30 am the next morning. After the obligatory sleeping bag races and some breakfast, we began clearing away, and again bade farewell to those with other commitments. Those who remained were all given parts to play in our Sunday morning celebration over in the Church. All of them very willingly took part; whether reading, announcing, welcoming, taking up the offering, playing music or drumming. The young people were exceptional! Some of the parents also came along and were with us for worship, and were really blessed by the part the young people played, and the welcome that they received.

Working with children and young people involves an exceptional amount of time and commitment, and I am grateful to all those who were able to help with this event, and those who have helped in so many different ways throughout the year. We may never know what a difference we are making, but it is a privilege to be able to sow seeds of faith and hope in these young lives.



Rev.Andy Walker

The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness.

William Blake

Poignant Celebration with Aldridge Youth Fellowship at Pitton



It was always going to be a different, and in many ways, a difficult camp at Pitton Cross for the Aldridge group this year. The week before they came on camp, we received the news that their Youth Pastor of so many years, Rob Cook, had died.

This great hero of the faith had gone to be with Jesus, after several years of bravely battling with cancer. Rob was always at the very heart of camp, from the planning and organisation beforehand to the – mostly – smooth running of the programme for often well over 100 young people and their leaders on site.

But as much as his skills with a rota or a minibus, a tent peg or a frying pan will be fondly recalled, it is Rob's generous pastor's heart and his clear and deep love for Jesus that shone through and will be remembered most.

So many people have come to know and love Jesus through the work of AYF (Aldridge Youth Fellowship) and through Rob's own pastoral work and his prayers and his sharing of Jesus. He has inspired many in their own journeys of faith, and called and equipped and mentored others in leadership in Church and in the wider community.

(continued on page 12)

Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened.
Billy Graham

(continued from page 11)

So the annual Aldridge service in Pitton Chapel was as alive with passion for Jesus as ever; Rob's legacy was to be seen in the resolve of everyone to carry on and make camp a success; and in the genuine committed, prayerful faith of the leaders and the young people. Rob's younger sons Josh and Elliott had been at camp through much of the week, and Josh was able to join us in worship at Pitton. Our service together was filled with warmth and with passion, with tears, with laughter and with love.

We are grateful that Eira and Roger Button and Selina Taylor were able to attend the funeral service of thanksgiving for Rob's life, which was held in Aldridge Parish Church on Monday 14th August.

We remember Josh and Elliott, Rob's wife Annette and the rest of the family, and the Aldridge community in our prayers, as we give thanks for Rob's life and ministry.

Rev. Andy Walker

Pause to Ponder

It's tough in the desert. It's bewildering. It's destructive. It's hellish.

Yet the testimony of the Old Testament, and ever more strongly of the New, is that out of it comes new growth, new insight, new certainty that a God of love is at home among us.

Charles Elliott

May the river of God's love wash gently over you and, bathing in its warm and cleansing water may you find healing, wholeness and strength enough for this and every day.

John Birch

News from Clydach

CYTUN

Following the Village Fair on Saturday August 5th (in which a certain dog owned by a certain lady Methodist Minister won first prize in one of the categories!), CYTUN (Churches Together) held an ecumenical service on the village green. The service, led by the Rev Leslie Noon, was lively and interactive (as you would expect!), and attended by around 40 people from most of the churches and chapels in the village, as well as the Chair of the Community Council. During the service the new CYTUN banner was unveiled. A bring and share tea was then enjoyed by all.



Alan and Pam Cram

A note for your diaries

Mumbles Methodist Church is planning a Christmas Fayre to be held in the Victoria Hall on Saturday 2nd December.

Holyhead to Chester : 105 miles by bike with Rev. Andy Walker

I confess I was a little apprehensive preparing to set off, loading the panniers up for the first time on my new bike. Have I packed too much? What can't be forgotten? Will there be room for the bike on the various trains upon which I must travel? Oh! Where are my sunglasses? The weather three days prior to setting off was very wet. Great for the garden, not so good for cycling! Behold a remarkable improvement by midweek, and a dry and sunny weekend looked likely! Have I packed the sun-cream?

Thursday morning was beautiful. I enjoyed a spinach, banana and apple juice smoothie for breakfast, and one 'weetabix'. Perfect! The panniers fitted on bike like a dream; a robust, sturdy fit! Emily and Christopher waved me off at 9 am, with Griff the Postman! It was a lovely ride out of Pennard. Loaded with a full bike I still managed the hill up through Bishopston! Clyne common looked stunning, wild flowers adorning the wayside. I enjoyed the leafy descent through Mayals, then over onto the bay at Blackpill. Quick photo opportunity.

My journey would take me by train from Swansea to Cardiff, with a short wait for the Holyhead train. My dad Dave and brother Martin would be joining that train when it pulled into Chester. In Holyhead we would begin our ride together, across the causeway and north to an old farmhouse, beautifully renovated by long standing friends; in whose company we would spend our first evening.



The lanes of the northern part of Anglesey gently amble through countryside with occasional windmills, grazing sheep, meadows of wild flowers and views out to the Irish Sea beyond. Change direction and face to towards the South and East, and the full panorama of the mountains of Snowdonia open up before you. We spent most of Friday cycling alongside sun-glazed patchwork fields which some years earlier I had gazed out upon atop the highest mountain in Wales. This was cycling at its very best!

We spent our second night in the town of Menai Bridge, and enjoyed learning something of the history of this ancient crossing. Long before Thomas Telford's magnificent structure opened in 1826, herdsman would swim with their cattle or pigs across the narrow but often treacherous strait which separates Anglesey from the mainland.

We made our crossing over the bridge by bike and then descended through Bangor, a surprisingly sprawling place that seems in need of some of the investment that other parts of post-industrial Wales have benefited from. It was good to be heading out of the town along a former railway track. This would eventually lead us on to the lanes that nestle above the coastline as we began our journey towards Conwy. A fitting place was found for a coffee stop, and we encountered about ten minutes of light rain; all that was to fall upon us during our whole trip.

Once we had left the gentle lanes behind us, it became clear how the northern reaches of the Snowdonia mountains hug the coast between Llanfairfachen and Penmaenmawr. It is a feat of engineering to condense the A55 dual carriageway, the North Wales main railway line and the foot and cycle paths in the same narrow swathe of land. As you cycle you appear to approach tunnel mouths at various places on both the road and the railway, but at the last moment, instead of entering subterranea, the path veers suddenly to the side and you take a steep 'up and over' route on some very fine tarmac! In places the coast has been remodelled for road expansion. New beach huts set in concrete below the road level have an Orwellian feel to them; distinctly un-inviting.



Progress has not touched the delightful quayside at Conwy, nestled below the castle and home to Britain's smallest house; and dare-I-say home to some of the

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tastiest chips! Great late-lunchtime fare for hungry cyclists. An optional detour round the Great Orme at Llandudno was not taken on this occasion. Cutting across the peninsular with its famous seaside town we re-joined the coast at Rhos and Sea, and there it was coast path through Colwyn Bay; rejuvenated in some places, tired and unkempt in others. There is not much to be said of the coastline between Colwyn Bay and Rhyl; caravan upon caravan, most with un-inspiring views of the sea wall! The real natural beauty of this area is to be found inland; in the Snowdonia national park. But a cyclist will not complain too much about a mostly flat path that runs by the sea, with views across to the Wirral.

This was to be the longest day of our ride, and was expected to be the hardest; Menai Bridge to Ruddlan Castle, just south of Rhyl, north of St Asaph. Rhuddlan was a delightful village and we settled well into our B&B.

So our final day of cycling dawned. Coastal path all the way to the Dee estuary and then into Chester. Things progressed well, Prestatyn was a delight to cycle through; but there was no coastal path to be found. Examination of the map confirmed that this was to be a predominantly inland stretch. We may have been clear of Snowdonia by now, but these hills came as a surprise, and were a real test to the calf muscles! At this stage of the ride my right knee protested and refused to carry on. As a result I could only attempt to ride up these hills using every 'half turn' of the pedal that my left leg was able to provide. This was cycling at its worst! Progress became so frustratingly slow that I encouraged my dad and my brother to press on. But they stayed close and together. After some painfully slow progress we eventually made our descent, down narrow, and in places quite treacherous lanes. At this point I could only be thankful that we were not riding in the opposite direction!



Refreshment was taken in Flint, and we took a more civilised but meandering course through Connah's Quay before crossing the Dee at Howarden Bridge. At last! The Dee estuary path and a level end to our ride, all the way to Chester. Not so fast! Literally, not so fast! A strong easterly wind had blown up over the Pennines, and was racing across the Cheshire plains and down the Dee Estuary; blowing us back against every pedal we could muster! I was finished! This was gruellingly hard. I was sorely tempted to pick up the bike at this point and hurl it into the water!

Estuary finally became river, and a gentle unexpected turn to the left took us out of the wind. Suddenly we were on a leisurely riverside path on a sunny Sunday afternoon, gently enjoying the ride with others, entering Chester with renewed energy as if the last 100 or more miles were a dream! This ride had been a mini parable of life itself, unexpected twists and turns, hardship and disappointments mingled with great pleasure; but a sense of purpose and ever-present guidance to complete the course!

I enjoyed a relaxing evening in the delightful city of Shrewsbury, before venturing home by train through 'the Heart of Wales' the following day. Last stop Gowerton, and then a final ride home to Pennard. By this time I had covered 120 miles in total. My legs – and other parts of my body – were achingly aware of it!



I am grateful to Martin and my dad for all their encouragement along the way. I am particularly grateful to all my incredibly generous sponsors, from churches, groups and individuals. The last of the money finally came in by mid July, and I am delighted to say that this ride of 120 miles raised a total of **£941**, split between Ogof Adullam and Christian Aid. It was a privilege to visit Oguf at the end of July and present Huw and Cerys

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a cheque for £470.50 towards their amazing work. At the end of the day, the real heroes of this story are those working tirelessly at the projects we were able to support, and my generous sponsors who made 'every mile worthwhile'! Sincere thanks to you all!

p.s. I'm planning the next ride for 2019. Anyone up for the Kennet and Avon path?

Rev. Andy Walker



Ty Croeso

Ty Croeso, our ecumenical community project, continues to host branches of the Swansea Foodbank and the Neath Port Talbot Credit Union, as well as the weekly Siop Siarad for Welsh learners. Other regular activities, including groups supporting the bereaved and families affected by drug and alcohol abuse, and the seated exercise group, have also recommenced after the Summer break.

In addition, Ty Croeso recently arranged another Tea and Hymns afternoon, attended by, amongst others, residents from three local residential homes and their carers. The special guests were Fiona Gannon and her son Llewellyn who entertained us all on keyboard and recorder. Future Tea and Hymns afternoons have been arranged for September 20th, November 1st and December 13th, at 2.15pm in the hall of Capel y Nant. All welcome, but please check with Alan or Pam before setting out!

Alan and Pam Cram

Greenbelt



Where can you see an amazing circus act by Abyssinian acrobats and jugglers; listen to speakers on 'a good Brexit', 'the real Moana', or 'divine doubt'; join in a Bible study based on works of art in the National Gallery; listen to a variety of singers, comedians and story-tellers; meet friends old and new; and attend a very moving Communion service led almost entirely by people living with various disabilities – all that and so much more over one weekend and in one place? The answer is at Greenbelt Festival.

Alan and I have just got back from our annual pilgrimage to Boughton Park in Northamptonshire. It may take us a while to sort out all our impressions, experiences and ideas from this year's festival, the theme of which was 'Common Ground'. Last year the festival received three awards, one for accessibility; one for sustainability; and one for inclusivity. There's probably no-where else where you will experience such a mix of people- all ages and abilities, a mix of culture and background, and those of different sexuality and gender identification. Also, though unashamedly a Christian festival, it is loved by those of 'other faiths and none' who come across it, and Muslim and Jewish voices are often heard in the talks and debates.

The key themes of the festival are faith, the arts, and justice. Every year Christian Aid has a tent on the site and works with Greenbelt on a specific campaign, this year lobbying the banks on climate change. It's also a good place to stop by for a cuppa and some delicious cake!

There's always lots going on and for some things you do have to plan – and queue to be sure to get in. However, it's good to spend some time just wandering, chatting at the stalls, eavesdropping on a talk or debate as you go by, or catching a bit of music or artwork. This is when you often 'stumble across' something really interesting or significant.

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Unless life is lived for others it is not worthwhile.

Mother Teresa

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want to give it a try, take a look at the website: www.greenbelt.org.uk Tickets for 2018 are on sale NOW and the theme is 'Acts of the Imagination'. Or if you'd rather try a smaller event with similar themes, next July there's a 'spin-off' festival in Wales. Called CODA ('arise' in Welsh) it will happen on a farm near Llanidloes on the weekend of July 27th to 29th with the theme of 'Gathering Hope'. Tickets for CODA go on sale on the 1st of November and the website is www.coda.cymru This will be much more intimate. And, by the way, you don't have to camp – we don't!



Alan and Pam Cram

Circuit Missions Weekend

Sunday 8th October 2017

At Penlan Methodist Church

4.15 p.m. Learn about Ogof Adullam, the new circuit project

5.15 p.m. Bring and Share tea

6.30 p.m. Evening Worship led by Pastor Carl Roberts

Christians Against Poverty



Oasis Church, Gowerton, has joined forces with Christians Against Poverty (CAP) to open a new debt centre in Swansea. The new centre, which will be known as Swansea West CAP Debt Centre, will run alongside the established centre based at Gendros Baptist Church, meaning that all the Swansea city postcodes are now covered.

The centres aim to help people and families over a twelve month period by offering home visits as well as on-going support for those affected by debt problems.

Every client is visited in their own home to give them the privacy and dignity that they need, with CAP's head office doing all the negotiating with creditors, while local volunteers offer support to each person until they become debt free.

Tony Quinn, Swansea West CAP Debt Centre Manager

To book an appointment with Tony call CAP free on 0800 328 0006 or visit www.capuk.org/i-want-help

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

Elie Wiesel



The Methodist Circuit has close links with Step by Step (Wales) through our Ogof Adullam drop-in centre for the Homeless and Prison Fellowship.

Step by Step (Wales) is a Christian Charity based in Swansea that works to help people with backgrounds of addictions, mental health issues, learning difficulties, people reliant on state benefits, ex-offenders or individuals who just need a bit of help and support. Through a gardening and clearance business Step by Step aims to help people by providing work giving them an earned income and a feeling of purpose and achievement.

Step by Step has helped people to get into employment through training, experience and introductions to local businesses. They have several local businesses, organisations and churches who help them by providing work, people or connections.

Pastor Carl Roberts who runs Step by Step is a pastor with *Workers Together With Him* ministries and currently holds regular Sunday morning services at Penlan Methodist Church, Heol Gwrosydd.



We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.

Oswald Chambers