

The Diocese of Swansea and Brecon



The Newsletter for Retired Clergy and their Families

No. 93

Autumn 2021



From the Editor: Chancellor Brian H. Jones

My Dear Friends

The Bishop's throne in Brecon Cathedral remains unoccupied with no name yet available. Despite three days of deliberation the meeting of the Electoral College in its recent meetings in St. Mary's Swansea failed to make an appointment. There were negative comments on social media some suggesting a new format for episcopal appointments and a variety of other unhelpful suggestions and all of us had a feeling of great disappointment. Under the Constitution of the Church in Wales the appointment of a new bishop for the diocese has reverted to the Bench of Bishops. The Senior Bishop, Bishop Andy of Bangor has made a statement of that effect and I quote part of it below. The Bishop says;

"Whenever we have engagements like this and there is rigorous debate and close engagement, a decision is a very difficult thing to achieve. As the College hasn't come to one mind, it has asked the Bench of Bishops to take responsibility for the next appointment. So that is now very high on our agenda. We will be consulting together, both with the diocese and amongst ourselves, in the hope we can provide for the diocese someone who can take it forward. I am really confident that we will be able to

do that soon." This process will be demanding on the Bench as they seek to consult with Electors and sift through nominations for the post before they can make a final decision and produce a name for appointment. The patience which they exercise must also be that of the whole of us as we wait for their conclusions, and we are able to welcome a new bishop. In the 1984 Prayer Book (the green book) the prayers for a vacancy in a diocese pray

"so guide with thy heavenly wisdom the hearts and minds of those to whom is committed the choice of a bishop for this Diocese, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who shall feed thy flock and make ready a people acceptable to thee..."

What more can we ask for other than that the whole Church in the diocese will focus its intercessions on what is central to all of us a new bishop and that there will be a happy conclusion for the task facing the Bench of



Bishops

With best wishes and prayers.

Brian

Family News

We send our congratulations and best wishes to:



- Brian and Monica Jones who recently celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary
- Robert Jones who celebrated the 25th anniversary of his Ordination to the priesthood at Petertide
- Those embarking on Ordination training in the St. Padarn Institute, University study or apprenticeships

Alan Meats writes: On the Feast of Transfiguration, August 6th. I celebrated 50 years as a priest. having been ordained by Archbishop Glyn Simon at Llandaff Cathedral in 1971. This was Glyn's last ordination before retiring. To mark this year of celebration, I produced a little booklet of hymns (9 in English and 5 in Welsh) with proceeds given to St. Luke's healthcare for clergy and next of kin. You will be pleased to know that Dr. William Reynolds at St. Mary's and the Director of Music at Brecon Cathedral have both received copies and I believe that the copy that I sent to Robert Williams has been handed to the organist at St. Barnabas. It would seem that a cheque for over £600 will soon be sent to St. Luke's,

We send our best wishes and prayers to those who have been unwell recently. The Covid 19 experience has been difficult for many, hopefully this will begin to ease shortly.

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In Memoriam

Phyllis Davies was born and brought up in Gower where she went to school. After school she began work in Lloyd's Bank in Swansea and ultimately became the first female cashier in the bank, a position she held until her marriage. She married Bill Davies who at the time was an accountant in

Swansea and they settled in Oystermouth. Later Bill was to be ordained and after serving a curacy and one incumbency in the diocese moved to the parish of Bedwas in the diocese in Monmouth. On retirement they returned to Swansea and settled in Killay although they were faithful worshippers at St. Gabriel's. During retirement Phyllis followed her passion for music as a faithful member of the Gower Chorale, and active member of the Townswomen's Guild and of the Mothers; Union.

Later Phyllis moved into a retirement home in Sketty where she celebrated her 100th birthday, a huge achievement and a time for celebration. She will be remembered as a faithful incumbent's wife supporting Bill in his ministry. But above all she will be remembered as a very cultured lady, a faithful member of her church, a traditionalist in every way. We send to Pauline and her family our condolences and prayers and commend Phyllis to the new life that is the life of God.

Betty Williams was a child of the vicarage in St. Asaph Diocese and early in her career she trained as a secretary and worked locally. At the beginning of the war young Harry Williams was at Kinmel Bay completing his training as an Army Chaplain and was invited to supper in the vicarage marking the beginning of their romance. After the end of the war and their marriage his first living was St. Jude in Swansea, followed by Sketty and St Mary's before his time as Archdeacon of Gower. As a young wife with two young children, Betty was able to involve herself not only in supporting her husband but also her personal involvement in the life of the parishes in which they served. She brought with her the secretarial skills which had been her training, extensive use of which were made until they got to St. Mary's where there was a Secretary to the Vicar. At the same time she was Diocesan Secretary of the Mothers' Union and was heavily involved both on a Diocesan and parish level. When Harry was made a member of the Cathedral Chapter she experienced the demands of a month in residence with two young children in the rarefied atmosphere of the Cathedral Close.

For those of us who were curates at the time probably our dearest memories of her was the care and concern that she showed for our wives and young families. Alongside those memories when she brought the coffee into the staff meeting on a Monday morning and on many occasion eased the tension in the room as in turn we reported our efforts in our visiting the previous week.

She too a centenarian who lived happily in retirement. A lovely lady. We send our sympathy and prayers to Michael and his family and commend Betty to the care and mercy of God.

The Challenge of Change

The recent advance of the Taliban through Afghanistan is a reminder that even the best laid plans of potentates and presidents can be overtaken by unexpected change. Climate change, political change, change in the church are constant factors we all have to reckon with. Those reading this article have witnessed more change in the church than any generation of clergy since the Reformation. So what should our reaction be?

We have all known people who take the reactionary view. We have all known PCC members who fight any change every inch of the way. Their attitude was summed up by the Duke of Wellington "I am absolutely opposed to any change whatsoever and will fight it every inch of the way. I will only give way when change seems absolutely inevitable"

Then there is the progressive attitude. This sees challenge and change as not enemies, but friends and opportunities. Just as transatlantic pilots harness the energy and velocity of the jet stream to get faster to their destination, so activists can use powerful currents in society to further their aims. But there are real dangers in confusing transitory political movements for the kingdom of God.

At its best, the Church always takes the long view. The Church herself has witnessed so many changes and remains one of the most remarkable and enduring phenomena in human history. St Ignatius of Loyola would remind us that the Christian attitude to change is summed up in a single word — discernment. Whether our natural frame of mind is reactionary or progressive, we should ask one question: Is this to the glory of God?

Our challenge is to discern and distinguish the good from the bad. There are haunting words in St John's Gospel "My Father is working still, and I am working." Despite the horrors and tragedies, we have faith to believe that God is working His purpose out in human history. And we are the instruments of His purpose today.

For the Christian who values stability, order and tradition, the 2020s are not the most comfortable era in human history. It is easy to fall back into the temptation of seeing the past as a golden age when the Church loomed so much larger in the life of our nation. It is salutary to remember that these present times will one day be the good old days which our grandchildren will fondly recall.

The prayer often attributed to St Teresa of Avila sums up the Christian view of change:

Lord, when I am confronted by change, give me the courage to change the things that can be changed, give me the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed, and give me the wisdom to know the difference.

George Bennett

The Baptist Tradition in Wales

Two of the earliest recorded Baptist chapels in Wales are in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon - Capel-y-ffin in the Brecon Archdeaconry and Ty Ilston in the Archdeaconry of Swansea. Both are set in beautiful secluded and remote locations.



Capel-y-ffin Baptist Chapel in the Vale of Ewyas can be found along a stony track across the River Honddu immediately behind the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin in the benefice of Hay/Llanigon. Giraldus Cambrensis described the area's "hushed atmosphere", and it is a perfect spiritual retreat where people could feel safe from discovery and potential persecution – an important factor for the early Baptist congregation.

From 1663 the Baptists of Capel-y-ffin had a long association with the Baptists of Olchon, the congregation walking two miles across the mountains to services prior to the building of a Chapel. The Chapel at Capel-y-ffin was built in 1737 by two brothers, William and David Prosser, whose names are recorded on a stone tablet outside the building. It may well have been converted from a house.

Baptists had a considerable influence in this valley and by 1793 they could record a congregation of

forty members. Records of baptisms and burials held by the National Library of Wales date back to 1738. In 1770 Capel-y-ffin hosted the all-Wales Baptist Association meeting. In Victorian times, the Chapel was also used as a school room. The traditional Anniversary service with singing and recitations from children and adults is still held and the Chapel is open for funerals and is registered for weddings. It is a member of the Breconshire Baptist Association formed in the mid 1800's.

In another secluded position in woods close to Parkmill on the Gower peninsula are the ruins of the first meeting place of the Particular Baptists in Wales founded in 1649, known as Ty Ilston.

John Miles (1621-1683) and Thomas Proud were the first Ministers. John Miles was born in Herefordshire and studied at Brasenose, Oxford, matriculating aged just 15. It is probable he was ordained in the Diocese of Hereford. Under his leadership Baptists met in Ilston Parish Church until 1660 when Miles lost his position as Minister and was replaced. He had earlier served as a "tryer" for ministers in Cromwell's government. By 1660 the Baptists numbered 261, of whom 115 were men. These were distressing and dangerous times for non-conformists and Miles fled to America with some of his congregation to settle in Swansea, Massachusetts, where he founded the First Baptist Church in that town.



The ruins at Parkmill are on the site of a pre-Reformation Chapel known as Trinity Well. A stone tablet on the pulpit claims that it is "by tradition" the meeting place of the First Baptist Church in Wales, honouring its founder, John Miles. The site was renovated in 1928 and a commemorative stone was unveiled by Rt Hon David Lloyd George then President of the Baptist Union of Wales and a promoter of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales.

The site is easy to find by following a stream at the top of the car park belonging to the Gower Inn. An

annual service is held there but this year, because of Covid and the need to hold Zoom and smaller meetings, the site formed part of a "Wave of Prayer" replacing the usual annual gatherings of the Baptist Union of Wales. If you would like to view the videos of the Ilston service or the closing celebration they can be found on <https://buw.wales/momentum-2021/>

While the Baptist tradition dates back little more than 350 years, it is good that we can recognise these two locations as part of our shared Christian heritage and places where our Faith has been celebrated and God's name is hallowed.

Janet Matthews

President of the Baptist Union of Wales (English Wing) 2019-2021

The Conversion of Chief Washakie



I was delighted to read Philip Morgan's account of the life of Fr John Roberts in the last issue of the Newsletter as it brought back many happy memories of our visit to the diocese of Wyoming with which we were then 'twinned' in 1986. Margaret and I spent a day at the Wind River Indian Reservation – home for the Indians of the Shoshone and Arapaho tribes. We received a warm welcome from Fr Stan Verstraten, the priest in charge at the Episcopal Mission who introduced us to the leaders of the community. The headquarters of the Mission were formed by a cluster of buildings in a quadrangle on each side of which there was a log church, a social centre and a folk museum where various items representing the Indian culture were carefully preserved and exhibited. We were excited to hear about Fr John Roberts, the Welsh priest who ministered to the Indians here from 1883 until his death in 1941. He continues to be revered with great affection. Such was his popularity that he earned the title 'White Robe'. While we were there we heard the fascinating story of the event which led to the baptism of Chief Washakie. We discovered the full story on the back of a menu in a restaurant!

Fr Roberts' friendship with Chief Washakie had an interesting beginning. One night, the story goes, in a drunken brawl, a soldier fought with, and killed his son. He knew his son was wild and incorrigible, but he loved him, and as a consequence of this tragic murder he sent word throughout the settlement that he himself would kill every white man he met until a white man killed him first. News of this soon reached Fr Roberts. One night he went to the old Indian's tent. Carrying a lantern he walked quietly into the tent, introduced himself to the Chief and told him why he was there. 'I have come, Chief Washakie', he said, 'to ask if you will kill me and let my life pay for the death of your son. You see, if you go out and kill many of these white settlers to avenge the life of your son, many fathers will be slain, many children left orphans. Now, in our religion, one man died for all, our Saviour. I am asking you to kill me for only my old mother in Wales will miss me and she lives far across the sea. But families of soldiers and settlers would be in great sorrow, as you are now.' The old Indian Chief said: 'You come into my tent. You know I will kill you, and yet you are not afraid to die?' 'No', said the young missionary, 'I am not afraid'. 'Sit down', said Chief Washakie, 'and tell me about a religion where one man died for all. Tell of a power that makes you not afraid!' And Fr Roberts told him, and later baptised him. So it was that the Chief of the Shoshones, who had always been friendly to white settlers, became a Christian.

In the Reservation Fr Roberts built schools and churches on land presented to him by Chief Washakie in Trout Creek. We were taken to the two storey brick building which housed the girls 'school which was in a bad state of repair. However, we were told that it continues to stand as a memorial to John Roberts, as does the church. But the most lasting memorial to the saintly missionary lies, of course, in the hearts of those Indian Christians whose grandparents and parents were his 'children' nurtured in the Faith by him and owing so much to his zeal.

Arthur Howells.

John Roberts, Martyr

In the Summer 2021 newsletter I recounted the story of Rev John Roberts from Dyserth, Denbighshire, and his work among the native Americans during the late 19th Century and early part of the 20th Century. However, there was another Welshman, born some 300 years earlier, who bore the same name, whose ministry is also worth noting.



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Born in Trawsfynydd in 1577, John Roberts was said to have been of noble birth and a descendent of Welsh Princes. Roberts was baptized a Protestant at the local parish church of St. Madryn. His early education was formed by a Cistercian monk who had been at Cymmer Abbey near Dolgellau. After attending St. John's College, Oxford, he went on to study Law. However, after travelling in Europe and visiting Notre Dame, in Paris, he left Protestantism and the Law behind him and converted to Roman Catholicism.

After conversion he moved to Spain and joined St Benedict's Monastery, Valladolid, and became a member of this community in 1598, where he was known as Brother John of Merioneth. After completing his studies, he was ordained, and set out for England on 26 December 1602. Although observed by a government spy, Roberts succeeded in entering the country in April 1603, where he was appointed vicar of the English monks of the Spanish Congregation on the Mission. He was arrested and banished on 13 May 1603. Leaving England he reached Douai, in northern France, on 24 May.

He soon returned to England and worked among the plague victims in London. In 1604, while embarking for Spain with four postulants, he was again arrested. He was released and again banished, but he returned to England at once. On 5 November 1605, while Justice Grange was searching the house of Mrs. Percy, first wife of Thomas Percy, who was involved in the Gunpowder Plot, he found

Roberts there and arrested him. Though acquitted of any complicity in the plot itself, Roberts was imprisoned in the Gatehouse Prison at Westminster for seven months and then exiled again in July, 1606.

This time he was absent for some fourteen months, nearly all of which he spent at Douai where he founded and became the first prior of a house for the English Benedictine monks who had entered various Spanish monasteries. This was the beginning of the monastery of St. Gregory's at Douai. (Later the Community was banished from France in 1795, and travelled to England where they settled at Downside Abbey, Somerset in 1814.)

Again, Roberts was arrested and banished but yet again returned to England, only to be arrested once more. On 5 December 1610 he was tried and found guilty under the Act forbidding priests to minister in England, and on 10 December 1610 was hanged, drawn, and quartered, at the age of thirty-three, along with Thomas Somers, at Tyburn, London.

Roberts was canonised by Pope Paul VI as one of the representative "Forty Martyrs of England and Wales." In July 2010, an Ecumenical Service at Westminster Cathedral was held in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Martyrdom of John Roberts. A large contingent from Wales attended the bi-lingual service and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams addressed the congregation in both English and Welsh. It was the first time Welsh had been spoken in a ceremony at Westminster Cathedral. Roberts is commemorated by a tourist trail from St Madryn's church Trawsfynydd to Cymer Abbey near Dolgellau, and by an exhibition in the Llys Ednowain Heritage Centre in Trawsfynydd

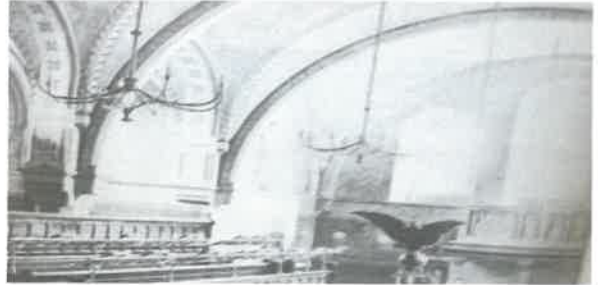
Philip Morgan

Saving Chapel Organs not a pipe dream

In the Saturday Times, July 31 Huw Edwards focussed on the closure of chapels and the fate of the organs. He quotes one chapel in Caernarfon where the chapel and the organ had been bulldozed. On Facebook earlier this month there was the headline *Swansea Chapel and organ to be bulldozed*. Edwards goes on to say that there is little concern as to what happens, not only to organs, but also to chapel and church furnishings. There is a demand for church organs in France but the cost of transport is prohibitive.

When I went to Killay in 1995 the organ repairs were estimated at £40,00, the cost of an Allen

organ was half the price and quite adequate for the musical needs of the parish and this was done. While it was being discussed we had an enquiry from a church in France, very interested but as Edwards says the transport cost was prohibitive. Instead the organ went to a musician in Clydach who rebuilt it in his garden and the PCC was invited to the first organ recital.



The Chapel Swansea Grammar School

I had recently been reading the history of the Swansea Grammar School (now Bishop Gore School) which when the new building opened in Mount Pleasant in 1842 was a school for boarders and day boys, hence the need for a chapel in the tradition of Hugh Gore Bishop of Waterford and Lismore who had founded the school in 1682. In 1871 the chapel became redundant and the furnishings spread around the local churches.

The altar and reredos went to the parish of Christ Church to the new church of St. Faith in St. Helen's Road. The communion silver went to St. Jude's then a tin tabernacle before the current church was consecrated 1915. I was brought up in St. Jude's and well remember the chalice and paten with the Grammar School Crest on them. Alongside that the altar in the Lady Chapel was the Grammar School Altar presumably taken there when St. Faith's was closed.



The reredos from St. Jude's in Eastmoor

St Jude's has now been closed to worship and the Reredos from the Lady Chapel is now in the Library at the Eastmoor Resource Centre. I now wonder where the communion silver and the Lady Chapel Altar are and what has happened to the

other furnishings including the reredos of *The Supper at Emmaus*?

I was the last parish priest in Capel Coelbren and the Vicarage had a clause in the deed of gift of the land, that in the event of it no longer being a vicarage that the house returned to the family of the original donor. Every morning on the way to the bathroom we passed the landing window with the large diocesan crest, I never thought of myself as the bishop of Coelbren. Mercifully someone had the wit to remove the window and it is now the window in the Archdeacon's office in Eastmoor.



The Diocesan Crest landing window!!

There are other examples of furnishings from churches going to other churches when churches have been closed. When St. Augustine's closed the lectern went to the parish church of Llanddettty one of the churches in the Talybont Group. The altar went to the cathedral and is now the mobile altar that is used as a nave altar

What I find concerning is that there does not appear to be a policy in the diocese for the removal of furnishings in redundant churches, or if there is we don't know about it. In the DBF's recent statement to the Profile for the new Bishop it emphasises the need to close more churches for financial reasons so the clearing of church furnishings is going to be an ever growing problem which presumably will have to be faced. Some of the furnishings in country churches are of huge historical interest, e.g the medieval screen in Llananno. The problem almost suggests a new department if only to list the furnishings and make them available for societies who, for historical reasons, would value them. Who could help in this? There are lots of retired clergy all over the diocese who have the time and maybe the inclination !!!!

Brian Jones

HONORIFICS

When I was 9-year-old at school my class teacher introduced us to Charles Dickens. He began by

reading us "A Christmas Carol" in episodes in the December, and then followed up with "A Tale of Two Cities" in the following terms. I realise now how lucky I was to have been exposed to good writing so early on, and we were all fascinated by both books. One thing I do remember from "A Tale of Two Cities" is how the Parisians in the book always addressed each other as "Citizen" or "Citizeness". From my schoolboy superiority I thought "poor saps", but thinking back, I am realising that in the UK we are now in almost the same sort of behaviour.

At the time when I was listening to Charles Dickens, I would get letters addressed to "David Jenkins Esq.", and that was thought quite normal even into my student days. These days I get letters quite often directed to just "David Jenkins", and no forms of address whatsoever. Indeed a couple of decades ago there was much debate about how to address letters to women, as Mrs, Miss, or the ambiguous Ms. but it all seems to have gone by the board, especially with the social obstacle course of transgender.

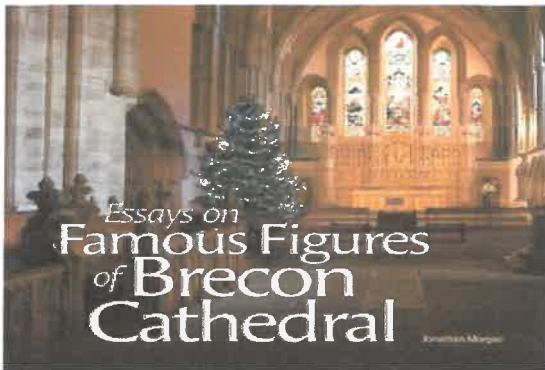
Now that emails are so common, as is buying on the internet, I notice that hardly ever am I allowed by the companies' computers to put myself down as a "Revd.". A Mr., sometimes Dr. or Prof. but never Revd., and never, ever "The Reverend" It's not so important for us clergy, as there is an acceptable form of address as just "Mr.", (or the equivalents for ordained women), but if professors and doctors are recognised, why not ourselves as well? And if you are senior clergy, well, just forget being Canon, Venerable, and all the rest. My bank had a brave attempt, but insists on addressing me as Mr the Revd David Jenkins.(Crockford says it should be the other way round.

I do not think I am unduly sensitive as to my status in society, but these days there are times when I feel I am being airbrushed almost out of existence, and certainly gone are the days when clergy could endorse identity documents. But then I think of those really unfortunate, the members of the peerage, whose common forms of address are totally different from their family name....

David Jenkins

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

A recent publications in the Diocese, has focused on Brecon Cathedral



Essays on Famous Figures of Brecon Cathedral by Jonathan Morgan is a rich collection of interesting stories and historical facts about people and events that have connections and have shaped the town and Cathedral of Brecon,

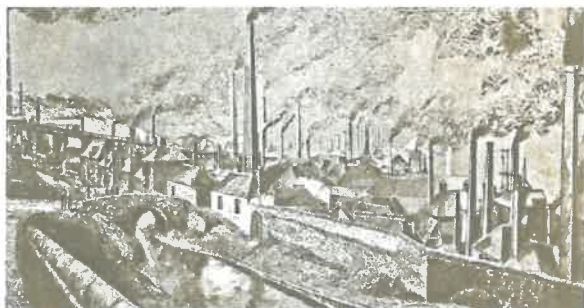
Brecon Cathedral has had a tremendous impact on the spiritual life of many people. Not many know the figures behind most of the plaques. They are significant in that they are a compilation of Brecon's history. Many of them are Welsh, but some more prominent benefactors came from over the border.

The Regimental Chapel is known throughout the world for its collection of Colours from the Zulu Wars. Brecon has only been a Cathedral since the 1920s but was one of the Priors left standing by church of the town, although some damage was done.

In late Victorian times it was revamped by Gilbert Scott and unfortunately many of the effigies were lost. However it stands as a great bastion of Christianity in Brecon immersed in the town's history. This is the story of the figures behind it

The Dean of Brecon has written the Foreword and in a Flyer at the launch of the book says that copies are available from cambriabooks.co.uk at £10 plus £3.50P&P A good read! *Ed.*

The Hafod Morfa Copper Works.



Work is progressing on the Swansea City Council's programme of regeneration to bring new

life to the Hafod/Morfa Copper Works powerhouse and outbuildings.

After a period of research sponsored by the City Council and Swansea University in which some of us were involved, the work has developed rapidly. The subject has drawn media interest in the recent BBC Wales programme *Hidden Wales* and the focusing in one edition on *Swansea City of Copper*. In addition to that programme there is now a series on YouTube, a series of short documentaries dealing with the growth and expansion of copper production and alongside that the development of the port and town of Swansea from the eighteenth century onwards until copper production ended in 1968.

The place to begin is with the Royal Commission Animation *Hafod Copper Works Swansea* which is a virtual journey through the copper smelting process with its buildings incorporating coal and the river and port of Swansea.

Alongside the Animation there is a series of short documentaries. I mention two *Hafod/Morfa Copperworks* and *Visitors Centre and Scenes from the Lower Swansea Valley in 1963 – where no trees grew! The beginning of the Lower Swansea Project*. Involved in this process over the years have been *The Friends of the Hafod Morfa Copperworks* which is now a registered charity

The YouTube documentaries are well worth a visit. *Ed.*

Our contributors once again I am grateful to our contributors for articles supplied for this issue. Hopefully for the next issue there will be news of when the Retired Clergy Group will be able to resume its activities *Ed.*

The Retired Clergy Newsletter

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Please send suggestions, comments, items of news by December 1st for the Autumn issue.

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