

# Letter From Lisvane

## Christmas 2022

It's been a nearly normal sort of year, with added 'not quite's for extra value!

Although we started the year back in a form of lockdown in Wales, things have progressed through the year so that now almost everything is back to where it was in February 2020 - the only place we have to wear masks is in health care situations now. All the shops are open (those that survived...), public transport is up and running (when the buses turn up and the trains aren't on strike), and concerts are back on (as long as the performers don't get covid).

We've both been vaccinated up to the hilt; David's side effects have been limited to a sore arm and somewhat impressive and long lasting bruising, while Bran has felt a bit rotten for a day or so. Unfortunately, Bran did come down with covid mid-June. David nursed her through the worst of it, and while Bran was testing positive for a week or so, all through that period he wasn't. The conclusion was that either the immunisation was working just fine, or that his body was so riddled with other sundry infections that covid couldn't get a look in. Flu jabs - yes, had them too.

Bran's still retired, though volunteering once a week at a café for the disadvantaged, and also helps out at Lisvane's library a few mornings or afternoons. Every now and again she goes out on the Brecon Beacons to help with conservation works there. David's still working, but has an exit strategy in place, hopefully coming to fruition at the end of September 2024. Gwen's still spending most of the day asleep, though she did have a few medical escapades of her own this year, one involving an infected nailbed, and a sudden loss in weight.

We've managed a few get-aways this year too. There have been random trips to Aberystwyth to look after



the house, oversee removals of chimneys, and the creation of curtains. Aber is also a good source of harp strings (they keep going 'ping' at odd intervals), and has very good Spanish and Italian grocery stores.

We went back to the Lake District, back to the Borrowdale Hotel, this year for our 30th wedding anniversary. Some things hadn't changed much - Derwentwater's ability to flood the valley for example - some things had - fewer guests in the restaurant and strict times to be booked for breakfast and dinner. We also managed to meet up with one of David's work colleagues who lives on the Cumbrian coast - needless to say he works from home a lot of the time!

For the first time in 3 years we were able to go to France - albeit with post-covid and post-Brexit conditions in place. And for once, being free of the tyranny of the school term, we could go 'out of season'. That made such a difference; we first clocked it when having our first evening meal on the ferry. Although the ferry was quite full (not as full as in August) we reckon there were only three children going out (or maybe back home), so the crossing was a little more sedate than we'd been used to.



Our first few nights were spent in Bordeaux, and the less said about its one-way system and accompanying roadworks the better. Our 'hotel' - which in the notes received prior to arrival was a little curious in that there were no TVs in the rooms, nor could you check in before 4pm, and not check in at all on Saturdays and Sundays - well all that became quite clear when we got there. It was a Catholic Diocesan building that housed a seminary, the administration offices for the diocese of Bordeaux, a chapel, a restaurant, and it also happened to have some rooms that it made available to tourists. And secure off road parking. It was, however, within easy walking distance of the trams and the Marché du Capucins. The centre

of the city was easily accessible by foot or tram. It was a very pleasant few days; one massive downpour at lunchtime was the worst of the weather, but the small unseen biting insects made David's legs look quite unsightly for a good few weeks afterwards. No we didn't take insect repellent. Yes, we bought some.

We spent a few days with our friends, the Hunts, in St-Robert, again visiting the old haunts of Objat, Terrasson, Brive, Branceilles, Perigueux, St-Yrieux and Pompadour. It was a bit cooler at the start of September, but the main thing was the significant reduction in tourists - school holidays and all that. A number of local restaurants had also closed for a break.

We then moved on to the Vendée, to the Château de la Verié in Challans. We spent a good deal of time at the mainland side of the Gois, the tidal causeway that links to the Isle de Noirmoutier. We watched the cars go over to the island, walked near on halfway across, watching the locals collect shellfish. We watched the last van come across from the island splashing through as the tide started to come in, and we watched the sea close off the causeway completely. Absolutely fascinating.

En route north we stopped off at Carnac - the kilometres of stones in alignment. Like a lot of these neolithic monuments the one unanswered question is surely "what were they thinking" followed by "what were they drinking"? After that we moved up to Vannes, a place we've never been before. Very interesting, small town centre with lots of timber-framed buildings. Did seem to find it a little hard to find a place for a p'tit rosé on our first night there - places were either not open at all, not open for another few hours, or about to close. It was a Sunday, but don't think that was part of it.

We spent a morning pottering around the town, visiting the large marina that is close to the town walls, and the cathedral, which was under some renovation inside. In the afternoon we went out to the coast for more sea watching as the tide came in, creating whirlpools and rough waters on an otherwise calm day.

Our last night was spent in Caen, and the next day while waiting for the ferry we spent a rather grey day pottering around the Normandy coast, visiting a few of the D-Day landing beaches.

We had to be careful on the way back - our previous attitude to the wine sections of French supermarkets and caves had been somewhat "how much will the car take before the suspension sags". Latest regulations (thanks to the B word) have modified that to "how many of the 24 bottles we're allowed each does that make"? It didn't look a lot. It didn't look as much as we were hoping it would be. However, it was enough to trip the car's back seat passenger sensor, and we had to affix a seat belt to stop the annoying binging sounds.

## **Best Wishes to you all for Christmas and for 2023**

Our address remains unchanged at  
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**Our email addresses are [branwena@gmail.com](mailto:branwena@gmail.com) and [dpabbott@gmail.com](mailto:dpabbott@gmail.com)  
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Gwen's interest in computers has expanded to know when a video conference is in progress, then to make as big an entrance and impact as her small body will allow.