

The Worshipful Livery Company of Wales

Cwmni Anrhydeddus Lifrai Cymru

Master's Weekend Newsletter · Tenby, Pembrokeshire · 15–17 May 2026

A weekend of fellowship, history and the very best of Pembrokeshire

The Master's Weekend took the Company west to Tenby, Dinbych-y-pysgod, the little fortress of the fish, for a weekend of warm welcome, good company and a remarkable sense of place. Tenby is one of Wales's most engaging small towns: a medieval walled settlement that has been welcoming visitors since the Georgian era, and which today is the jewel of Pembrokeshire tourism. From Friday afternoon to Sunday lunchtime we walked its cobbled lanes, were welcomed to the Mayor's Parlour, welcomed a new Liveryman, dined above its harbour, sailed to its monastic island, and parted even firmer friends than we arrived.



Tenby before we set sail for Caldey – the weather did not dampen our spirits

Friday 15 May — Arrival, History and the Mayor's Reception

We gathered at the Imperial Hotel (aka Faulty Towers) from 2.00 pm in good spirits looking forward to the weekend together and hoping for good weather as well as good company. Having reasonable weather was critical for our boat crossing to Caldey on Saturday, so we were very pleased to arrive with the sun shining and light winds.. We enjoyed reunions with old friends, and meeting Liverymen and guests we had only heard of but not met.. The bar was open, the views over the South Beach were beautiful and the mood was uplifting as befits a Livery event.





“I think my favourite part of the weekend was the chance to talk to everybody, to actually sit with people, have a drink, have a meal, get to know them. It was just so friendly and fun, and I really enjoyed it.”

— Kate Housley

A Potted History of Tenby — Dr Simon Hancock M

At 2.30 pm we were treated to a sparkling twenty-minute history of Tenby from our new Liveryman Dr Simon Hancock local historian and expert on Pembrokeshire Heritage, the perfect person to start our weekend. From its origins as a Welsh settlement, through its medieval walling under the Earls of Pembroke in the thirteenth century, and on to the further refortification by Jasper Tudor in the 1450s after Tenby gave refuge to the young Henry Tudor (later Henry VII) before his flight to France in 1471, the town has lived close to the great currents of Welsh and British history. By the Georgian period it had reinvented itself: Sir William Paxton’s investment from 1802 onwards turned Tenby into one of the most fashionable bathing resorts in the kingdom a status it has, in its own quietly confident way, never quite let go of.



“Tenby was so interesting, there was so much history. I mean, it had been there since the twelfth century. Being American, I haven’t experienced anything so historic. It’s a picturesque town; I liked all the shops. And Caldey Island was very beautiful. I enjoyed being there and speaking with the monks. Really interesting.”

— Sam Wilson

Exploring Tenby

Some of us then went to explore Tenby at 3.00 pm while others stayed and enjoyed each other’s company. Some Liverymen and guests went to the harbour, some for the lanes, some for a quiet pint before the evening programme began.



Civic Reception at the De Valence Pavilion

At 5.00 pm we walked the short distance down to Frog Street and the De Valence Pavilion, its appearance is perhaps the least pretty thing we saw all weekend, but the welcome we received when we arrived at the Mayor’s Parlor under a Cadw listed tower was warm and beautiful enough to more than compensate. In the Mayor’s Parlour we were received by Cllr Sam Blacklake, County Councillor for Tenby, Laurence Blacklake and the Mayor of Tenby, Cllr Dai Owen, who could not have been warmer in their welcome. Liverymen, the Mayor, Cllr Blacklake, Laurance Blacklake and guests all enjoyed a drink and lively discussions, Tenby was at its hospitable best.

It was in this setting that Dr Simon Hancock was formally clothed as a Liveryman of the Company, a memorable moment for all present.. Simon spoke eloquently of the privilege he feels on joining the Livery and his intention to be a very active contributor to the Livery’s mission to “Nurture Welsh Talent..” The applause in the Parlour was loud and genuine, and Simon’s response was characteristically modest.



Welcome Dinner and the Welsh Livery Family

Back at the Imperial Hotel at 7.30 pm we sat down to dinner and were pleased to be joined by two particularly welcome guests: Mrs Abi Green, of the Gild of Freemen of Haverfordwest, and Councillor Aden Brinn JP, Master of the Pembroke Gild of Freemen.. Both spoke after dinner about their own Gilds and about the great affinity between our organisations and the potential for close collaboration between the Worshipful Livery of Wales and both Gilds. We discussed organising future shared events, our shared causes, and shared support for one another's work. (Gild is the ancient spelling of Guild)

It is the nature of these evenings that good intentions are easily made; what was striking about Friday evening was the seriousness with which both speakers voiced their enthusiasm for collaboration with the Livery. The Company will follow up.



Saturday 16 May — Caldey Island

Breakfast on Saturday was hearty, but the weather forecast was less than encouraging. A trip to Caldey Island is at the mercy of the weather and of the tides: high winds stop the boats, and the tide rules the timing of the crossing. We had been advised to be at the harbour for 9.45 am. We were lucky and despite some dark cloud, there were light winds and the boat was ready to take us.

We boarded an open-top vessel, open being the operative word. The crossing was lively, and one or two of us, particularly the Chair of Trustees Dyfrig James, who had settled on the starboard side, took a memorable Pembrokeshire soaking as the salt water lashed over the bow. There was much laughter, some shivering and not a little resigned wringing-out, and we landed at the quayside on Caldey with our spirits and most of our umbrellas intact. Yes umbrellas! And there at the quay Abbott Jan was there to greet our party, what an astonishing welcome to this beautiful Island.





“My best part was going to Caldey Island. I’ve never been there before. It was a beautiful visit. We were very lucky with the weather and lucky with the company. Very special company.”

— Richard

A Rare Privilege the Abbot Greet Us

Caldey is one of the holy islands of Britain. Christian monastic life there is recorded from the sixth century, when it was associated with St Illtud and later St Dyfrig, names that will mean something to many in our Company. The current Cistercian community has been on the island since 1929. The island has been a place of prayer for over fifteen hundred years.

It was a particular and rare honour that the Abbot, Father Jan, came down to the quayside in person to greet us. He walked with us up to the monastery and gave us a wonderful talk on the history of the community and on the life of a Cistercian monk on Caldey today. Brother David and Brother Daniel then took us round the monastery including the Chapter House, the places of worship, and the kitchens. They spoke with great openness about the day-to-day rhythm of monastic life. We left with a real sense of having been let in to something private and important, and we are grateful. All the monks expressed their wishes to be remembered

to our Liveryman Phillip Kitchen who had arranged our visit with Abbott Jan to whom we are immensely grateful.



“Caldey Island was the highlight of the weekend, and I really appreciated the wonderful welcome we were given by the Abbot and the monks. The superb fellowship of the whole weekend will be well remembered. For my nephew Sam, newly arrived from the USA, it was a great introduction to Welsh hwyl, history and hospitality.”

— Norma Jarboe

“It’s been a wonderful weekend for the fellowship and the wonderful sights and experiences. But for me, the highlight was visiting the monastery and meeting the monks, who have a wonderful depth of spirituality and faith. I found that very inspiring.”

— Herbert Lonsdale

“It was such a privilege to be able to see the monks on Caldey Island and to spend time with them in that special place.”

— Stephen Ley



“Caldey Island was fascinating, the monks were so engaging — and Brother David, he was a bit of a comedian. Remarkable. I hope it continues for many years. I think society needs things like this..”

— David Protheroe, Master's Consort





Picnic in the Gardens

We all met in the picnic gardens. The Imperial Hotel had sent us off with packed lunches and, by some quiet miracle of arrangement on the part of the Master, the sandwiches were joined by champagne and a respectable red. The sun came out, the wind dropped, and we enjoyed convivial company, comparing impressions of the monastery and the monks and all the other



"Iechyd Da, shall we be forced to have another one more?"



Chocolate, Lighthouse and the Quieter Corners of Caldey

Suitably restored, we walked on. The chocolate factory, known to anyone who has ever set foot on Caldey, drew most of us in, and the smell as you walk in is sumptuous. Many of us are coming home with great reminders of our weekend in the form of delicious fudge and chocolate, 'a moment on the lips a lifetime on the hips' was replaced by 'a delicious lingering taste that will be a long lasting memory of a wonderful day spent on Caldey Island.' Most of us strolled up to the lighthouse to enjoy the sweeping views of the waters connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Severn estuary, the lighthouse helped historical maritime traffic to identify the Bristol Channel. We could see the Gower Peninsula and faintly in the distance Lundy Island.

Then to St. Illtud's Church and St. David's Church, off to post some souvenir post cards in the Post Office and pick up a few souvenirs from the gift shop before boarding the ferry back to Tenby.

For many of us this Caldey Island was the highlight of the whole weekend. The quiet, the beauty, the tremendous welcome from the Abbott and the monks, and the sense of being in a place that has been a place of prayer for fifteen hundred years was magical and not to be forgotten.



Back to Tenby

We all returned to Tenby at different times after lunch. John Charles and Dyfrig James departed to watch the rugby, Dyfrig was there to support Aberaeron against Tenby United, but even his magic was not enough for them to garner victory on Saturday. Stephen Ley and Alison made very good use of the afternoon by visiting the Tudor Merchant's House on Quay Hill, a late-fifteenth-century town merchant's home in the National Trust's care, and a highlight in Welsh historical buildings. Many of us took the boat at around 3.00 pm and, after a quick

stop for further refreshments and to warm up after the crossing, it was back to the Imperial. By way of contrast to the serenity of Caldey we were greeted by the hotel disco in full swing; the noise was so loud that the walls of the hotel building as we approached seemed to be vibrating. Undaunted we entered the fray and after a quick freshen up we were all back together for an evening of good food and friendship.



Saturday Dinner

The Master's friends, daughter Elizabeth and her boyfriend, Ieuan who had joined us on Caldey joined the Company for dinner. We enjoyed drinks before the meal, an enjoyable dinner, and then a few words from the Chair of Trustees, Dyfrig James. Characteristically entertaining and charming, he engenders all that the Livery movement is about. He spoke about what a lovely weekend we had enjoyed, the fellowship of the Company, the delight of Tenby, and the soaking he had on the way out to Caldey. He was, as ever, the embodiment of good humour and charm.



“It’s been a lovely weekend with great company — and very, very welcoming.”

— Alison Ley

Sunday 17 May — Walls, a Church, an Ice Cream and Home

The Town Walls with Dr Simon Hancock

After breakfast Simon Hancock returned to regale us with more fascinating history on Tenby’s town walls. Tenby’s walls are, remarkably, the most complete of any walled town in Wales. Built in the late thirteenth century and re-fortified by Jasper Tudor in the 1450s, they enclose the old town on the landward side. The Five Arches gatehouse, as Simon explained, owes its survival to a public outcry against its proposed demolition in 1873. Simon, with the cheerful instinct of every good guide, had set us the task of finding the date stone in the wall. Stephen Ley, took the prize.



St Mary’s — One of the Largest Medieval Churches in Wales

From the walls we walked the short distance to St Mary’s, where the Church Warden Lawrence Blackhall met us with his guide Stephanie, knowledgeable, generous and very welcoming. St Mary’s is one of the largest medieval parish churches in Wales, with outstanding carved stonework, a fine wagon roof, and a very different atmosphere than the busy harbour outside both charming and distinctive in their remarkable beauty. The tour had been timed to avoid Sunday services, but it was noted with delight that the church was busy with people staying after the service to have coffee and fellowship and the children playing were a joy. This all added to the penultimate experience of our weekend.



“I’ve enjoyed every single minute from the time we arrived. We’re just going into St Mary’s Church now before lunch and then home. Thank you, Jane — wonderfully done.”

— Angela Parry MBE, Assistant Clerk

Farewell — and an Ice Cream

The final experience in Tenby was delicious home-made ice-cream in homemade waffle cones - fabulous. Respecting tradition, you can’t go to the seaside and not have ice-cream. Liverymen and guests departed at their own pace, some by train, others by car all with a positive sense of fellowship amongst Liverymen and guests. The weather, in the end, had been kind enough; the welcome had been kinder still; and the friendships, old and new, had been the kindest part of all.



“The fabulous fellowship we have enjoyed this weekend — if all members of the Livery could experience this, that is what it’s all about. It’s brilliant.”

— Dr Claude Evans

With thanks

The Company is grateful to Dr Simon Hancock for his talks and his good company; to the Mayor of Tenby, Cllr Dai Owen, and to Cllr Sam Blacklake for their warm reception in the Mayor's Parlour; to Abbot Father Jan and to Brother David and Brother Daniel of the Cistercian community on Caldey; to Lawrence Blackhall and Stephanie at St Mary's; to Mrs Abi Green of the Gild of Freemen of Haverfordwest and Councillor Aden Brinn JP, Master of the Pembroke Gild of Freemen for joining us.

Particular thanks are due to Liveryman Phillip Kitchen for arranging our visit to Caldey, and to the Very Rev. Father Sebastian M Jones, Junior Warden of the Company, for his work in preparing the way and to David, the Master's Consort, Liz her daughter and partner Ieuan, Jody, Paul and Sue for their help and to all the Liverymen and guests who joined the weekend with such fun, charm and good humour.

Diolch o galon i bawb — heartfelt thanks to everyone.