

May Speaker at Sully u3a

On May 14th Sully u3a welcomed Mr. Nigel Bosanko, the Tower Captain of Llantrisant Parish Church as its speaker. Mr. Bosanko began his talk with a condensed 5,000 year history of bells, beginning with pottery hand bells found in China through to those rung by monks in the Campana region of Italy in the 4th century, which gave rise to the word campanology. By the 7th century the churches in Britain had bells which were initially rung to warn of invaders. The 11th century saw towers being built onto churches to house larger bells cast in bronze. The bell tower at Llantrisant dates back to 1490 and it is documented that 6 new bells were cast in 1718 and increased to a set of 8 in 1926. Throughout the centuries bell ringing progressed and Mr. Bosanko explained the development in the 17th century of Full Circle Ringing when bells were hung with full wheels in oak frames and able to swing through 360 degrees. This allowed the speed and order in which the bells were rung to be altered now known as method ringing. During WWII the bells remained silent only to be rung if Britain was invaded. In 2012 the bells of Llantrisant were silent again, this time due to the poor condition of bells. 500 years of water penetration had wreaked havoc. In 2022 the gaps in the masonry of the 7ft thick walls was restored but what about the bells? Over a pint in the local pub members of the community discussed a new project – the re-installation of the bells. Fund raising began immediately and in May 2025 work began to remove the 8 bells that would be taken away, refurbished and tuned before being returned. The tenor, the largest bell weighed in at 9 ½ cwt. The restoration of the tower began which involved putting in steel beams to replace rotted timbers and lifting beams to help if the bells needed to be moved in the future. Two new bells were commissioned which are lighter and don't require so much physical strength to ring them so younger members of the community can learn to ring. Finally, St. Davids Day weekend 2026 saw the return of the bells to Llantrisant and the completion of a remarkable restoration project that saw the whole community come together.