# Camels appear outside St Mary’s Church for academic’s memorial in Abergavenny



In a curious incident in Abergavenny, a group of camels was spotted outside St Mary’s Church, prompting a wave of confusion among residents. The sighting was initially reported by local resident Alice Dawson on April 25 via Abergavenny Voice. She expressed her bewilderment, wondering aloud, “Am I going mad or did I just see a camel outside St Mary’s as I was driving past? I’m beginning to think I’m going crazy….”

Many neighbours shared Dawson's surprise. One resident, David Collyer, remarked with a hint of humour, “They’ve arrived early for the nativity, but the chances of finding three wise men before Christmas are slim….” Another local, Rachel Dixon, expressed her intrigue about the significance of the camels, saying, “Love this but would also love to know the significance out of curiosity.”

The mystery surrounding the camels was later unveiled to be linked to the memorial service of Professor Jeremy Swift, an 85-year-old academic renowned for his expertise in nomadic studies. Professor Swift had dedicated nearly two decades to life in Africa, engaging closely with nomadic tribes in the Sahel region, particularly the Tuareg people. His fondness for these animals made their presence at his memorial service particularly fitting.

Speaking to the local community, Camilla Swift, the professor’s widow, shared her memories of her late husband. She noted his deep affection for Wales, where he resided in the Black Mountains, enjoying a peaceful life filled with his other interests of fishing and gardening since 1990 until his passing at the end of 2024. She reflected, “He created for himself a paradise garden, an oasis in complete contrast to his life in the desert, which he loved nothing better to share with others.”

While the garden, a source of joy for Professor Swift, will be closed this year as a mark of respect, plans are in place for it to reopen in 2026 as part of the National Garden Scheme. This initiative aims to preserve the legacy of a man who was not only passionate about his academic pursuits but also dedicated to the beauty of his surroundings.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.onenewspage.com/n/UK/1zpowybdgr/Real-camels-donkeys-and-sheep-parade-through-Welsh.htm> - This article discusses a parade featuring real camels, donkeys, and sheep in a Welsh town, bringing the Christmas Nativity story to life, which aligns with the mention of camels being spotted outside St Mary’s Church in Abergavenny.
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3wev90nvx2o> - This BBC News article reports on three camels participating in a church service outside Hereford Cathedral to mark the eve of Epiphany, highlighting the use of camels in church events, similar to the Abergavenny incident.
3. <https://www.monmouthshirebeacon.co.uk/news/palm-sunday-procession-in-chepstow-with-bishop-606150> - This article covers a Palm Sunday procession in Chepstow, where real animals, including donkeys, were part of the event, drawing a parallel to the use of camels in church-related activities in the Abergavenny article.
4. <https://www.britishpilgrimage.org/portfolio/st-thomas-way-9-abergavenny> - This page provides historical context about St Mary’s Priory Church in Abergavenny, including its founding in 1087 and its significance, which supports the setting of the camels' appearance outside the church.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-29210082> - This BBC News article discusses the revival of a Benedictine tradition in Abergavenny, with modern-day monks setting up a monastery, providing context to the town's religious and cultural activities.
6. <https://www.visitwales.com/en-us/inspire-me/holidays/faith-tourism/exploring-churches-monmouthshire> - This Visit Wales page highlights St Mary's Church in Capel-y-Ffin, near Abergavenny, noting its unique architecture and historical significance, which adds depth to the setting of the camels' appearance.
7. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25128155.reason-camels-spotted-abergavenny/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data