

Our First Dolwyddelan Christmas and Winter

When we imagined our first Christmas in Dolwyddelan, we pictured frost on the valley floor, church bells drifting through cold air and mugs of tea cooling on the windowsill, while rain — because rain here never merely falls, it commits — tapped at the glass.

Instead, we spent Christmas Day in Santiago, Chile.

Work carried us to the other side of the world. While the valley settled into winter stillness, we were standing beneath a Southern Hemisphere sun, celebrating Christmas in summer. Yet even 7,000 miles away, we found ourselves checking the Dolwyddelan weather. Had it frosted? Was the river high? Were the mountains clear? Christmas music played in hotel lobbies, but in our minds, we could hear carols echoing closer to home.

We returned to winter waiting for us. Slate roofs darkened by rain. Hills wrapped in mist. The river louder after storms. Winter here is not decorative; it is elemental. Light becomes precious. Logs become strategic. A clear morning feels like a gift.

Then January delivered what every valley hopes for — snow.

Beautiful, postcard-perfect snow.

We know this because we missed it.

While we were away again for work, Dolwyddelan briefly transformed into Narnia. Photographs arrived: white rooftops, crisp blue skies, Moel Siabod standing proud. We were disproportionately devastated. It turns out that belonging means wanting to be in the snow, not just admiring it remotely.

And just as we were recovering from that disappointment, village life produced another surprise — the discovery of a very large cannabis farm. Not quite the rural idyll brochure image. Yet even that was absorbed with characteristic calm: raised eyebrows, practical conversations and life carrying on.

Our first Dolwyddelan winter has taught us this: perfection is overrated. What matters is rhythm, community and the quiet exhale you feel when the valley opens before you on the drive home.

We weren't visiting.

We were coming home.

Dolwyddelan in summer made us fall in love.

Dolwyddelan in winter made us belong.

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