



Welcome to our fourth annual Newsletter. The Newsletter is mainly intended for members of our Church congregation, for Friends of Llansantffraed Church and for visitors to the Church. We hope that you find news items of interest to you.

Editorial It has been an extremely busy 12 months at Llansantffraed. Since the last newsletter more Friends have joined our group, and we have held some successful fund raising Concerts in the Church as well as opening the church for visitors and Walking groups. More is given about these items elsewhere in this newsletter. However, due to our rural location and now very small local congregation and Church Committee, keeping this church open and available for services, visitors and special events is becoming increasingly difficult unless we can get more people actively involved. So it's not simply a matter of fundraising! Do read about our consultation on the Future of Llansantffraed Church overleaf. Thank you for whatever support you have given in the past year or can give to Llansantffraed Church in the future.

Sandra Briskham, Church Warden, sandra.briskham@btinternet.com

Mervyn Bramley, Brecknock Society and Church Friend, mervyn.bramley@icloud.com

CHURCH WARDEN TO RETIRE

Sandra Briskham retires as Church Warden later this year after 10 years in the post. Under her care and perseverance, the leaking church roof was renewed in 2008, the rotting church floor was retiled in 2014, the failing churchyard wall along the A40 was rebuilt in 2016, and this year the boundary wall at the back of the churchyard was completely rebuilt (see report elsewhere in this newsletter). She was also instrumental in setting up the Friends of Llansantffraed Church. Reflecting on this, Sandra said: "I feel I have left a legacy which should protect the fabric of the building for many years to come - but there is still the church bell problem to resolve (see report in this newsletter) and no doubt the gradual deterioration of the fabric elsewhere will throw further unexpected problems at the Church Committee to resolve or fund."



LAST YEARS' CONCERTS



In May, we were extremely lucky to have the renowned soprano Dame Emma Kirkby and her Dowland Works group of instrumentalists and singers give a marvellous early music concert on the theme of Henry Vaughan's life. The programme of lute music, song and poetry brought parts of the poet's 17th century world back to life. It was a sell out and the varied performances were thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Commenting on the visit, Dame Emma said she had rarely had such a welcoming audience in such inspirational surroundings. Thanks go to the Brecknock

Society and the Friends Group for organising this. In September, our locally based Gwent Chamber Orchestra provided a wonderful afternoon of varied music. They are now one of our regular musical groups at Llansantffraed and we are so lucky to have the Conductor Steve Broom and his wife Julia, the Leader, living here in our village. Both these concerts were very well supported and raised welcome income.



VISITORS AND WALKERS

In March, we hosted a Crickhowell Walking Festival group of walkers organised by Elizabeth Siberry. They met up in our Visitor Area for a talk and then visit to Henry Vaughan's grave, then went up The Allt, and ended with the Henry Vaughan Walk. In May, a group of walkers from the Talgarth Walking Festival ended their walk at the Church having commenced at Tretower Court (8 miles away). Then in October a further group of walkers visited the Church - this time it was under the auspices of the Brecon Baroque Festival when their theme was "Henry Vaughan & The Swan of Usk". On the last walk, one of the walkers developed medical problems and the Brecon Mountain Rescue Team carried him down from The Allt. Most walkers never need the rescue team but they're always on call and we were extremely fortunate to have them. We have welcomed further visitors on 'Church Open' Saturdays and Sundays, including the Maddox family from Seattle USA who'd flown over specially to look for their ancestor's graves. By good fortune, they found a 16th century Madoc forebear's grave slab in church vestry! Most of our visitors are extremely grateful to us for opening the church. They show their appreciation by purchasing items for sale or leaving donations - all of which helps our income. We are grateful to Elizabeth Siberry and Mervyn Bramley as Church Friends for helping to arrange most of these visits.



PETER PIKE - 2019 VAUGHAN SPEAKER

We welcome the Venerable Dr Peter Pike as speaker at the 2019 Henry Vaughan Memorial Service. Peter was born and



bought up in London, with an English father and a Welsh mother from Penclawdd, near Swansea. He was a teacher prior to his ordination. His ministry was in Yorkshire prior to being Archdeacon of Montgomery in the Diocese of St Asaph. He retired last year from full-time ministry and is a long-standing member of The Vaughan Association.

FRIENDS OF LLANSANTFFRAED CHURCH

This group was formed in 2015. It is aimed at the local community, visitors, friends from afar, and anyone else who is not a regular member of the Llansantffraed congregation, but nevertheless feels they would like to help and/or give financial support so that church building can be maintained and kept available for use by future generations. The Friends have helped to broaden the use of Llansantffraed Church with more concerts and visitors. Their activities and subscriptions raised £1,370 in 2018 to maintain the church fabric.

The annual subscription is £20 per year. Friends all receive this annual newsletter and prior notice of any special events being held. If you are not a Friend and would like to become one, or you know of someone who might like to, please contact our Treasurer Brenda Powell on 01874-676639 who can provide an application form and more details, or see the websites (details overleaf).

FUTURE OF LLANSANTFFRAED CHURCH

As our small Church Committee is now getting older and we have few local members of the congregation, we are finding it extremely difficult to carry out some of the recent church activities. We will be holding a Consultation in the coming months with the local community around Llansantffraed (including Talybont-on-Usk), with the Church Friends, and with the members of other churches in the Beacons Benefice about the practical help that can be offered to sustain church activities as well as the broader use of Llansantffraed Church - e.g. for more concerts. Details of the consultation will also be on the Beacons Benefice website. If you can offer any assistance or ideas, please contact Kelvin Richards as Priest in Charge, Sandra Briskham as current Church Warden, or Mervyn Bramley as a Church Friend.

CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

Internal Improvements: We were successful in getting a grant from the Community Foundation in Wales to get **50 new wooden and upholstered stacking chairs** for use in major events. They replace the rather uncomfortable plastic ones. The new chairs are extremely comfortable and were used for the first time at the Gwent Chamber Orchestra Concert in September. We now have a serviceable **loudspeaking system** and this certainly makes a difference when there is heavy traffic passing on the A40 outside - particularly motor bikes!!

The Bell in the tower has started to feel loose when rung and, after arranging for it to be surveyed, we were advised not to use it as it was in danger of falling through the ceiling! The bell is inscribed "*William Powell: David Madocks: Churchwardens 1676*". Our records show it was rehung by Taylors of Loughborough in 1895. A full survey was carried out in November 2018 and we are awaiting the report. However we are told that there is a 12-month waiting list for any repairs even if we had the ready cash to proceed!! Our thanks go to Paul Johnson of the Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers for his help and advice with the ringing and the inspection of the bell.



Our **Pipe Organ** is an ongoing worry - not with the keys sticking due to dampness in the atmosphere but now from small creatures who invade the church over the winter for some dry comfort! We are monitoring them closely!

External Works - Boundary Wall. The upper boundary wall in the region of the Henry Vaughan grave had been causing concern for some time due mainly to a sycamore tree having grown through the wall and pushing some of the stonework into the churchyard. The stonework on other sections of the wall was loose, and immediate action on these issues was advised in our last Quinquennial Inspection. We were fortunate to acquire a repair grant from the Church in Wales.



Our local contractors JL Stephens Ltd commenced work in December, having first to arrange for the sycamore tree to be felled by professional tree surgeons. So the date was set - but prior to the proper felling work taking place, we had a bad storm that brought down some of the branches - whilst the contractors were at work in the area! A very lucky escape for Gareth and Jamie who hearing the crack quickly moved out of the way!! A 16 metre length of wall had to be dismantled before new foundations were laid and the wall was rebuilt using lime mortar. The job was completed on 29 March 2019.



The photo shows Gareth and Jamie by the completed wall; the other shows the offending sycamore tree. The Diocese advised that the 18th and 19th century grave headstones that had been standing along or fixed to the wall should be laid flat in an adjacent 'grave lay' area. We thank J L Stephens Ltd for carrying out all the work so professionally. The Church Committee feels it has opened up and enhanced the Henry Vaughan Grave area greatly and hopes that visitors will sit and relax in this peaceful setting of the churchyard.

LEAFLETS, BOOKS AND CARDS

We have free leaflets on the Church in the porch or at the Henry Vaughan Visitor Area at the rear of the church, where other items are on sale. These include leaflets and books on the Church, 'Henry Vaughan & the Usk Valley', 'Above Brecknock', 'A selection of poems by Henry Vaughan' and the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship's 'At the Grave of Henry Vaughan'. The extra income from sales is always welcome.

SUNDAY SERVICES, 'CHURCH OPEN DAYS' AND 'WHEN THE CHURCH IS NOT OPEN'

For the rest of 2019, Sunday Services will be held at Llansantffraed on the following dates:

Sunday 26 th May	Sunday 22 nd September
Sunday 2 nd June - Benefice Group Service	Sunday 27 th October
Sunday 23 rd June	Sunday 24 th November
Sunday 28 th July	Sunday 1 st December - Benefice Group Service
Sunday 25 th August (Bank Holiday Weekend)	Sunday 22 nd December



All Services start at 10.00 am and are either Holy Communion or Morning Prayer. Everyone is welcome to join these and we would love to see some new faces in the congregation. We have some special services over the course of the year, particularly at Christmas. See the 'News' on the Beacons Benefice website for more details. Our picture shows coffee time after the Mothering Sunday service in March.

Church Open Days: Because of the exposed location of the Church alongside the A40, we always need an attendant in the Church when it is open. We have to rely on local volunteers to 'man' the church on 'Church Open' days and to welcome visitors. In 2019 the Friends of Llansantffraed Church and members of the Brecknock Society will open the church to visitors from 11.00 to 13.00 and 14.00 to 16.00 on the second Saturday of the month from May to September - that's 11 May, 8 June, 13 July, 10 August, 14 September. Our thanks to all those who volunteer to help to promote and open this beautiful and interesting church. **Please contact Mervyn Bramley (01874-665267) if you, or someone you know, can help for one of the 2-hour slots.**



When the Church is Not Open: Visitors can find leaflets about the Church, Henry Vaughan - Breconshire's famous 17th century poet, and the Henry Vaughan Walk in the Church Porch which is always open. They can also view a half-size copy of the Information Boards on Henry Vaughan and the local Landscape and Wildlife that inspired him. The Boards themselves are in the Henry Vaughan Visitor Area inside the Church. We will always try to arrange a convenient time for people wishing to visit the Church at other times - please contact the Church Warden, Sandra Briskham until later in 2019 (phone number on the Beacons Benefice website and in the church porch) or Mervyn Bramley (as above).

VAUGHAN GARDEN

We should also mention the renovation of the Vaughan Garden that has been taking place over the past 12 months. It is on the Vaughan Walk close to Talybont-on-Usk (see above for leaflet or website below). The Garden had fallen into disrepair and become overgrown. In 2018, a local group - the Henry Vaughan Garden Volunteers - was formed alongside the Talybont-on-Usk Community Council to renovate and maintain the garden, including renovating the picnic table and plant beds and replanting its collection of 17th century medicinal herbs. We hope you will also find time to visit this peaceful and tranquil place on the other side of the River Usk.



WEBSITES For more information on the **Ministry and Services** at Llansantffraed Church, go to the **Beacons Benefice** website at parish.churchinwales.org.uk/s475 or Google 'Beacons Benefice'. For more information on the **Church's broader links** including its Henry Vaughan heritage and related local information go to www.breckknocksociety.co.uk and click on 'Henry Vaughan Heritage at Llansantffraed'.