

# LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 182 JUNE 2020



## THE LOCKDOWN ISSUE: LOOKING FORWARD TO DOORS REOPENING



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## FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the Newsletter comes to you in anything but normal times. When our March edition went out, with Sir Keith Thomas (the “History Man”) on the cover, who could have predicted what was around the corner? It’s a truism that history repeats itself, but the world has never seen anything quite like this. Entire economies across the planet have been placed in self-induced comas in an effort to keep health services from being overwhelmed. Billions of people have been hemmed in by lockdowns.

In our little corner of the Vale, it has been truly uplifting to witness the many acts of kindness across the community towards those in need over the past couple of months. And what can we say to our neighbours who work in the health system? What but Thank You! (Don’t worry, we’ll stop clapping now. We got the message! See page 12.)

No Village Show this summer. No Open Gardens Day. No cosy, boozy evenings in the Fox – for now. No “Upcoming Events” section on our back pages; what would be the point? Still, be thankful for all that glorious recent sunshine. Imagine what lockdown would have been like under more typical Welsh skies. No, best not to.

As the lockdown starts to ease, let’s hope that there’s no second spike and we can soon get back to something resembling normality. Your editor sincerely hopes to be able to start listing events again in the September issue. (Please don’t let them all be on Zoom, much as we’ve grown to love our online quizzes.) What was that about a right old knees-up later in the year? A bumper version of the VE Day street party that we weren’t able to hold in May, you say? Now there’s a thought. We’ll see...

## Michael John Crosta, BA, OBE

The passing of our former Chairman, Mike Crosta, was occasion for great sadness in the village, and a cue for many memories. Mike's family history reflected the Italian influx into Wales, during its industrial heyday, his great grandfather Dominico emigrating at sixteen. We picture Dominico's Newport shop here;



Mike has written of his and Jan's visit to the family village, Pianello—known locally as the Village of the Crostas—to explore his family roots. Here in this Crosta village we shall miss Mike and send all sympathy to Jan and the family. Their daughter Alex has sent this obituary...

### My Pops, by Alexandra Crosta...

Mike Crosta will be well remembered and loved by many, and in many ways. He was a Husband, Dad, Grandpa, Solicitor, world traveller and an all-round good, gentle man.

He was a soulmate, best friend and married to Mum for 52 years. Over 50 of those he lived here in Llancafán where he had purchased a plot of land and built his

house. He was a great dad who was extremely proud of my brother Andrew and me and granddaughter Petra. He meant the world to us. As a senior Crown Prosecuting Solicitor, he was highly respected throughout his working life by colleagues, the opposition and police officers.



When he walked into court, the defence knew they were in for a fight! He was known to be tough but fair, but his family knew him to be soft as putty. Our proudest moment was when we all went to Buckingham Palace for Dad to have the OBE pinned to his chest by Prince Charles.

His holidays were known as “stuff of legend” and he travelled to all seven continents. He was particularly keen on wildlife holidays, which began by



watching David Attenborough programmes with Andrew and me when we were young. How many people can say they have put their hand into a whale's mouth, been chased by a large trumpeting bull elephant and stared into the eye of a wild tiger? It was only back in 2016 when he swam with whale sharks!

Dad was very popular with village residents and could often be seen dragging huge logs along the road for

his wood burner. Everyone knew his love of logs which was remembered touchingly by the villagers on the day of his funeral (see picture above), something which the family truly appreciated.

Dad fought a brave battle after a terrible diagnosis and operation but still lived his life to the full. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten. When we have great memories, they never leave us.

### **Godfrey Griffiths: 1940—2020**

*Barbara Milhuisen*

Godfrey was born at Top End (Caradog Cottage), the first son of Robert and Mary Griffiths, later joined by his brothers John and Andrew. All three boys were christened in Llancafarn and Godfrey and John grew up to be members of the church choir. The boys can have had few memories of their father, who was tragically killed on VE day in 1945.

Godfrey went to Llancafarn School, then was awarded a scholarship to Barry Boys' Grammar School. Later, he served an apprenticeship at Wyndham Engineering in Cardiff docks. He joined the William Reardon Smith shipping company as a marine engineer, rising to become Chief Superintendant Marine Engineer. Always a grafter, he bought a Triumph motorbike with money earned by working for Frank Rowlands at Ty-to Maen, for transport to Cardiff. Godfrey's later travels took him all over the world. It was while in Glasgow that he met his wife, Helen. They made their first home in Llantwit Major, and later in Rhoose. Godfrey is survived by Helen, and by his children and grandchildren.

## FLAXLAND FACH: A PARTIAL HISTORY

*Gordon Kemp*

**At a meeting of the Committee of the Llancaf Society** I suggested that perhaps articles by residents on the history of their houses might prove of interest, as well as contributing to the history of the area. Nobody came forward from the Committee and therefore at our last meeting I “volunteered” to contribute a history of Flaxland Fach, Walterston. The offer was made less than a week before writing this and proved more difficult than I thought!

The house, as those that know it will be aware, is a detached property next to barns used by Viv Price. Between the house and the barns is a small single storey stone building which I have always taken to be an old cattle shed. However, in a will made in 1830 there is a reference to a “messuage or dwellinghouse and farm called Flaxland Fach” occupied by Edward Thomas or his under-tenants. Does “occupied” mean lived in or just farmed and was the stone building originally a house? The 1841 census is not very helpful as although it lists an Edward Thomas in “Llancafvan” it doesn’t give an address. I will move onto surer ground.

In 1898 “Flaxland Farm known as Flaxland Fach” was sold to Elizabeth Harris at public auction on July 9th for the price of £600, the sale being completed on October 28th. Mrs Harris being described as a widow residing at The Carpenter’s Arms, Penmark. Was this what is now known as the Six Bells, or was there then more than one pub in Penmark, as there was in Llancafvan? The property she buys comprises seven fields running along the road from Llancafvan to Walterston as well as a separate parcel described as Coed Ffynon Dyfrig. A total of 20 acres, 1 rood and 5 perches. Some readers may remember those measurements from their school exercise books or rulers, and others may remember still using them!

Mrs Harris doesn’t move to Flaxand Fach. Was there a house there? Certainly there is no mention of one in the conveyance to her, only to “premises, land and hereditaments”, which may or not have included a house. In 1901 the census shows her at The Carpenter’s Arms, aged 56, with her six children: four sons, three described as masons, one as a carpenter; and two daughters who are not described as having occupations, the youngest child (a daughter) being 13.

**In 1903 Mrs Harris mortgaged the property** and borrowed £180 on the security of her new property. Was this I wonder used to build a house? What did a house cost to build at that time? On a side note, the cost of building HMS Dreadnought, the latest in battleship design, was about £1,750,000. In any event a house is built as it is referred to in the 1911 census. In that census four of her children are shown as living at Flaxland Fach, three sons and one daughter described as “at home”. They are all single. Also there is a



Mrs Lovell, described as an aunt. She only speaks Welsh, whereas the four Harris children only speak English.

There is no mention of Elizabeth Harris as unfortunately she had died on December 23rd 1910. In her will, made in 1904, she had appointed her brother-in-law Thomas Lovell as her executor, presumably the husband of the Mrs Lovell living at Flaxland Fach in 1911. He however renounced probate in favour of Ethel Harris, the elder of the Harris daughters. Were he and his wife no longer together?

In 1912 Ethel Harris sold the property. To be continued.....

***POSTSCRIPT: Flaxland was back in the news recently, but not for the happiest of reasons. On the weekend of May 23rd-24th there was a big fire at the property in the middle of the night. Fortunately the blaze was in the barn, not the house. The fire brigade spent six hours fighting it and making the site safe.***



### ***IT'S IN THE PAPER!***

***Many Happy Returns to Ron Price, who celebrated his 90th birthday on May 11th in style, with Lockdown fish & chips.***

## Parsons from Porlock

Ian Fell

**I don't know if it's a sort of Tourette's syndrome**, but thinking of titles always brings a temptation to make bad puns. Penny, not wishing to encourage the habit, tries hard to edit mine out. Nevertheless, I did feel slightly justified when the above title suggested itself, because it reflects a real experience. We really *did* meet a parson from Porlock.

I probably don't need to explain that the original "**person** from Porlock" was the nameless fellow who in 1797 interrupted Coleridge whilst he was trying to recall the poem he'd composed during an opium trip, just over the water in Nether Stowey. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* – er – tripped, because later he could only remember fifty-four lines. So the rest of this heady poem was lost to posterity. Heavy, man.

Back with my bad pun, the **parson** from Porlock who we met was standing with her husband on the cliffs at Nash Point, looking across the sea, peering into the mistily retreating Porlock Bay, just down the Severn from Minehead.

Chatting with us, the parson explained that she "wanted to see my church from across the water. So," she said, "we grabbed the binoculars, and drove round to have a look at it." And see her church she did.

You must have you done something similar? We have. Some years ago we upped and crossed the bridge, then rounded the other coast to our niece's wedding at West Quantoxhead. (If only the Cardiff White Funnel Fleet was still ploughing across the briny!) It was a lovely wedding, we stayed the night, and when we got up we found we could look straight across the water to Llancarfan. Well, to the power station anyway.

**It must now be forty years or so since we had a seaside holiday** with our (then) youngsters in a friend's caravan over at Blue Anchor. That's the *Somerset* Blue Anchor, just outside Minehead. But what we *didn't* know then was that the name of "Blue Anchor" over there is said to come from the same seam of mud which stretches right across to Aberthaw, thus giving our more local hostelry the same name. It appears that when you raised anchor from that trans-channel mud, the anchor came up coated with blue clay, christening eponymous pubs on both sides of the channel.

Now to be honest, when you look back at the Vale from across the Severn, it seems a less striking vista than looking the other way. We *do* have a very special view, across to the Quantocks, to Exmoor, even as far west as Ilfracombe. It is a stunning panorama, ever-changing, and it doesn't require laudanum to awaken the (minor) poet in a person.

In fact our poet friend, Elin ap Howell (now bravely fighting early onset Alzheimers) once told us that at the age of ten she lived on a hillside in Barry. “From there,” said Elin, “we saw the lights of Weston-super-Mare every night (atmospherics allowing). One formative afternoon in Cold Knap I came across a beer can with a picture of a very buxom barmaid on the back, washed over from The Other Side. “Hmm,” I thought to myself, “this Somerset place is obviously dead wicked and exciting.”

Funnily enough, our recently blue-plaquet local poet, Iolo Morganwg of course, thought there were “dead wicked” things over there too. Or at least usefully subversive. Iolo in fact knew Coleridge, and gave him in person volumes of his (Iolo’s) poetry. As a radical Iolo shared Coleridge’s ideals, including an enthusiasm for the French revolution. Coleridge in return however patronised Iolo as “Poor Williams, the Welsh bard (a very meek man)”.

**It is also on record that in June 1795, en route from London,** Iolo awaited a homeward boat from Bristol to Aberthaw. So on Tuesday the 16th of June, with time to kill, he took the opportunity to visit Bristol’s Assembly Coffee House and pay a precious shilling to hear Coleridge lecture “On the slave trade”.

“Would you choose to be sold?” asked Coleridge, challenging his Bristol audience. “To have the hot iron hiss upon your breasts, after having been crammed into the hold of a Ship with so many fellow-victims, that the heat and stench, arising from your diseased bodies, should rot the very planks?” This sickening speech was surely reason enough for Iolo to share Coleridge’s disgust and opposition to Bristol’s wicked slave trade.

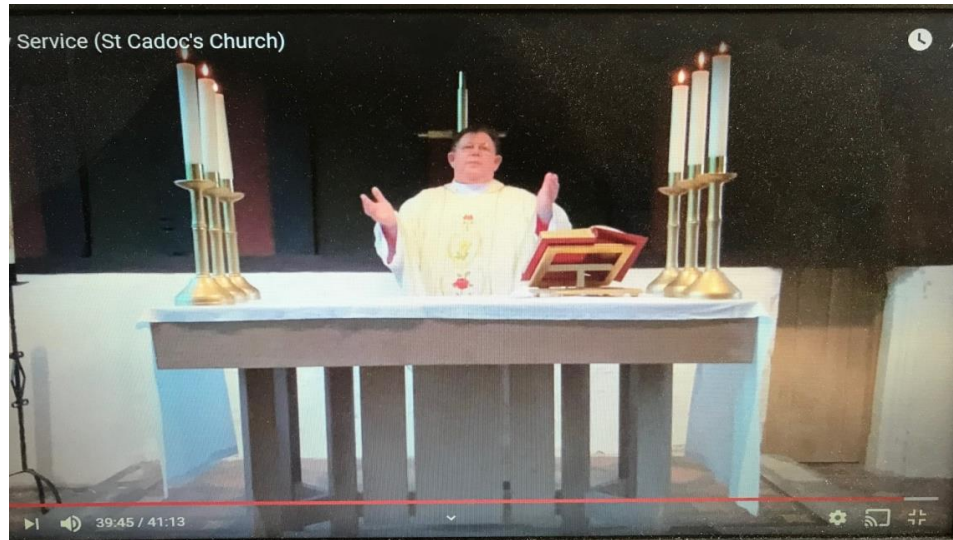


Just at the moment, of course, any chance of a view across to Somerset would be welcome. But at least we have the odd snap to remind us of that “dead wicked” coastline, here in our sunny house arrest. And when the time finally comes to emerge safely into the world again, we won’t be alone in seeking the uplift to the soul that comes from looking across the waters of the Severn.



## FR DEREK, YOUTUBE INFLUENCER

The streaming site has been playing host to weekly services during the lockdown, ensuring that the local congregation, while denied access to the pews, is still able to worship online.



As many readers will know, Fr Derek will conduct his final service on Sunday June 28th. The service will be available on YouTube and the Hub. He will be saying his goodbyes, but may come back when this virus has gone away, to enjoy a get-together over a sherry or two. (We hope Derek will write words of farewell for us in the next issue!)

Richard, his son, is putting a video together, which will be shown after and maybe during the service. If you would like to have a short message included, send it to Richard by June 15th. His email is [r13elc@me.com](mailto:r13elc@me.com).

Sue Taylor is collecting donations for Pam and Derek. If you wish to give something please contact Sue on 781453, or 07836 324967.



## QUESTION TIME

*The fun was all on Zoom on May 24th, when more than a dozen local families took part in the online quiz organised by Martyn Hughes. The event culminated in a cliffhanger tie-break after the Voisey-Smiths and the Kemps notched up the same score, some way ahead of the chasing*

*pack. The Voisey-Smiths clinched victory with a remarkably close guess for the height of the Eiffel Tower. Bien joué! The winner's prize: getting to organise the second instalment.*





**WITH villagers locked down**, there was, alas, no street party to celebrate the 75 anniversary of VE Day. But the bunting went up, and Andy Farquharson donned his uniform and gave locals living within earshot a moving rendition of the Last Post.



## AND I WOULD WALK 500 LAPS.....

*Penny Fell*

Like the Grand National, this year's Society May Day walk fell victim to the pandemic. Harnessing the spirit of both events, and inspired by Sir Tom Moore, our President, Barbara Milhuisen, pledged 85 sponsored laps around Rhoose Library to raise money, not only for the Library but also for Rhoose's Bay View Nursing Home. This would have been one circuit for each of her 85



years, but being Barbara, she quickly ramped up her target to 500. Sadly, as many know, Barbara tripped, fell and broke both her nose and a finger on the 400th lap. Too steely-willed to give up, she has since recovered and completed the equivalent of 451 laps (with a promise to finish the job), and has so far raised around £1,250 to date. Barbara, we salute you!

**Barbara writes:**

Please send my thanks to Llanccarfan Society, and especially the Committee, for their support in my walk. I thank Sue Taylor for many visits, and Graham and Kay Brain for delivering flowers (from the Society) and lovely lavender bags. Over a thousand pounds has been raised for charity – my final laps will be done just as soon as I've recovered the nerve to get back on the horse. In this case, Shanks's pony.



**Bruised, but determined to finish the job**

## CLAPPING, CLANGING BELLS AND BANGING POTS AND PANS FOR CARERS



## LLANCARFAN CONNECTED – AND FED!

Perhaps the biggest silver lining to the cloud that is the coronavirus is the way in which it has brought communities together. Ours, we are happy to report, is no exception. A group of local volunteers, linked together by the “Llancarfán Connected” WhatsApp group, have performed no small number of community-minded tasks for the vulnerable and homebound, including the all-important picking up of prescriptions. Llancarfán Connected is fast turning into a hub for all sorts of things, from cadging unwanted flower pots to brainstorming over how to get an alarm on a van left overnight in the Fox car park to shut up. If you are not in the group and would like to join, call Catherine on 07957 325252.



Frances and Lackey



And then there's the lockdown grocery deliveries. Your editor begs your indulgence in praising his partner, Frances Valencia, who has spent a fair few hours in recent months arranging and co-ordinating deliveries from purveyors of fish, meat, bread, milk, fruit and vegetables, and (mostly) making sure the right stuff went to the right people. Thanks to Sarah Angell for helping get the goods from dairy to doorstep, and to Kay Brain, aka the Spreadsheet Queen, for processing payments through the LDCA account.

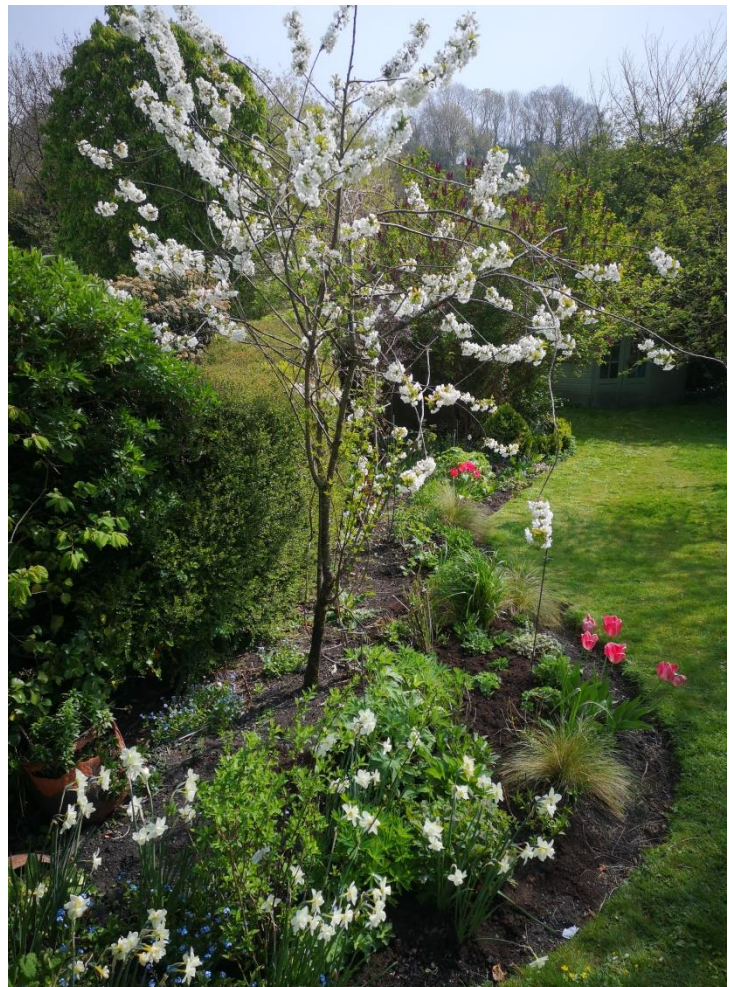
**ON THE SUBJECT OF HELPING OUT, Barbara wanted to pay tribute to the Pipelle Old Village Stores and Post Office, which she informs us has been a “lifeline” in Rhoose, while also providing deliveries to Barry, Llancarfán and other areas. In recent weeks the shop has kept our President supplied with, among other things, “bird tables and seeds, raised beds and all the plants and bulbs to grow in them”. The team in the photograph include Pippi and Elle, after whom Peter named the shop. Peter has been very kind to Llancarfán in the past, donating baskets of fruit and packets of sweets for the church and Llancarfán Society events.**





## BLOOMING GORGEOUS

There's no Open Gardens Day on June 13th, but with all the glorious weather we've been having it's looking too lovely out back (and front) not to show some of it off. Thanks to Fran Winterbottom, Ceri Jones and Tony and Shelagh Lewis for sending pics...



*More overleaf, so to speak.....*





## SCHOOL'S OUT – BUT THE WORK GOES ON

*Our primary school reports:* Whilst other schools report how home working has proved stressful as staff grapple with new systems and working methods, thanks to Mr Jones in Rivers Class all staff at Llancarfan were well equipped and technology-savvy to provide a full online programme when lockdown commenced.

Children are set Maths, Literacy and Topic tasks to complete at home in addition to reading as widely as they can. Recently, Year 6 children enjoyed researching and creating a Powerpoint presentation on VE day, planning a party menu using rationed foodstuffs and learning the Lindy Hop with a willing sibling or parent!



Digital pattern by Phoebe, Year 3



VE cake made by some of the pupils while under lockdown

During regular updates with the children, Year 6 children report that they are experiencing a range of feelings:

“It’s fun and a bit boring at home,” admits one child. “I’m having quality family time and we go on long walks together,” reports another. “I’ve baked a banana loaf and scones,” declares a budding pastry chef.

These are definitely very strange times, but we look forward to returning to school in the not too distant future and sharing our stories

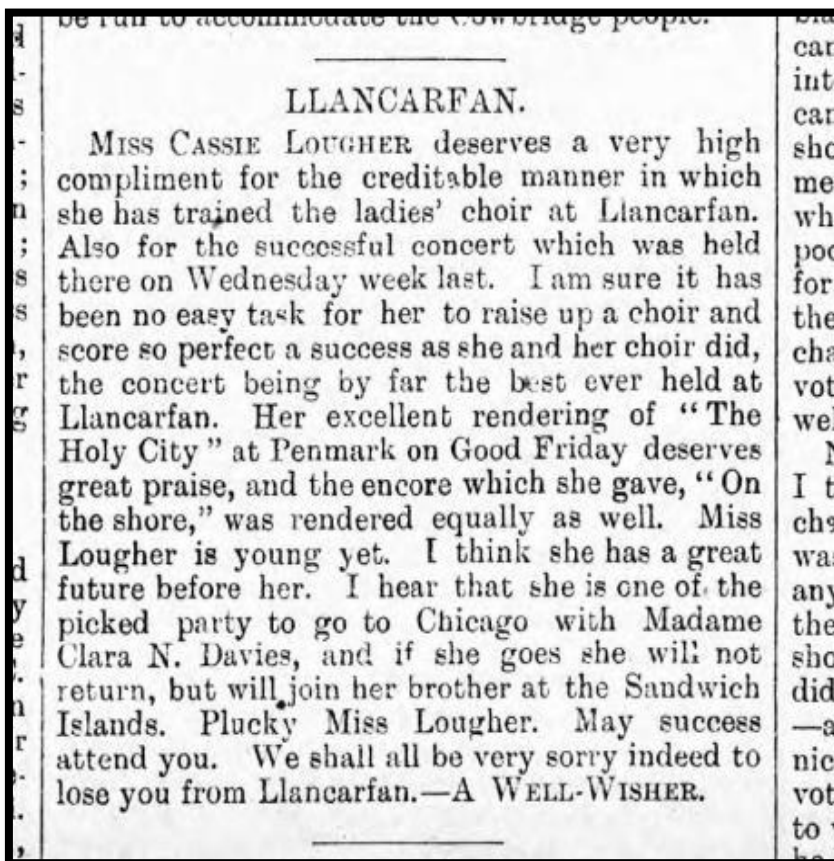


of Lockdown with one another. Until then, stay safe and well.

*Some of the children have been sending messages and pictures to Mrs Hughes, our school administrator, as she has been missing them very much. She continues to go into school to carry on with her work and finds it very strange indeed being there all on her own!*



**Above left: Amelia, Ollie and their Mum .... another family enjoying Joe Wicks Fancy Dress Workout! Middle: Paying tribute to our health service. Right: Lexie and Holly all dressed up (and nowhere to go) for Dad's 40th birthday under lockdown**



This newspaper cutting comes from the *Barry Dock News* of April 7th 1893. It reports that a certain Cassie Lougher, who has worked wonders with one of our village choirs, may be about to set sail for America with Madame Clara N. Davies. Who she? None other than the mother of the world-celebrated rock (well, showbiz) god of the last century, Ivor Novello. Do any

readers happen to know if Cassie actually went to the States with Clara? Here's hoping this snippet spawns an intriguing story.

## ST CADOC'S WALL PAINTINGS: CONSERVATION UPDATE



**After the breathtaking discovery** and restoration of medieval wall paintings at St Cadoc's, it became apparent in 2017 that damp, wicking up from the ground beneath the church walls, risks jeopardising them. If no action is taken then it may only be a matter of time before the medieval plaster that supports the paintings is affected. Structural and civil engineers Mann Williams have been advising the Parochial Church Council (PCC) on how best to

mitigate the high ground water problem for the church. As an initial step, Mann Williams have recommended geotechnical site investigations to determine the groundwater profile and to monitor the groundwater levels. The proposals involve forming up to six boreholes in the churchyard, while keeping a distance from graves. Following Llancarf Community Council's permission to start in late 2019, an experienced archaeologist took advantage of a single "dry" week in December 2019 to carry out exploratory excavation of each proposed borehole location to investigate any archaeology (including possible unmarked graves) and to confirm the best places to form the boreholes. The PCC's geotechnical engineers spent much of the spring waiting for the ground to dry out sufficiently to allow them to form the investigative boreholes. Each borehole will be about 100mm in diameter, with each capped at ground level. These will enable monitoring of the groundwater levels throughout the year. The impact on other churchyard users should be minimal since only one hole will be worked on at any one time, and the contractor will closely supervise the forming of each borehole using a relatively small "tracked" rig. The hope is that the boreholes will be formed on site in the near future to enable the monitoring to begin.

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