

St Mary Magdalene Langridge

Langridge Parish Newsletter December 2023- February 2024



**Letter from Revd Tom Yacomeni
Rector of All Saints, Weston
December 2023**



Flowers by the altar

Dear Friends,

Hello and thank you for your interest in the community and activities at St Mary Magdalene Church, Langridge.

The peace and tranquillity of the church can seem a million miles away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and the challenges and strife so evident in our world at the moment. The Israel-Gaza conflict and the war in Ukraine have highlighted again how much we need the peace and reconciliation that Christ came to bring into the world. As we draw nearer to Christmas we are reminded that Jesus was born into an occupied country with the real threat of violence and uprisings and yet that is precisely the time and place that God chose to enter the world and engage with humanity. Yes, we can experience the peace of Christ at St. Mary Magdalene's but thankfully his peace extends even into warzones and brutal conflict situations. Wherever we find ourselves, however stressful our own situation becomes, we can follow Paul's advice that he wrote to the church in Philippi: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

With my love and prayers,
Tom

RECENT SERVICES

We have once again been very fortunate with the clergy leading our services. Tom Yacomeni led our Harvest Festival service, and he & Emma King led a service each month. Robert Webb and Colin Maggs each took two services, and we also welcomed Roger Clifton, Judith Harries and Richard Hunt.

Instead of holding our own Remembrance service, this year our congregation chose to go to either All Saints Weston or St Martin's North Stoke to join their services.

RECENT EVENTS

Richard Fenwick gave a hugely enjoyable organ recital in the church on 21st October. His programme of old and new pieces ranged from Bach and Pachelbel to modern English and French composers.

We had a very industrious session of churchyard clearance and brass polishing in late October. The churchyard is looking very much cared for.

Very sadly, Jenny Lewis' funeral took place on 12th October at Langridge, with family and Langridge representatives in attendance. Tom Yacomeni led the service.

Mike Smallwood's ashes were interred on 27th October, in a short service led by Robert Webb.

Also Jill Millar's ashes were interred on 29th August, with Emma King taking the service.

Sadly very recently Judy Rippin, who has lived in the valley for so many years, has passed away. Her family are making arrangements for her memorial service.

FUTURE SERVICES

Christmas is coming! Nigel Rawlinson opens December for us with a BCP Holy Communion on 3rd. Emma King will lead our Christingle service on 10th December and Tom Yacomeni our Christmas Carol service on 17th December, both at 3 pm. Tom will also take our Christmas Day Communion at 9:30 on 25th December.

There will be no service at Langridge on Christmas Eve (Sunday 24th December).

On Sunday 4th February, all three churches in the benefice will come together for a Service of Light, at 5 pm in the All Saints Centre. There will be no service at Langridge that day.

Otherwise, there will be the usual weekly service at 9:30 at Langridge, led by our stalwart team of visiting clergy and lay readers.

FUTURE EVENTS

We were unable to find a good date for Gregory Steward's tenor recital at Langridge in the autumn. Hopefully we can arrange a date in the spring: further details to follow.

The Quiet Day which unfortunately had to be postponed is now planned for late Spring/early Summer next year. Details will be put on our website.



FABRIC NEWS

Following our Quinquennial Inspection last year, Jeremy Humphries has engaged Avonroof, who by the time you read this will have done some of the most urgent remedial work.

Mandy Osborne has arranged for a short stair rope to be installed, to provide valuable support with the steps between the vestry and the chancel. This has kindly been donated in memory of Mike Smallwood by his family.

We also had a new bell rope fitted recently when we had an inspection made of the belfry and our new church architect Harry Whittaker visited the church.

Mark Hempleman-Adams and his team have identified an appropriate 'Ecoloo', which could be installed at Langridge without the need for mains water or drainage. The team are liaising with the planners at B&NES on the project.

MEMORY CORNER

Many of you will who enjoy history will be familiar with the writings of Arthur Mee who enjoyed visiting English churches in the early 19th century.

The account of his visit to the church of St Mary Magdalene has appeared in an earlier Newsletter but for those who have never read it is appearing once more.

Lost in a Country Lane LANGRIDGE

There is no more delightful experience for an Englishman than to be lost in some of the lanes round Bath, and if it is in the valley by the Gloucester Road it is all the better. We can run down to it from Lansdown Hill, taking in the little turning from the monument to Sir Bevil Grenville (on the spot where that great Cornish hero fell) and winding our way through the lanes with just room enough for a car to run without disturbing the grasshoppers; and we find ourselves in a hollow of the glorious hills that look towards Bath. When we come to Langridge there is nothing about us but the lovely group made by the barn, the farmhouse, and the church. Dull would he be of soul who could pass by a sight so touching in its tenderness.

It was the Normans who first brought civilisation here. They set up the small tower which stands so daintily, and for 700 years the farmhouse and the barn have stood beside it, a wonderful surprise as we come upon all on a summer's day. Through all these centuries this little place has been an outpost in this wondrous valley. We are lost to the world in the presence of the past; we stand where Romans, Saxons and Normans must have been, for hereabouts have been found the foundations of a Roman house, and Roman bricks are in church walls not far away.

But it is Norman England we begin with. We come through the yew arch at the gateway and up the steps to the roses climbing about the porch (with medieval tiles in it walls), to find ourselves at a magnificent Norman doorway. It has a triple arch, carved with flowers and zigzag, set on rounded columns, and inside these an inner arch like a rope of stone curiously twisted round. It leads us into a perfect Norman building 50 feet long and 18 feet wide, with a tiny modern apse seen through the chancel arch. The arch was made by the men who made the doorway, and has also three orders moulding with zigzag and balls all round. It is set on huge square columns with a rounded shaft running up the centre, both columns with cushion capitals, and above the arch, set in a tiny Norman recess, is the Madonna and the Child, looking down on this small place since the days when Norman barons were fighting for our liberty.

It is a moving thing to think of the generation after generation of simple folk who through all these years have been coming through this doorway, sitting in the pews of linenfold and fleur-de-lys, looking on this impressive chancel arch and on this figure of a Mother and Child. Battles have raged on the hill, the city not far away has been rescued from ruin and made a glorious spectacle with fashionable England thronging through its streets, but here the simple thread of English life has run quietly on.

In this small temple two stones in the wall by the altar face each other, one of them cut with the name *Jo Powe(ll) 1588*, the other saying, *Here lyeth the body of Penelope Powe(ll) 1611*. These two crude stones mark two great years of our Island story, for one was the year of the Spanish Armada and the other the year of the gift of the Bible to the English people. On the wall of the nave is the brass portrait of Elizabeth Wallshe, who may have lived in the house next door. They laid her here in 1441, and on her brass her little dog is sitting at her feet. On a tomb in the tower is the stone figure of another lady probably from next door; she lies with long wavy hair and a scarf about her neck. In the chancel lies Ann Gunning who lived across the valley at Swainswick; she lies wither father and mother, and in spirit at least she must have been worthy of the beautiful Gunning sisters of whom all the world has heard, for we read of her that she was a woman of admirable art and beauty, uniting in a high degree a strong understanding and a good heart. Near her lie the Blathways, one of them a soldier killed in Delhi in the Mutiny, and one a rector here: the faithful servant of their house for 35 years, Hannah Burton, lies in the nave. Rector Blathway's pulpit is still here, Jacobean and with a canopy under which is a face carved in a flaming sun: the rest for the Bible is on two carved brackets with tiny faces. The choir stalls are very old, carved with arches and flowers. The 700-year-old font is mounted on a great base; it is one of those that were locked against witches.

In a tiny window set over the arch in the tower, a bishop with his crozier looks down on the nave, and in the west window are the women returning from the Crucifixion, with Calvary in the background. There is a priest's doorway with the tiniest carved doors opening in the middle, panelled with roses and crowns, and on the sunny wall outside is an old scratch dial from the days before clocks.

The churchyard is filled with yews, a lovely one half hiding the tower. The delightful farmhouse, set back from the lane across a little lawn, is the old home of the Wallshes, medieval lords of the manor; it was built in the 13th century and refashioned in the 16th and it has the old trefoiled windows.

A little way from this deep solitude, up on the broadbacked hill of Lansdown, stands the monument set by Cornish men to keep alive the name of Bevil Grenville, who fell here in the hour of victory to one of the fiercest of the early battles of the Civil War. The monument is a queer sculptured griffin, and the pedestal is richly carved, standing finely above the glory of the valley. On the panels we read:

*Thus slain thy valiant ancestor die lie
When he with his one barque a navy did defy.
Where shall the next famed Grenville ashes stand?
Thy grandsire fills the sea and thou the land.*

The grandsire was, of course, Sir Richard, hero of the Revenge.

- from *The King's England* – Somerset – County of Romantic Splendour
Edited by Arthur Mee October 1940

LANGRIDGE SERVICES
December 2023 to February 2024

Date	Time	Type of Service	Preacher
December 3	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Preb Nigel Rawlinson
December 10	3.00	Christingle Service	Revd Emma King
December 17	3.00	Christmas Carol Service	Revd Tom Yacomeni
December 24		Christmas Eve No Service	
December 25	9.30	Christmas Day CW HC	Revd Tom Yacomeni
December 31	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	Lay led service
January 7 2024	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Revd Robert Webb
January 14	9.30	CW Morning Prayer	Mr Tom Peryer
January 21	9.30	CW Holy Communion	Revd Tom Yacomeni
January 28	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Canon Richard Hunt
February 4	5pm	Service of Light at ASW	Revd Tom Yacomeni
February 11	9.30	CW Morning Prayer	Mr Callum Houston
February 18	9.30	CW Holy Communion	Revd Tom Yacomeni
February 25	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	CW Morning Prayer

If you have contributions for the next Newsletter (March to May 2024) or any Friends of Langridge news items please send them to Lisa Davey or Liz White. We would like to hear about all items of interest – photos, comments, events or special occasions by Monday 19th February 2024.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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www.stmarymagdalenelangridge.com or let us have your email address if you would like to receive the e-newsletter. Contact: angelaumpleby@sky.com