

## St Mary Magdalene Langridge

**Langridge Parish Newsletter September - November 2023**



**Letter from Revd Tom Yacomeni  
Rector of Langridge  
August 2023**

Dear friends,

Hello and thank you for your interest in the community and activities at Langridge. It is a great blessing that St. Mary Magdalene can stay open all year round for visitors and pilgrims to come and enjoy some sacred space in the midst of hectic everyday life. It feels a million miles away from the challenges of wars, wildfires and a cost of living crisis.

But sometimes it is only by deliberately drawing aside to seek God in silence that we can learn to listen to him above all the noise and distraction. Recently when I popped in the church to reflect and pray, I noticed a couple of birds' nests inside the porch. They reminded me of Psalm 84: *'How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may have her young – a place near your altar.'*

We all need a spiritual home, where we not only feel connected to God, but also connection with a spiritual family. St. Mary Magdalene is not just a building, it is also a community of God's people seeking to grow faith in Christ as *pilgrims together*.

Everyone is welcome to join in and discover more of the peace and hope that may be found in Christ. You may even find yourself echoing what King David wrote at the end of Psalm 84: 'Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere!'

With my love and prayers,  
Tom

## **RECENT SERVICES**

We have once again been privileged in the leaders of our special services. Robert Webb led our Trinity Sunday service; Tom Yacomeni headed up our Patronal Festival communion; Tom Peryer took our Lammas Festival service; and Pippa Page helped us through Transfiguration.

It has also been a treat to welcome for the first time Stephen Howard, a lay reader at St Mary's Bathwick; and our new curate, Rev Emma King. And we were also supported by our regular leaders Robin Lewis, Colin Maggs and Dave Parr.

We welcomed a new organist, Mike Renton, and a new reader, Callum Houston.

## **RECENT EVENTS**

Tristan Howitt and Callum Houston have slaved away, straightening gravestones in the churchyard - see separate article.

By the time you read the newsletter, Jill Millar's ashes will have been interred in the churchyard next to those of her late husband Dick. Rev Emma King is to take the service on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

## **PCC NEWS**

Alastair Jones has joined Langridge PCC. Victoria Humphries has picked up the reins as our new Churchwarden. Her husband Jeremy is leading the work to implement the tasks recommended in last year's Quinquennial Inspection. Tony Davies continues to stand in as Treasurer (but is still seeking a volunteer to take over the role).

## **FUTURE SERVICES**

Once again we will have the support of several old and new friends to lead services at Langridge this autumn.

Tom Yacomeni will conduct our Harvest Festival service on 17<sup>th</sup> September, and will also be with us in mid-November. Our new Curate Emma King is leading two services for us.

We also welcome back Roger Clifton, Judith Harries, Richard Hunt, Colin Maggs and Robert Webb.

Callum Houston will rise to the challenge set for him by the Rector, and lead our service on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

## **FUTURE EVENTS**

We are hoping that Gregory Steward, a professional tenor, will give us a recital at Langridge Church before long, followed by wine and nibbles. Further details of the date and time will follow.

Our dear friend Richard Fenwick will give an organ recital in the church on 21<sup>st</sup> October at 6:30 pm. Another stimulating programme of old and new pieces is promised.

The next Quiet Day has been postponed until Spring 2024. Details will be circulated nearer the time.

## **“ECOLOO”**

Largely driven by the efforts of Mark Hempleman Adams, we have renewed our initiative to establish an Ecoloo at Langridge. Mark and Tony Davies have viewed the composting loo at Charlcombe, and Tony has also been to see another example at Staple Fitzpaine in south Somerset. They are optimistic that such a facility at Langridge will be feasible, and not impossibly expensive (although some fund-raising will undoubtedly be needed).

The next step will be to embark upon gaining permissions from BaNES and from the Diocese.

## **MEMORY CORNER**

### **Alderbrook Cotswold Sheep by Grace Macmillan**

When you walk out through the door of the church after a service and look out across the valley, you might see some special sheep in the fields below. The Cotswold sheep that I breed on my land at Alderbrook Farm are our local rare breed, sometimes referred to as the ‘Cotswold Lion’. They are a large, longwool breed with fine, curly, lustrous, glorious fleeces. This breed flourished in the Cotswolds during the Middle Ages and were a major source of wealth in the district, funding the building of many Cotswold churches and stately homes as well as providing a living to the local population of farmers, shepherds, wool merchants, spinners, and weavers. Huge consignments of wool were transported to Southampton and shipped to Italy where it was processed into the finest quality textiles. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a top-quality woollen cape made from Cotswold wool in Italy could cost the equivalent of around £12,000 in today’s money.

People often say two things about sheep; firstly, that they are stupid animals and secondly that they try their best to die. Of course, neither of these things is true. When I first started my flock, my dear friend and neighbour Pat showed me how to gather in the sheep by calling them and shaking a bucket of feed, and sure enough, they learnt to come to call. However, when I had to give them an injection or some foul-tasting medication, I wore my waterproof over-trousers and the flock immediately learnt to ignore my calls when they saw that I was wearing the dreaded trousers.



Cotswold sheep have been selectively bred over the centuries to produce a large carcass for tender mutton, gentle ewes that are good mothers, and a heavy soft fleece. They are very different to their native wild ancestors which were shy, goat-like, hardy little animals with tough wiry wool. Cotswold sheep are much larger, are docile and even friendly, have long, fluffy wool which doesn't protect them well from the elements. We have created animals which require shepherds to observe them closely and look after them carefully if they are to thrive. When you see the gentle ewes devotedly looking after their lambs, and all youngstock bounding along together, leaping high into the air, how could anyone claim that they aren't happy to be alive?



## **STRAIGHTENING OF GRAVESTONES**

**by Tristan Howitt**

As an adjunct to the Church working parties, we have a rewarding project to straighten some of the gravestones that have slowly leant over too far and risk breaking off or sinking too low into the soil and soft clay. The West side of the graveyard slopes sharply and subsidence has meant that headstones not only lean fore/aft but also to the West.

A small team of Tristan Howitt, Cal (Callum Houston) and Tony Davies has done two stints of 12 and 7 stones so far, and we have another 6 or 7 to go (East side) to finish the most extreme. To correct the angles, one has to dig to the very bottom of the stone on one side and remove any large boulders used initially to support the stone. They then move very easily.

We have been careful to avoid any excessive force, which would risk breaking the stone or causing a splinter to slough off the front damaging the text. Some stones need bodily lifting up to reveal lost text, and wooden braces, crowbars and steel reinforced toecaps help enormously in this. So far we have avoided any damage whatsoever, except to three fingers and two toes.

The before/after photos below really help to show the difference, as when one looks at the result in the churchyard, the eye irritatingly only picks up the remaining leaning ones. Our aim is to make the churchyard look loved and well cared for, but not to become so tidy that the wonderful history behind all the collective angles is lost forever.



Caution is urged for a few months, if ever absent-mindedly leaning on a headstone.

The ground has been so dry that some of the stones will need rain and time to reseat themselves fully and then, unmolested, recommence their rudely interrupted journey of leaning and sinking.

## Historical Record

Another part of the project is to record all the gravestones and make a database of the text and history of each so that people can search for any connections through the Church website, ably kept up to date by Victoria. Jeremy Humphries is leading the recording project, but work done some time ago by Liz in documenting the wording on the stones has been fantastic as many have eroded or split since.

We hope to break the back of this project in the Autumn and Winter, and may well seek help from others to decipher some of the stones. Volunteers please get in touch!



[Note from the Editor: Tristan is far too modest. He has done the lion's share of the work: the second stint of the work was done by Tristan alone, and in the first stint Tony did little more than pass the equipment to Tristan and Cal, and serve the coffee.]

## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Ros Smallwood, who has skilfully put together the rota for the services at Langridge over the next three months, has had some difficulty in signing up anyone to lead our Remembrance Sunday service on 12<sup>th</sup> November. We also think that this is a service which works best in a larger group.

Therefore, there will not be a service at Langridge on 12<sup>th</sup> November. To play your part in remembering those lost in past wars, you could either join the service at North Stoke that morning (which will be led by Colin Maggs), or join the All Saints Weston procession to the war memorial in Weston shortly before 11 a.m. and the service afterwards at All Saints Weston.

## **From the Bishop of Bath and Wells**

### Learn from the Master

When you hear the word ‘disciple’, what comes into your mind? A learner? A follower? A super Christian? Someone kitted out in Biblical dress complete with robe, sandals, tea towel head covering and beard?

The New Testament’s word for disciple doesn’t quite match any of these descriptions. It’s much closer to the word we’d use in English for ‘apprentice’.

Back in history, and still today, to be an apprentice meant spending time in the presence of a master in order to learn a craft – maybe carpentry, or blacksmithing, baking or butchery. You’d start out doing the simple stuff – sweeping floors or sharpening tools. Then gradually you’d acquire more and more skills until you learnt to work confidently with materials producing beautiful things, products of utility and worth. Apprentices often learnt their craft while living alongside their masters, becoming members of their trade through time spent together at work and rest and play.

Jesus was often called ‘the carpenter’s son’ – apprenticed to his worldly father Joseph, growing in skill at the plane and the lathe. He was also the apprentice of his heavenly father. The Gospels speak of Jesus withdrawing to spend time with God in order to know God’s mind, hear God’s voice, grow in God’s ways.

Apprenticeship was and is a story of growth, development, discovery and change. It’s the journey that Jesus invites us to take with him too – of baby steps and toddler stumbles, of emerging skill and increasing understanding.

Churches near you are offering opportunities to apprentice yourself to Jesus this autumn - from practical action that gets you involved in Jesus’s service to the world, to learning and discussion that comes with courses such as Alpha, Exploring Christianity or Pilgrim.

Why not sign yourself up and learn from the Master?

Every blessing

Bishop Michael

**LANGRIDGE SERVICES**  
**September to November 2023**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Preacher</b>
3 September	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	Mr Colin Maggs
10 September	9.30	Common Worship Morning Prayer	Revd Emma King
17 September	9.30	Common Worship Communion	Revd Tom Yacomeni
24 September	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	To be confirmed
1 October	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Revd Robert Webb
8 October	9.30	Common Worship Communion	Canon Roger Clifton
15 October	9.30	Common Worship Morning Prayer	Revd Emma King
22 October	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Revd Judith Harries
29 October	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	Revd Robert Webb
5 November	9.30	BCP Holy Communion	Canon Richard Hunt
12 November	No service at Langridge – see note on page 6		
19 November	9.30	Common Worship Communion	Revd Tom Yacomeni
26 November	9.30	BCP Morning Prayer	Mr Callum Houston

If you have contributions for the next Newsletter (December 2023 – February 2024) or any Friends of Langridge news please send them to Liz White or Tony Davies by Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023. We don't know who will edit the next Newsletter: offers welcome!

#### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Acting Treasurer	Tony Davies	01225 336124
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You can follow current news over the next three months on our website: [www.stmarymagdalenelangridge.com](http://www.stmarymagdalenelangridge.com) or let us have your email address if you would like to receive the e-newsletter. Contact: [angelaumpleby@sky.com](mailto:angelaumpleby@sky.com)

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