

## St Mary Magdalene Langridge

**Langridge Parish Newsletter December 2021 to January 2022**

**Letter from Sarah Couchman  
Lay Reader of All Saints, Weston**

**December 2021**



*Remembrance Sunday*

Dear Friends,

As we move towards the end of the year and all the activity and preparations for the festive season, it is also a time for reflection as we look back on the highs and lows of the year that has been.

A special moment for me this term was taking part in the Langridge Harvest service. As well as offering the traditional horticultural harvest gifts, I asked those present to imagine what small object could represent them as an individual. What a wonderful collection emerged ....including flowers, drawing pens, a tape measure, a toy sheep and a calculator. It was a wonderful picture reflecting how we are all so different and bring individual gifts that complement each other and enrich our whole community.

A walker had been sitting outside the church before the service and been welcomed and invited to join in. She sat at the back but gamely joined in the time of sharing. Movingly she pulled a conker complete in its shell out of her pocket and said that the prickles represented the way she keeps people at a distance. However she went on to say that taking part in the service had given her hope and the promise of more fruitful times ahead.

As we step into the season of Christmas shopping and present buying may we have eyes to see the gift in each other and may the times we share together, whether in each other homes, in our special church services or simply sitting on the bench by the church door, continue to inspire hope and the promise of fruitful times ahead inspired by the good news of the story of Jesus and the Christian heritage which has been such a precious thing in this valley for generations before us ... and it may be our legacy too.

Sarah Couchman  
Lay Reader

All Saints Weston, Bath, with Langridge and North Stoke

## RECENT SERVICES

We have been able to continue live services over the last three months, usually with a Zoom alternative. There are some people who choose to stay away because of Covid risk; for those who feel able to attend, we practise sensible social distancing, and sanitiser is available. We are allowed to sing hymns, but not yet to share the wine at Communion.

We are always grateful to the dedicated team of Antony Claridge, Roger Clifton, Judith Harries, Richard Hunt, Robin Lewis, Colin Maggs, and Robert Webb who lead our services. All of them seem to love to take services at Langridge. Rev Mark Searle hopes to return to work in mid-January.

Sarah Couchman has been particularly busy on our behalf, leading both our Harvest Festival and our Remembrance Service. And she will be back in December for Christingle. *TD*

## CONFIRMATION SERVICE – WELLS CATHEDRAL

Ben Humphries has been a member of our congregation for most of his life. He has always been active and taken an interest and enjoyed meeting people.

His life has obviously become busier as he has grown older but we are always delighted to see him when he comes to church. Latterly he became an assistant sidesman and we have always been grateful for his continued assistance when he is with us.

Recently he joined classes for his confirmation which was to be at Wells Cathedral and the photograph shows us this important day in November following the service with Bishop Ruth and his proud Father Jeremy.



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## Memorial Service for Dawn Hooper

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the sudden death of Dawn on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. She had been a member of our congregation for many years and contributed to services reading the lessons regularly. She and her husband had brought up their children in Doynton and then moved to Weston in Bath, but the family always kept in close contact with their friends in Doynton.

Music was a central part of her life and we were fortunate to have the Sulis Trio whom she accompanied and the Monday Players which she had helped found, to give a summer recitals at Langridge some years ago.

Following a service at Haycombe Crematorium in September her family arranged for a service of Thanksgiving which Dawn had prepared herself with the Revd Lore Chumley from Christ Church, Bath and the Revd Canon Nigel Rawlinson, Bath University Chaplin and previously All Saints Weston and Langridge. This was a truly beautiful service, with a full congregation of her family and friends held at Holy Trinity Church, Doynton, and with tributes encapsulating her generosity of spirit and all that Dawn appreciated, with emphasis on her family, humour, her love of detail and efficiency and choral and organ music,

## FUTURE SERVICES

Christmas is almost upon us! Please put into your diary:

- Christingle on 12<sup>th</sup> December (11am). There will be oranges for all, decorated with the traditional ribbons and candles, and a wreath made by Rosemary Wilson's granddaughters!
- Christmas Carol Service on 19<sup>th</sup> December at 3 pm. Rev David Parr will lead service of lessons, carols and meditation.
- Christmas Day Communion on 25<sup>th</sup> December at 9:30. We are honoured that the Archdeacon of Bath, the Very Revd Adrian Youings, will lead our Christmas Day service. Everyone in the valley and beyond is invited to come



Beatrice and Emma with their Advent wreath

along.

## RECENT EVENTS

Richard Fenwick gave us another stunning organ recital on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. It was entitled “Music for an Autumn Evening ... to bring good cheer in these times”, and was in the tradition of the popular concerts of the Victorian and Edwardian era. The central pieces were by a Bristol organist, Arthur George Colburn.

Second Saturday resumed on a monthly basis from September, and continues to be enjoyed by all who take part.

## FUTURE EVENTS

As we go to press this week end Jules Addison and Anne-Marie Humphries will perform a cello and piano duet recital for us, at St Mary Magdalene Langridge on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November at 3 pm. Hopefully many of you will have been able to attend this and we look forward to more events next year when life will hopefully be a little easier.

Tony Davies’ planned Ride+Stride this year, on which occasion he will walk from Woodspring Priory (just north of Weston-super-Mare) to Wells Cathedral, will now take place on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Do feel free to sponsor him!

## MEMORY CORNER

You may remember the poem Memories of Tadwick given to us by Marianne Brunt’s daughter Amanda Skelton, in our June Newsletter 2020. Marianne (nee Pickford) grew up at Manor Farm at a time when the nearby Charmy Down Airfield had closed after the war ended. It was then taken over to help the local people and others establish a community there. You may be interested to learn about this history in a recently published book **Charmy Down** by local historian Howard Burton. Copies are available from the Genesis Charity Shop in Walcot Street, Bath with proceeds going to the Genesis Trust which our church supports.

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***It was three years ago that Bishop Richard Fenwick retired from his diocese of St Helena, in mid-South Atlantic. Now, from June to September 2021, he's returned for 3 months to help whilst the present Bishop is 800 miles away, up on Ascension Island.***

## **Journey to the South Atlantic, Part 4 – Farewell**

I hate goodbyes! During 53 years in the Ministry Jane and I have had to say a good many, but every time you move, those feelings of loss and sadness never get any better! For me, St Helena came as the high point of a “job” which first called me at the age of 10 – and which has never stopped calling. I was extremely happy as Dean of Monmouth, and in charge of the glorious little Celtic Cathedral of St Woolos, high up on Stow Hill in Newport. Here was everything you could wish for: a lovely ancient building, wonderful church music, thousands of visitors. But beware of ever thinking, “well, that's it. Now's the time for a nice 'snoozy' retirement”! For God just doesn't work like that – as Jane and I have found out! Hence the South African Synod hauled me out of St Woolos, and down to distant St Helena for 7 years. And then - I was also called back to the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean to help out whilst my successor (Bishop Dale Bowers) went up to do important work in the Northern part of the Diocese – the the tough equatorial island of Ascension.

And now these 3 months have passed by so quickly. The bags are being packed, the final visits being done, and the farewells made with so many friends – both old and new.

**ooooooo**

The first farewell was with one of our retired Lay Ministers out on the West side of the Island. Elaine's just hit 90, and she lives in her shady house up near High Hill. The journey is astonishing, because you have to travel along the spine of the mountains which run right across the island from West to East. So, you pass St Paul's Cathedral, winding around the arboretum where the great George Benjamin discovered the one remaining St Helena Ebony plant, and saved it from extinction. (It's an amazing place, and as you go up the steep track leading to her house, if you call out a “hellooooo”, an answering echo comes back from the rocky cliffs of the hill that towers over everything around. )

Jane and I spent a wonderful hour with her on her veranda. After being there for many years, she's about to move to Town – but she loves that place, and her garden is complete, with banana trees, a guava tree, and a cloud of bright flowers – including the local “blood and custard” flower(!), a crowd of blue agapanthus, and a set of wonderful old rose trees. I always loved visiting her, and many is the time we've seen the sun down and, as we left for home, sadly we were saying farewell to her, just as she was about to say farewell to that house, sheltered there in the far West in a deep fold of the Hill. Our “goodbyes” echoed off the cliffs as we left!

Another of the many farewells was with a group of friends over a glorious feast of a Sunday lunch in an old military Observatory in Upper Jamestown. This was where the greatly honoured Canon Walcott lived in retirement after 40 years as Vicar of Jamestown. He was half West-Indian, and his ministry changed the face of both the church on the island, and also the education of the island. Again, he and his wife also founded the Scout and Guide movement there. Now, our friend Helen lives there, and she cares lovingly for that gracious old house ... with the stream called the “Run” bubbling past ... down from Heart-Shaped Waterfall, and on down to the sea in James Bay.—But what a lunch, and what a place .... complete with endless chat, and gales of laughter about some of the old characters of the Island – long gone. She sings in the

choir of the local church. She's also a volunteer in the City Museum. Above all, as a former teacher, she's an absolute fund of down-to-earth common sense for all.

One of the very famous parts of St Helena is the village of Longwood, where Napoleon lived in (luxurious) captivity, and where he died. Our Farewell here was at a parish party in the hall of St Mark's. At one time an C18<sup>th</sup> Magnetic Observatory, this now serves the people of the parish of St Matthew's – we're actually staying in the Old Vicarage in Hutt's Gate, just opposite St Matthew's itself. So, as always, the tables were groaning with everything from goat meat curry to luxurious Kiwi jellies. Speeches were made (including a hilarious one by the Vicar, Archdeacon Allan Williams).

But the saddest farewell was just 3 days ago, and I was called up to the Hospital where Ellen was fighting her last battle after nearly 91 years. She was a head Mistress for many years at her local Infants School. A talented writer, she has several manuscript books to her credit - and a chat with her, and her late husband always brightened things up. Many times we've had a meal with them both, there in the mud-and-stone house that her husband, his brother, and her late brother actually built. It was always lovely to drink tea with them, and to look over at the valley far below.

There in the hospital it was my great privilege to say the prayers with her and the family at her bedside. She seemed totally unconscious. But after the final Blessing, loud and clear came her “Amen”! Within a matter of hours she left us.

That's it then – and tomorrow morning at 5am we'll be at the airport waiting to board the Boeing 757 for Accra, and then Stansted. So let's hope the hydraulics don't break down this time”!!

*God bless, take care of yourselves – and keep safe!*

## **LETTER FROM BISHOP RUTH**

### **The heart of Christmas**

What is at the heart of Christmas for you? Is it the feasting and festivities? The carols and the candles? The stockings and the gifts? Or the presence of those you love?

This Christmas we may find ourselves investing more in our preparations, as last year Christmas plans were curtailed and for some even cancelled. A year ago we were to have had all our family gather for Christmas at our house and then just before, my husband Howard had a positive Covid test. Everything changed and in fact neither of us felt well enough to enjoy a special meal together let alone welcome others. So, this year I want to pull out all the stops!

The children and grandchildren will be with us and Howard tells me that Father Christmas will be paying a special visit! However, we are also wanting to make sure that we don't get carried away with all the tinsel and trappings and forget the heart of the story. So, we shall limit our spending on pressies but make sure that we really value the presence of one another and particularly of the Christ child at the heart of it all.

This year as you anticipate Christmas, through the stories told through Advent windows, or carol services in your church, or Nativities on the move, how might you prepare your heart for the coming Christ child? The wonder of Christmas is that God has never given up on us and in fact loves us so much that he wants to spend time with us. The birth of Jesus, God's Son, into a humble human family, brought God into our very midst, into the heart of our homes. This Christmas let's make space for Him once more and listen to the

words of love, hope and joy He wants to share with us. And may that inspire our faith in the future, for ourselves and our world.

Wishing you much joy and peace this Christmas!

+ **Ruth**

## **THE FUTURE OF LANGRIDGE CHURCH**

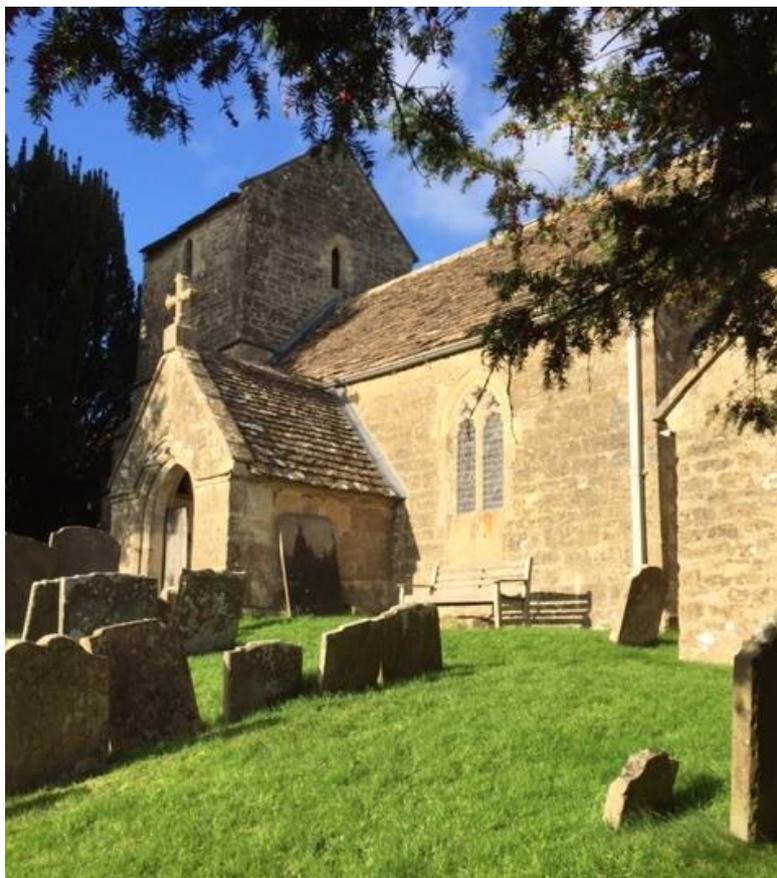
Village churches are much loved, and no-one wishes to see them neglected or closed. But it becomes ever more difficult to find people to do all of the jobs that are needed in order to keep a rural church in operation.

Our PCC has been meeting regularly over the past few months, with the guidance of Archdeacon Adrian Youings, to discuss the future of our church. We have discussed all options ranging from the closure of the church, it becoming a festival church (with services only at festival times) or trying to continue with regular worship.

We are keen to keep the church running. But.... we cannot do it on our own. We suspect that amongst those in the valley there may be an untapped resource of people who are willing to help with some of those tasks. We have designed a survey to give us a feeling for how large that untapped resource might be.

If you have access to the internet, please fill out the online version of this survey at: <https://tinyurl.com/langridge>. If not please complete the paper version (inside this newsletter) and post back to Victoria Humphries. Thank you very much for your time.

**Tony Davies, Churchwarden**



## St Mary Magdalene

As the season of Christmas approaches we look forward to welcoming you and your families to our Festive Services in particular.

<b>LANGRIDGE SERVICES</b>			
<b>December 2021 – February 2022</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Preacher</b>
December 5	9.30	BCP HC	Revd R Clifton
December 12	11.00	<b>Family Christingle</b>	Mrs S Couchman, Mr T. Peryer
December 19	3.00	<b>Carol Service</b>	Revd D Parr
December 25	9.30	<b>Christmas Service</b>	Ven A Youings
December 26		<b>No Service</b>	
January 2	9.30	BCP MP	Mr Colin Maggs
January 9	9.30	CW HC	Revd R Clifton
January 16	9.30	CW MP	Revd Judith Harries tbc
January 23	9.30	BCP HC	Revd R Hunt
January 30	9.30	TBD	Mr R Lewis
February 6	9.30	BCP MP	TBC
February 13	9.30	CW HC	ASW
February 20	9.30	CW MP	Rev A Claridge
February 27	9.30	BCP HC	Revd R Webb

If you have contributions for the next Newsletter March to May 2022 please contact Liz White regarding Church matters, or the Friends' news. We would like to hear about all items of interest – comments, events or special occasions by **17 February 2022**

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Rector	Revd Mark Searle	01225 421159
Church Warden	Tony Davies	01225 336124
Treasurer	Laura Somodi	07816 961951
Langridge Friends & Newsletter editor	Liz White	01225 744852

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)