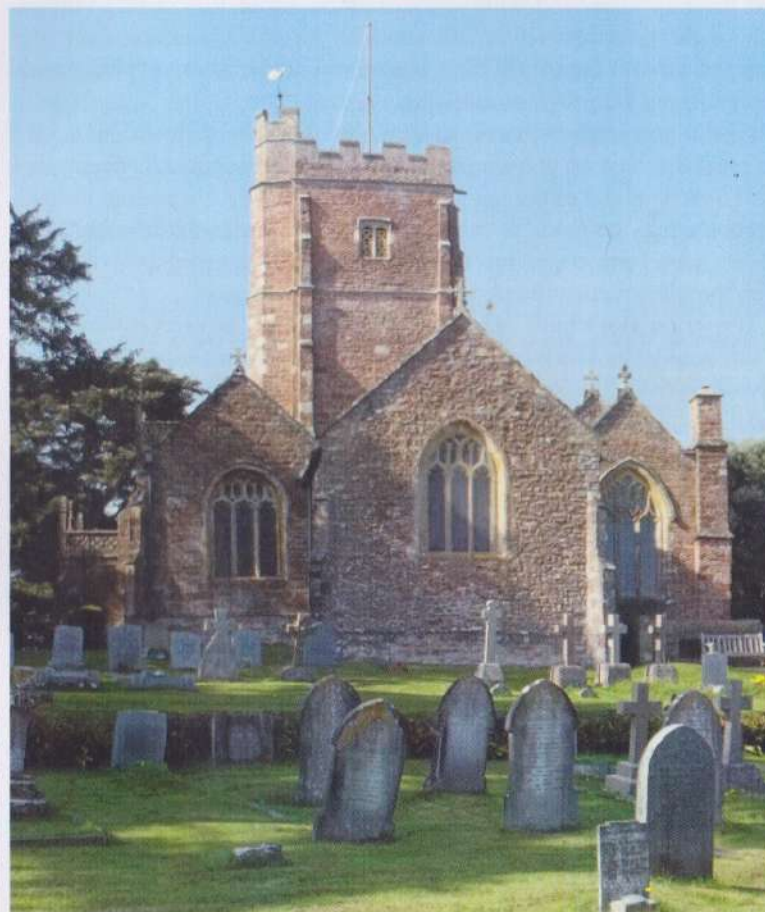


**A HISTORY OF
ST. PETER'S CHURCH
LANGFORD BUDVILLE**

M. B. McDermott



FOREWORD

Research into the ecclesiastical history of Langford Budville has been complicated by two special factors: the disappearance of most of the earlier records of the archdeaconry of Taunton, and Langford Budville's status, until 1863, as a chapelry of Milverton. This has made it impossible to compile a complete and wholly reliable list of curates, for instance. On the other hand, the parish registers and churchwardens' accounts survive from the mid-sixteenth century in an almost unbroken series, and these have proved an invaluable source of historical information. Where the dates quoted in this booklet have been drawn from the churchwardens' accounts, these denote an administrative year which began during the previous calendar year.

Of the many other sources which have been used, mention should be made here of N. Pevsner's *The Buildings of England: South and West Somerset* and of the notebooks of the Rev. S. J. Swainson. Further reference may be made to the fully annotated versions of this booklet which have been deposited with the vicar of Langford Budville and with the Somerset Archaeological Society in Taunton.

The writer alone must bear the responsibility for any errors contained in this booklet, but he wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the help and advice given by the Rev. P. R. Scott, Mr. T. J. Hunt, Dr. R. W. Dunning, and the staff of the Somerset Record Office, and also the assistance given by Marjorie Stockley and Christopher Fox in the preparation of the 2011 edition.

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INTRODUCTION

The parish of Langford Budville lies mid-way between Wellington and Milverton, and the church, which is constructed of local red sandstone and conglomerate, with honey-coloured Hamstone windows and other dressed features, is composed of a nave, side aisles, chancel (with combined vestry and organ-chamber on the north side) and a three-storeyed west tower. The tower may appear rather plain in comparison with the finest in the county but is nevertheless an impressive structure, and the church as a whole makes a very pleasing visual impression which is heightened by its hill-top position: for the building stands as a landmark in the surrounding landscape, with the tower dominating the village below, and from it there are magnificent views of the Brendon and Quantock Hills, the Vale of Taunton Deane and the Blackdowns, whilst Sedgemoor and even the Poldens are visible on a clear day.

The Medieval Manor and Chapelry

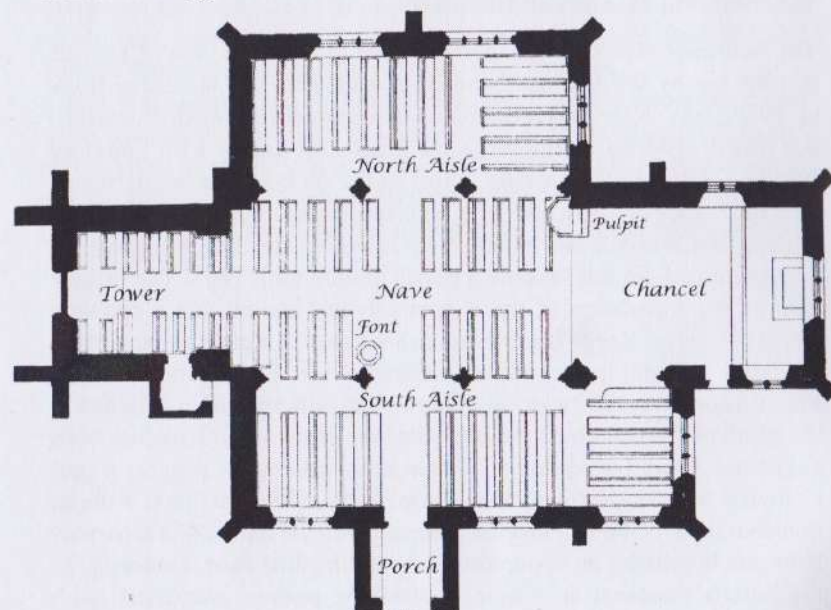
The Somerset manor of 'Langeford', held by Godwin, son of Harold, in 1066 but by William the Conqueror at the time of Domesday Book in 1086, may refer to Langford in Burrington (in North Somerset) but recent historical opinion has identified this manor with Langford Budville. The suffix 'Budville' refers to the de Budville family which held the manor by 1212 and for a time subsequently.

Langford Budville had a church by 1204, but this was a chapelry of Milverton and did not become a parish church until 1863. The precise date of the foundation of the chapelry is not known, but a chaplain named Nicholas Bagga is recorded as a witness to a grant of land made by Roger Arundel to the monks of Canonsleigh, Devon, at some time before 1204. In c.1989 a group of burials was discovered in a garden to the south of the church on the opposite side of the road. If, as has been suggested, these burials are of Saxon date, this might suggest a pre-Conquest date for the foundation of the church, although this is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the present medieval building is separated from the burials by an apparently long-established road. Conceivably the burials represent an overspill cemetery, perhaps associated with famine and plague in the 14th century.

In 1241 the church of Milverton (with its chapelry in Langford Budville) was granted by Bishop Jocelin to the archdeacon of Taunton

who thereafter derived income from the parish and appointed a vicar to undertake pastoral responsibilities, assisted, on occasions at least, by a chaplain or curate serving in Langford Budville.

In 1242/3 there was an enquiry into the death of "Nicholas the chaplain of Langeford" whose body was found at Burdon (possibly Burn Hill on the road to Milverton) where he had fallen from his horse. Nicholas' successor was a chaplain named Robert, who is mentioned in 1243, but the next known reference to a chaplain is not until 1381, when Richard Puryman was reported to Chancery for non-payment of taxes. It is possible that there were periods of time during the middle ages when Langford was not, in fact, provided with its own curate, and this may be implied by the fact that in 1351 the rector of Runnington was given permission by Bishop Ralph to celebrate mass every day in the chapel of Langford Budville. This arrangement may have been made to fill a gap created by the Black Death, which killed a number of Somerset clergy.



Faculty plan (now relabelled for clarity) showing the proposed new aisle which was built in 1866, but not including the vestry added in 1873.

Courtesy of Somerset Heritage and Libraries Service.

Architecture

The architectural style of the present church building is Perpendicular and therefore late medieval in period (with the exception of the Victorian north aisle and vestry). The appearance of the building in Nicholas Bagga's time remains a matter of speculation, however, for the first documentary reference to the fabric is dated 1509. In that year John Peryn of Wellington bequeathed 3/4d "to the fabric of the new tower of the parish church of Longford", and it is possible that this indicates not only the age of the present tower but the approximate date of the rebuilding or alteration in Perpendicular style of the church as a whole, for the way in which the west end of the south aisle embraces one of the tower buttresses suggests that the aisle in its present form cannot pre-date the tower. The four three-light Perpendicular windows of this aisle appear to be identical in design (type III according to Pevsner's classification), but the intrusion of a piscina into one of the sills implies the existence of an earlier aisle (or south transept) which was subjected to drastic alteration when the windows were inserted.

There are strong similarities between the east window in the chancel, the west window in the tower and the western window in the north wall of the north aisle. These also are three-light Perpendicular windows (type II). The second window in the north wall of the latter aisle is exceptional in that it has four lights, but it is still typically Perpendicular: more will be said later about the presence of such windows in this Victorian addition to the church.

The south arcade has typical Somerset piers of the late-medieval period (type A, with hollows in the diagonals) except that the four attached shafts of each pier do not have individual capitals: instead, each capital is in the form of an encircling band around the top of the pier. The decorative carving on these bands may represent foliage, but lace-work has also been suggested – particularly in the case of the eastern pier which also incorporates a carved needle-and-thread. This pier is elongated to form a double respond in which the capitals of the two responds are set at different heights to correspond with the differing floor levels within the church. The double respond may indicate that there was a projecting side chapel or transept before the south aisle was built, or it may have been intended to provide extra strength to support the thrust from the chancel arch.

The exact significance of the Langford Needle is not clear. It may

merely have been a mason's invention, but two rather more elaborate theories have been put forward. A needle and thread motif is associated with Queen's College, Oxford, and it has been suggested that Dr. John Caldebek, a former fellow of Queen's who was vicar of Wellington from 1465 to 1498, may have played a part in the late-medieval rebuilding of Langford church. The alternative view is that the needle and thread carving indicates that a woman provided the necessary patronage, and a link with Canonsleigh Abbey has been suggested. On the central boss of the wagon roof of the south aisle is a shield bearing three chevrons and this is repeated on the north side of that roof and again on the south side of the wagon roof of the nave: no colouring survives, but the form coincides with the arms of Matilda de Clare who re-founded Canonsleigh Abbey as a house of Augustinian canonesses in 1284. The roof bosses were re-carved in the nineteenth century, however, and their authenticity is therefore open to some doubt.

The Reformation

In the 1548 Survey of Chantries it was reported that a light which was supposed to be kept burning perpetually within the church had fallen into disuse at least ten years previously, despite an endowment of rent from a property in Milverton. The Survey was made early in the reign of Edward VI, and during the following years the local congregation experienced the impact of the Reformation. In 1550 the churchwardens purchased a communion book (presumably a reference to Cranmer's First Prayer Book) and sold to Thomas Pery a painted cloth which hung before the rood loft: the latter would have surmounted a rood screen at the junction of the chancel and the nave.

In the following year the rood loft itself was dismantled and the "pictures" (or painted figures?) of Mary and John, which would have been placed on either side of the rood (crucifix), were sold to John Phelyps for 3d. The ornamental panels of the ceiling above the position of the rood screen still survive.

In 1551 the side altar was removed from the east end of the south aisle where its position is indicated by the survival of a piscina and the remains of a ceiling. There is a second piscina in the south wall of the chancel beside what was originally the high altar, and the outlets from both piscinas were at one time visible near ground level in the outer faces of the walls.

Mary Tudor

During the reign of Mary Tudor there occurred a short-lived return to the old faith, and this is reflected in the fact that in 1557 John Wallrond's wife made a gift of a mass book to the church, whilst the churchwardens purchased a tabernacle (to contain the eucharistic elements associated with the mass) and a palm-cross: the latter would have been used in the revived Palm Sunday celebrations. The accounts for 1557 also refer to the moving of the holy water stoup: there was additional expense for plastering the aisle in this connection, and the stoup can still be seen embedded in the wall of the south aisle immediately to the east of the door. The stoup was presumably moved from outside the south door, and it is possible that this alteration provides a date for the building of the porch – for the presence of an empty niche over the inner door (a niche whose canopy, moreover, has been mutilated to make room for the porch ceiling) indicates that the porch was erected at a later date than the south aisle.

The rood loft must also have been restored at some time, for there is a reference to its being repaired and painted in 1575; and the screen itself may have survived until 1808 when there is a reference to "taking down the Screen in the Church".

The Langford Revel

The problem of raising funds for the church is by no means a new one, and a normal method employed in the sixteenth century involved the brewing of ale which was sold at a parish festivity named, like the beer itself, a "church ale". Church ales often took place, in the West Country at least, in a building known as a Church House (a good example of which still survives in the village of Crowcombe), although the nave of the church itself had originally been used. In Langford Budville the annual festivity was known as the Langford Revel: this took place at the festival of St. Peter, and the ale which the churchwardens were responsible for brewing was known as "St. Peter's ale". There was a Church House in the village (on the site of the private garden to the south-west of the churchyard) at least as early as 1551, and it is significant that although the churchwardens let a room in the building to the rector of Runnington to use as a school in 1620, they still reserved the use of the property to themselves for a fortnight every year "to sell there parish ale".

The Langford Revel was eventually suppressed during the Interregnum, and the puritans' hostility towards revels in general is perhaps made more understandable by the fact that the Langford tythingman (constable) and his assistants, who had the task of enforcing the prohibition, were abused and beaten up by a crowd of young men from Wellington who had come "to keepe revel" on the village green where they were "strikinge each at the other with staffs, whoopinge and makeinge a greate disturbance"! The Revel was later revived, but was finally brought to an end in the mid-nineteenth century after further outbreaks of violence had occurred. Langford Church House, on the other hand, was converted into a parish poor-house after 1650, and eventually passed into private ownership in (probably) the 1830s: the building was burnt down in 1908.

The Seventeenth Century

In 1614 the churchwardens purchased an hour glass "for the preacher", but this seems to have become somewhat of an irrelevance by 1623, however, for in that year Thomas Wygood (or Wigwood), the curate was rebuked by the archdeacon's court for not giving the required monthly sermons! During the years leading up to the Civil War, a number of visiting preachers entered the parish, and from 1636 they were expected to sign a register kept by the churchwardens. Wygood, who eventually died in 1640 at the age of one hundred, was also reprimanded in 1623 for failing to catechize the children of Langford Budville, and the churchwardens were indicted for not providing a "decent and comly pulpitt cloth". The records of the archdeacon's court only survive for 1623/4, but even in that short period there are numerous other references to Langford Budville: John Fursdon and his wife, for instance, were "vehemently suspected to be recusants refusing to come to the church on the Sabbath day", whilst a number of parishioners were indicted for having been "in the house of John Toogood on the Saboth daie typling and drinking at the time of divine service".

After the execution of Charles I the royal coat of arms, which had been set up (possibly over the chancel arch) in 1608, was defaced; and William Jewell, who was Wygood's successor as curate, appears to have been expelled, for the registers ceased to be written in Jewell's own immaculate hand and the parishioners then "subscribed for a

minister". In 1660, however, both King and Church of England were restored, and the churchwardens subsequently set up a new royal coat of arms in the church.

In 1663 the inhabitants of Langford Budville complained to the archdeacon of Taunton that the village "for divers yeares past hath byn destitute of a residing minister", and they petitioned him to appoint William Crofts as vicar in his own right (as opposed to being a mere chaplain) for a period of twenty-one years. This request may well have been granted, for Crofts' signature, with the style "vicar", appears in the registers in the later 1660s, and he was described as "vicar of this parrish" when buried in 1675. Crofts' successor, Nicholas Comer, may have inherited this vicarial status, for he also occasionally used the term "vicar" with reference to himself. There is clear evidence, however, that Langford was once again recognized as a chapelry of Milverton during the eighteenth century.

Church Music

At an unspecified date a gallery was installed in the church. The first reference to this structure is dated 1742, and the fact that there was a "gallery window" may suggest that the gallery itself was built under the tower where it would be lit by the west window. The probable purpose of this gallery was to provide accommodation for the church musicians and choir, for there are references in the later eighteenth century to "teaching the Singers" and to the purchase of a "Singing Book full of Tunes", whilst the musical accompaniment was provided by a village band which included bass and treble viols. In 1838, however, a barrel organ was installed in the church. The present organ was built by Forster and Andrews of Hull in 1875 (cf. Burlescombe church), and presumably replaced the organ referred to in 1873 as having been lent by Edward Ayshford Sanford and originally from Chipley Park. These changes probably provide an approximate date for the dismantling of the gallery.

Another aspect of the organization of the church services is the fact that Langford Budville seems to have conformed to the usual custom of segregating the sexes. As early as 1550 there is a reference to a payment being made to the churchwardens for a seat for three women, and the position of some of the seats for women is indicated by a reference in 1735 to "new making 20 womens seats through-out the Back part of the Middle Isle of the Church".



Photo by S W Kenyon

The interior of the Church looking East

Victorian Alterations

With the coming of the Victorian era there was a revival of interest in the fabric of the church. Thus the accounts for 1846 included heavy expenditure on "the re-seating and thorough repair of the Parish Church", and in 1847 it was decided to raise money for the building of a new aisle. The latter plan was in fact dropped, but the north aisle (the Bindon Aisle) was eventually built by Henry Warre of Bindon House in 1866: it was originally intended for the exclusive use of the Bindon household, but Warre agreed to allow five seats for the use of other parishioners. The architect was John Hayward of Exeter.

In connection with the earlier plan to build a north aisle, the mason was instructed to re-use the two windows (of three and four lights respectively) in the north wall of the nave, and this is evidently what happened in 1866. Faculty plans of the existing layout in 1866 and of the proposed new aisle show a pair of three- and four-light windows in the north wall in each case, and examination of the present windows confirms their authenticity, especially when compared with the 'mock Gothic' window inserted in the west end of the aisle, for their tracery is true to Somerset Perpendicular type, the external stonework is weathered and the outer edges of the external jamb-stones are irregular.

The building of the Bindon Aisle was the occasion on which the stairway to the rood loft was destroyed, for the stairway was referred to in 1862 and one of the plans of 1866 shows a small turret, which would have contained the stairway, at the east end of the north wall of the nave prior to the construction of the aisle.

Another feature of the church which was referred to in 1862 was "the chancel arch, which fits exactly into the roof of the chancel". The present arch must have been erected soon after this, but the earlier high arch, with its carved imposts, can still be seen on the east side. The vestry and organ chamber date from 1873 when their construction was approved by the Rev. T.H. Sotheby (a considerable benefactor to the church) at a vestry meeting at which he found himself the only person present!

When the porch of the National School (which was originally built in 1851) was being dismantled in 1928, the stone-work, which was identified by a mason as coming from Hele, showed traces of "conventional stalked leaf foliage", although this carved work was

subsequently hidden from view when the porch was rebuilt. The piers on either side of the entrance to the school playground and the gateway to Langford Court (which was used as a curate's residence in the 1850s) also appear to be constructed of this type of stone (probably North Curry sandstone which was quarried at Hele) and it is possible that all these features are relics of stonework discarded from the church during the Victorian alterations. The "stalked leaf foliage" is suggestive of the Early English style of the late 12th or 13th centuries, which would correspond with the earliest documentary evidence of the existence of the church.

Parish Status

The alterations to the fabric of the church which occurred during the Victorian period were accompanied by a significant development of another kind. Langford Budville's long-standing dependence upon Milverton is emphasized by the 1841 tithe map which describes the vicar of Milverton, the Rev. John Thomas Trevelyan, as the owner of the glebe in Langford. In contrast, the Rev. Robert Campbell (who in 1841 was living in the former Church House) is merely styled "resident curate" in a printed version of the farewell sermon which he preached at Langford church in September 1842. In 1863, however, Langford Budville finally lost its subordinate position as a chapelry and was granted the status of a perpetual curacy separate from Milverton, although the archdeacon of Taunton remained the patron of the living. Perhaps as a measure of this new-found status, a new vicarage was then built on the site known as Coneybear which was obtained in 1865 from Mr. E. A. Sanford (the lord of the manor) in exchange for the old thatched "vicarage" (strictly speaking this had only been a curate's house) and the church land on which it stood. The latter building, which may date from the late seventeenth century when an earlier structure was demolished, was described in 1815 as "a poor thatched cottage . . . unfit for the Residence of a Clergyman". Mention has already been made of the use of the former Church House and of Ritherdons House (now Langford Court) as substitute accommodation during the 1840s and 1850s respectively.

In c.1970 a new vicarage was built in the grounds of its Victorian predecessor, but this vicarage has in its turn become a private residence and Langford Budville is now served by a non-resident team vicar.

Union with Runnington

A further change, which was decreed by an Order in Council issued in 1930, was the uniting of Langford Budville with the neighbouring parish of Runnington. This came into effect in 1932 when the Rev. S. J. Swainson became the first incumbent to hold the united benefice.



Photo by L. Wymouth

THE EXTERIOR OF THE CHURCH

The overall external appearance of the church has already been mentioned, but there are a number of details which merit attention, including the priest's door in the south wall of the chancel and the base of the old churchyard cross immediately to the south-east of the porch. The buttress built against the south aisle is a late addition and is associated with a wooden beam placed across the interior of the aisle to support one of the piers of the south arcade. There are empty niches over both the inner and outer doorways of the porch, which is also mounted by two carved stone beasts (possibly an eagle and a leopard) on its outer corners, and the porch and south aisle carry pinnacled parapets with quatrefoils: certain of the latter appear to frame the crossed keys of St. Peter, although it has been claimed that the church was originally dedicated to St. James. The carved heads at the stops of the hood-mouldings of the windows of the south aisle may be later re-cuts, and it has been suggested that they represent the seven deadly sins. The churchyard at one time housed the village stocks, which were still in existence in 1873. The lower churchyard, however, is an addition which was consecrated in 1875.



Photo by Jean Marshall

The Tower

The tower has battlements and a stair-turret on the south-east corner, and is supported by set-back buttresses. The Langford Revel included a custom known as "clipping the tower" in which a human chain was formed around the church: a ritual dance was then performed, and at a given moment in the proceedings a shout was raised and the devil was chased out of the churchyard as far as the River Tone at Harpford.

The Bells

The clock on the west face of the tower was presented by the Rev. T. H. Sotheby in 1881, and there is a peal of six bells within the tower. The oldest original bells bear the dates 1687 and 1738, the latter bell having been cast by Thomas Wroth of Wellington. Two of the other bells were made respectively by Thomas Bilbie of Cullompton in 1810 and Gillett & Co. of Croydon in 1885, the latter being a further gift of the Rev. T.H. Sotheby. Llewellyns & James of Bristol recast a tenor bell of 1600 (originally made by George Purdue of Taunton) in 1896, and also a bell of 1663 (by John Pennington) in 1904.

In 1992 the bells were retuned at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, but the tenor bell of 1896, which required recasting, was replaced by the redundant 7th bell from St Saviour's Church, Lark Hall, Bath, which was cast by I. Rudhall in 1830. At the same time a new steel bell frame was installed in the ringers' chamber so that the defective wooden frame dating from 1753 could be preserved in the belfry. A new ringers' gallery was constructed behind the tower arch and a glass screen inserted between the gallery and the nave. John Matthews led the fund-raising for this expensive project, Robert Parker was in charge of handling and reinstalling the bells and of designing and making the steel bell frame, and Ray Arscott was responsible for the joinery, including the new ringers' gallery.

THE INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH

Monuments

The church possesses a number of monuments. On the north wall of the chancel, for instance, is a memorial (by Thomas King of Bath) to

William Barry Wade of Bindon House (d. 1806) in the form of a marble oval with two figures in relief on either side of an urn, and on either side of the east window of the south aisle are memorials to William Bacon (d. 1663) and to Capt. George Bacon of Harpford (d. 1690): the latter monuments are flanked by pillars with ionic capitals and surmounted by broken pediments framing the family arms.

Window Glass

The painted windows in the chancel and tower were presented by the Rev. Sotheby, whilst the two windows in the Bindon Aisle were presented in memory of Henry Warre (d. 1875) by his sons Francis and Edmund. The window to the west of the porch was inserted in memory of John Lamont of Benmore (d. 1850), and the east window of the south aisle was given in memory of John de Haviland, "Inventor of Radiating prisons", who was born at Gundenham in 1792 and died in 1852, by his son John.

The Font

The octagonal font is Perpendicular in design, and the blank face on one side of the Hamstone bowl indicates that it was designed to stand against a wall, possibly near the door. The stem is very ornate, but it does not appear to be carved from identical stone to that of the bowl, and it is doubtful whether there is sufficient space underneath the bowl for the missing points of the corner pinnacles: it is therefore questionable whether the bowl and stem are an original combination.

Photo by Jean Marshall



The Church Plate

The oldest piece of church plate is a silver Elizabethan communion cup which is still occasionally used in the communion service: the cover bears the date 1573, which indicates that the cup was purchased in accordance with a contemporary order that pre-Reformation chalices (associated with the mass) were to be replaced. Another item of church plate is a silver dish with a wide brim: this has been dated by its hallmarks to the reign of Charles II (but not later than 1678), and bears the arms of Edward Clarke of Chipley and his wife Mary Jepp. The church also possesses a chalice, paten and flagon, each made of silver (with the date letter for 1848) and inscribed with the initials of Edward Ayshford Sanford and the date 1866.

The Parish Bier

There is evidence that a bier was in use at funerals in Langford during the seventeenth century. The last example of such a vehicle in the parish was purchased in c.1929 and, after many years of disuse, finally sold in 1970.



The village in about 1900 – the former Church House standing immediately to the south west of the Church.

Photo lent by D. Pike

CURATES OF LANGFORD BUDVILLE

The following list is based on the known references to chaplains or curates who appear to have been appointed to serve the chapelry of Langford Budville as such. There are bound to be omissions, although the petition of 1663 indicates that Langford was not always provided with its own curate. Roger Person and William Persone, who are mentioned in 1481 and 1557 respectively, are unlikely to have been "parsons" and are therefore excluded from the list. The dates prior to 1793 do not necessarily denote the year of each curate's appointment.

Before 1204:	Nicholas Bagga.
1242/3:	Nicholas.
1243:	Robert.
1381:	Richard Puryman.
1410:	John Loveney.
1594:	William More.
1598:	Thomas Wigwood.
1640:	William Jewell. Possibly assistant to Wigwood from 1633.
1650:	The parishioners subscribed for a minister after Jewell's (presumed) expulsion.
1660:	John Wigwood. Described as "Clarke" when buried in that year: it is not clear whether he was a curate who had served in Langford Budville.
1663:	William Crofts.
1675:	Nicholas Comer. Signed the registers until 1701.
1727:	Thomas Evans. Signed the registers until 1746.
1784:	Thomas Hopkins.
1793:	James Randolph. Received a stipend of £30.
1805:	Charles Henry Sampson, B.A.
1832:	Robert Allan Scott, M.A. Received a stipend of £60.
1832:	Richard Robert Campbell. Farewell sermon: 1842.
1844:	Richard Burrige, B.A. Received a stipend of £100.
1844:	Henry Folkes Edgell, B.A.
1849:	Harvey Alexander, B.A. He was appointed as a curate in Milverton in 1847, but appears to have replaced Edgell in Langford Budville in 1849.

1855: William H. Walrond. There is no record of his being licensed, but he signed the registers from 1855.

Perpetual Curates

1863:	William H. Walrond.
1866:	William Henry Fowle, B.A.
1868:	Thomas Hans Sotheby, B.A. (until 1888).
1883:	Francis William Raban, B.A. (assistant curate).
1887:	Thomas Buncombe (assistant curate).
1888:	W. H. Fowle (again).
1894:	Charles Henry Luxton, B.A.
1919:	Samuel James Swainson, M.A.
1949:	David Cuthbert Mercier, M.A.
1955:	William Lincoln Jones, B.A.
1961:	Perceval Roy Scott, R.N.
1974:	Howard Charles Campbell Bowen, B.A.
1980:	Charles Edward Rolfe.
1986:	Andrew Gidleigh Bruce Rowe, A.K.C., R.N.
1995:	David Peter Randall, B.A.
2006:	Margi Campbell, B.A.
2012:	Alan Ellacott



The village as it appeared on a postcard in 1908.