

St Mary Magdalene, Wandsworth Common.

Brief outline of the history of St Mary Magdalene; taken from old Parish Magazines, various reference books, archival material and other sources.

INCUMBENTS:	1870	Revd J Garraway Holmes
	1884	Revd W Starkie Shuttleworth
	1897	Revd H Cotterell Evans
	1902	Canon Theodore Wood
	1923	Canon Edward Crawford
	1943	Revd Edward Pierce-Goulding
	1963	Revd Ian Atkinson
	1967	Revd David Vincent
	1984	Canon Ian Kitteringham
	2001	Revd Kevin Parkes
	2010	Revd Nicholas Peacock
	2017	Revd Philippa Boardman MBE

The site for the church (which is where the present church stands) was dedicated on St Mary Magdalene Day 22nd July 1870. The very first church building - a 'tin tabernacle' - was dedicated on 31st October 1870; the next church building (which was a temporary structure but in brick) was "brought from Streatham" and first opened for services on 13th November 1873. At that time St Mary Magdalene was a Mission Church of St Anne's, Wandsworth, which was then in the Diocese of Winchester.

The area covered by the church, though not yet legally a 'Parish' but never-the-less referred to as such, had just 1,700 inhabitants in 1873.

The first Incumbent was the Revd J Garraway Holmes who was Priest-in-Charge from 1870 to 1884.

The first issue of the Parish Magazine was in January 1873, costing 1 penny per month.

The first Parochial Church Council was instituted on 19th November 1871 with 6 communicant members and the 2 Churchwardens. Called the 'Parochial Council' the reasons for it being inaugurated included:

"That it will encourage men and women to take an active part in church matters;

That it will encourage liberty without encouraging license;

That it will cement the Clergy and the whole congregation into a body possessing in one common aim: the good of each and the good of all;

That it will not merely bring unity and success to St Mary Magdalene's but will be an encouragement to many other parishes to follow their example."

The Parochial Church Council was elected by persons on the 'St Mary Magdalene Roll of Communicants. This 'Roll of Communicants' consisted of persons over the age of 21 who had been communicants at St Mary Magdalene for at least three months; membership gave the entitlement to "have a voice in the elections of the Council and a Churchwarden and in other matters affecting the Congregation". [The account does not state whether both males and females were on the Roll of Communicants, but it is known from various accounts that only men could vote for and be a member of the Parochial Church Council. Women could vote for members from 1902 but could not be elected themselves until 1919].

Revised 'Rules for the Parochial Church Council' came into force in August 1892, but nowhere can be found details of what those rules were!

However many other details are frequently given - the Services in January 1873 were:

Sundays:	8 am	Holy Communion
	11 am	Matins and Sermon
	12.30 pm	on 1st & 3rd Sundays, Holy Communion
	4 pm	Litany
	7 pm	Evensong and Sermon
Weekdays	8 am	Thursdays, Holy Communion
	8 pm	Evensong daily, except Thursday
Holy Days	8 am	Holy Communion
	8 pm	Evensong and Sermon

In January 1873 the offertory was £26 12s 5½ d.

The Parish Magazine of September 1873 gives details of the Sunday School 'Treat' held in August: 90 children met in the church for a "short service consisting of hymns, lessons, Magnificat, Creed and Collects" before marching, with flags, to "Mr Lucas' fields in Streatham Lane", where they had tea, the boys played cricket and the girls had races.

In the early days appeals were made for money to open a 'Middle Class School for Boys'. The building was completed in March 1873 and formally opened on 29th July 1873, to be used as a school for boys at 25s per term, a night school for working boys and for the Sunday School and other meetings. The school was in Trinity Road, on the site of what is now the Parish Hall. (A notice in a Parish Magazine dated July 1892 speaks of "the school room, Brodrick Road" which, together with an advert for "St Mary Magdalene's Middle-Class School for girls in Brodrick Road" brings the realisation that St Mary Magdalene had two schools.) It is also clearly stated in a magazine of the time that "there is no connection with the Institute for the Young in Althorpe Road". School hours were Monday to Saturday, 9.15 to 12.15 and 2.00 to 4.15, no afternoon lessons on Wednesdays and Saturdays, holidays were 1 week at Easter, 4 weeks in the summer and 3 weeks at Christmas. The school had become defunct by 1900 as the Education Act of 1896 had set up the London Schools Board to provide schools and free education.

The Magazines of November and December 1873 give the statistics from 1870 to 1873 of such matters as: the number of celebrations of Holy Communion; and the number of communicants, confirmations and baptisms. Also in the figures are details of the specific coins given in the offertory each year - including groats.

In March 1874 a scheme to defray the debt on the purchase of the church site was announced - the Penny-a-Week scheme - 216 persons each to give a penny each week.

Also in 1874, in November the Revd. Holmes wrote in the Magazine "Our little church holds 320 and is frequently overflowing at Matins and Evensong, but many less at Communion Services". He also wrote "our offertories are lamentably small".

By May 1877 the debt on the purchase of the site was cleared - the then church also had a churchyard, not a burial ground but an open space which, it is noted as being filled with the overflow congregation from a Confirmation Service. St Anne, Wandsworth together with St Mary Magdalene (still a Mission Church) moved from the Diocese of Winchester into the Diocese of Rochester in 1877.

July 1880 saw the resignation of the then organist, having been offered a more lucrative post at a church in Kensington there were 14 applications for the vacancy.

By 1885 the temporary building had become inadequate in size and was in a bad state of repair. A fund was started to build a permanent church, the cost of £4,700 was raised in just over 3 years. The architect was EB Ferrey. The nave and south aisle (now the clergy and choir vestries and office) were consecrated on 13th November 1888. Ground was also to be purchased to allow for the later building of a chancel, aisles, chapel and vestries. After completion, a wrought iron screen was installed at a cost of under £40.00, this screen was between the first two pillars in the nave and thus made a small chancel.

1889 was an important year - the Parish of St Mary Magdalene Wandsworth Common, comprising parts of the parishes of St Anne, Wandsworth and St Mary, Battersea, came into being by an Order in Council in July of that year.

In 1892 the ground for the original Vicarage in Lyford Road (no 36) was obtained and building work started.

August 1895 saw the opening of an appeal for funds "to purchase the land to the east of the church, to build the chancel, north aisle, chapel, organ chamber, vestries and north porch". The Foundation stone of the chancel was laid on 22nd July (St Mary Magdalene Day) in 1899.

By 1900 the new chancel had been completed and a Confirmation Service was held, at which there were 53 candidates from the parish. Many gifts were given to the church, including the processional cross; the choir stalls were given as a memorial to the wife of the Revd. Wyatt-Smith, an honorary Curate for a number of years; 40 people each gave £1.00 to purchase a new altar, now the high altar and the altar from the temporary church was moved into the Lady Chapel and is still there.

1901: An analysis was published of details from the previous years' National Census; figures for the parish showed that a total of 8,371 persons were now resident in the parish (6,855 within the Borough of Wandsworth and 1,516 within the Borough of Battersea), this number included 1,083 in Wandsworth Prison, 1,262 in the Middlesex County Asylum (now Springfield Hospital) and 297 in the Royal Victoria Patriotic School (an orphanage in Trinity Road, [part of the grounds now house the Fitzhugh Estate], built after the Crimean War, for the 'orphaned daughters of members of the Army and Navy who died on active service'). Of the remaining 5,729 persons some 25% were employed in domestic service - maids, housekeepers, cooks, grooms butlers, etc.

1902: The pulpit was erected in memory of Revd. C Wyatt-Smith. The following statement was made at the Annual Meeting - "We cannot rely on large donations in this parish, but on the faithful and systematic giving by all members of the congregation according to their means".

A report on Easter Day 1903: 665 communicants, every service full and the need for an aisle to provide more seating was apparent. The Annual Bazaar raised £640 including £8 for photographs of the clergy and churchwardens

In 1904 plans were made for the completion of the church by building aisles and a hall; the church building debt had been cleared and the Parochial Church Council discussed purchasing the land accommodating the school room in order to build the north aisle and the parish hall. Also, in this year, the Diocese of Southwark was created and the parish moved into the new Diocese.

On the 15th June 1907, the Foundation stone for the north aisle was laid. On the 19th October 1907 the dedication took place of the new buildings. (There is a cutting from 'The Church Family Newspaper' regarding the event included in the Parish Magazine that year.)

1911, 'An eminent church architect' submitted plans and designs for the raising and enriching of the chancel screen, the panelling of the chancel and sanctuary, the erection of a reredos, the provision of an oaken screen between church and lady chapel; though it was emphasised that nothing would be done until the debt on the latest building projects had been paid off.

1912: the death of Mr Charles Burney. The family provided the east window as a memorial and the parish provided the chapel window as a memorial. His obituary in the magazine reads: "When Charles Burney came to this neighbourhood in 1867, our present parish formed part of St Anne Wandsworth, with the exception of a narrow strip which belonged to St Mary, the mother church of Battersea. Already, however, it was felt that so large and populous a district required another church and Mr Burney threw himself with all his heart and soul into the project of creating first a district, and then a separate parish, of St Mary Magdalene. From that time forward until his breakdown in health in the autumn of 1909, he never ceased to think, scheme, work and give for the church in which we worship and the parish in which we live. For 37 years he read the lessons on Sundays, for 31 years he acted as Churchwarden. And from the time when the building of the temporary church was first projected until the day when the final portion of our House of God was dedicated in the autumn of 1907 he was always the trusted counsellor, the enthusiastic helper, the generous donor, with the single-hearted desire for the glory of God and the good of his church, not only in the parish and diocese but throughout the world. It will be many a long year before all he was and all that he did, with us and for us, will be forgotten."

1913 saw the addition of a number of stained glass windows: On the 26th January the east window was dedicated to the memory of Charles Burney. The design of the window was explained in the Parish Magazine as follows: 'The window illustrates the Te Deum (it is thought that this was written by St Ambrose of Milan as it was sung when St Augustine was baptised by him on Easter Eve 387 AD). The central group of three lights is dominated by the figure of Our Lord seated in majesty, surrounded by adoring angels; the side lights are filled with groups of figures representing "The glorious company of the apostles", "The goodly fellowship of the prophets", "The noble army of martyrs", and "The holy church throughout all the world". In the centre light, Our Lord is represented seated upon a rainbow, his feet upon the earth, crowned as a king holding a sceptre and orb. Above a scroll runs through three lights "Thou are the King of Glory, O Christ". The upper part of the background is filled in with Cherubim (blue), which appear in the large central tracery at the head of the window, alternately with Seraphim (ruby). The purple shield with a crimson centre, in the middle of this tracery, with rays of golden light issuing from behind it, is emblematic of "The Veiled Godhead of the Father", which is why Cherubim and Seraphim surround it, they are all gazing on the glory which is hidden from man, and is why the colour is massed in the upper part of the window. The two small circular pieces of tracery have the letters "Alpha" and "Omega" - the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, because Christ is "the first and the last". In the canopy above the figure of Our Lord is a hovering dove, signifying the Holy Spirit. Below, two angels hold a ruby shield with the monogram "IHS" (an abbreviation of the Greek rendering of the name of Jesus)'.

On the 13th April 1913, the Lady Chapel window was dedicated; the central light is a representation of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, the side panels depict the Annunciation and the Nativity. Finally, in July 1913, the window at the east end of the north aisle, formerly the Children's Corner and now the Junior Church room, was dedicated; it represents the three cardinal virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

1914, at the outbreak of the 1st World War, the Royal Patriotic School became a Military Hospital, known as "The Third London General Hospital", people in the parish were asked to help find lodgings for visitors to the patients.

In July 1915 the Diocesan Quota scheme started. St Mary Magdalene's share was £100. In the Parish Magazine June to September there is a series of articles giving the reason why certain actions take place in church services.

1916, in April, an alabaster and marble reredos, the work of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, originally part of the canopy of a tomb in Lichfield Cathedral, was offered to the church and accepted. (The other half of the canopy was/is in Holy Trinity, Brampton). The dedication of the reredos took place on the 20th July that year.

1917, commenting in the magazine in January on the 1916 statistics, the then Vicar reported that the number of Communicants fell from 14,897 in 1915 to 14,429 in 1916.

1918, an article about the Church Institute in the March magazine:

"We should like to draw the notice of our readers to the fact that Mr CH Baker, honorary manager of the Church Institute, has now entered upon the fiftieth year of his work in connection with that wonderful institution. Mr Baker was the founder of the Institute in 1868. By his unwearied labours, his unflagging energy, and his entire and absolute self-devotion he has carried on a work for the wider church the greatness of which can only be realised by those who have been privileged to see behind the scenes.

During the last half century many lads and young men have been brought into contact with him and he has given of his all to help them to the uttermost in body, soul and spirit. In him they have always felt that they have the very best of friends. Night after night all through each year, and often well into the early morning, he has thought for them, planned for them, worked for them and prayed for them. He has brought very many of them to God. Numbers of them would willingly testify that, under God, they owe everything to him.

Certainly we in St Mary Magdalene's parish owe him a great debt of gratitude; for although the Institute is not directly associated with our own parochial organisation, but serves the whole surrounding neighbourhood, he has done very much for us in very many ways, and our own young men have benefitted greatly by the help which he has given them."

The Church Institute, in Wiseton Road, backed on to passage behind the church premises. This was re-developed in 2014-16 into upmarket housing and it is pleasing to see that it has been designated 'Charles Baker Place'.

1918, in November, the window in the chancel (over the organ/Lady Chapel) 'The Institution of the Holy Eucharist' was dedicated, this was not a memorial window but paid for by "Monies given for unspecified use".

A Faculty was obtained in March 1919 for the carved oak rood screen as a war memorial; the existing wrought iron screen was given to St Andrew's, Earlsfield and thought to be still there. As there was money in hand a matching screen was to be erected to separate the Lady Chapel from the church. The lettered version of the 1914-8 Roll of Honour was hung in the porch in April 1919, it was the work of Mr Arthur Pearce, and paid for by Mr Pearce and Mr Gaul; it now hangs on the south wall in the clergy vestry.

In 1920, under the 'Enabling Act', women became eligible to serve on the Parochial Church Council. Churches were to have 'Electoral Rolls' for the purpose of the elections of Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council members. The old Council at St Mary Magdalene (perhaps one of the few churches with a Council at that time) had to be dissolved. St Mary Magdalene had maintained a 'Roll of Communicants' from 1871 - again a forerunner?

Also in 1920 a decision was made that "Crossbearer and Sacristans wear scarlet cassocks and cottas, not cassock and surplice as chairmen do". And, from the Vicar's letter in the July magazine - "Our Patronal Festival falls at an unfortunate time because so many of our people are away, so we shall defer further doings in connection until the end of October when the 50th Jubilee of the original temporary church will be celebrated".

The same year (1920) the parish boundaries were noted as: Wandsworth side - Trinity Rd 261-345 and 238-324 including the Royal Patriotic School, Dorlcote Rd, Henderson Rd, Nicosia Rd, Patten Rd, Routh Rd, Lyford Rd, Herondale Ave, Frewin Rd, Loxley Rd, Ellerton Rd, Broadgates Rd, Magdalen Rd 1-79 and 2-Cemetery Lodge, Heathfield Rd 1-79 and 12-16, Alma Terrace, HM Prison, Collamore Ave, Marham Gdns, Lyminge Gdns, Burntwood Lane 261-315. Tooting Side - Trinity Rd 127-211 and 126-226, Crockerton Rd (even numbers), Dalebury Rd, Hendham Rd, Wandie Rd, Brodrick Rd, Beechcroft Rd 25-109 (odd numbers only), Bellevue Rd, Wiseton Rd, Nottingham Rd, Althorpe Rd, Ouseley Rd, St James Rd 1-139 and 22-46 including St James Hospital, Balham Park Rd 82-122 and 77-105, Sarsfeld Rd 1-79 and 2-86.

NB Since then, there have been a number of changes: St James Road became St James Drive in the 1950's, St James' hospital site was redeveloped as social housing in the 1980's, Beechcroft Road was renumbered from the Tooting end in the late 1920's; the Fitzhugh estate was built in the 1950's on part of the Patriotic School grounds – the school itself having had a number of changes being an

internment prison for low risk prisoners in WW2, a secondary school for boys and later housing small craft outlets; the portion of Lyford Rd nearest Burntwood Lane was re-named as Sandgate Lane, parts of the grounds of Springfield Hospital were added to the Parish in a 1950's re-organisation: the College Gardens estate, Ronald Gibson House and some buildings for Springfield Hospital being built on the extra area added.

A note from the magazine November 1920: "As sugar is at present so strictly rationed, perhaps those who take it in their tea or coffee and attend the congregational 'Social' on 2nd November will bring their own supply with them."

Electric lighting was installed, during 1920, in the parish hall, vestries, passages, chancel, chapel, at the lectern and pulpit - "a great improvement". At a subsequent meeting of the Parochial Church Council it is made clear that this was made possible by two generous donors. A fund was opened early the following year to provide electric lighting in the nave and aisles.

1921, from a magazine: "The congregation should realise that expenses are the same every Sunday and, if they are absent one Sunday, they should ensure that their offering for that Sunday is given in addition the following week".

1922, a conversation reported in the magazine between the Vicar and a member of the congregation (**M** of **C**), who fortunately remained anonymous -

Vicar: Where were you last night?
M of **C**: Last night? What was last night?
Vicar: So and so. We quite expected to see you there.
M of **C**: I'm very sorry, but this is the first I've heard of it.
Vicar: But there was a notice in the magazine.
M of **C**: I'm afraid I didn't read the magazine.
Vicar: The notice of it was given out in church last Sunday.
M of **C**: I'm afraid I wasn't listening to the notices.
Vicar: And handbills were given out at the door, didn't you get one?
M of **C**: Yes, I got one, but I didn't look at it!

Also from a magazine in 1922: "It is unfortunately necessary to remind the congregation once more that the church and its services cannot be maintained at their present level unless the amount obtained through the offertories is substantially increased".

From a 1923 magazine [precis made as it is a very long article]:

"Mr Charles Henry Baker has passed from us, a true saint of God. He came to the area in 1868 having been given only 2 years to live but remained among us for 54 years often working 18 or 24 hours a day in the cause of God and the service of his fellow men. He started a club for lads, originally in what is now Tooting Bec Rd, to provide for their bodily, mental and spiritual needs. Numbers grew, the club moved to Wandsworth Common and in 1872 he moved into the premises in Wiseton Road and began to build the 'Church Institute', many times extra rooms and halls had to be added as numbers increased. Bodily recreation was provided by cricket clubs, football clubs, swimming clubs and a gymnasium together with evening recreation of all kinds; mental needs were met by the provision of classes in preparation for a career - from Holy Orders down to domestic work; spiritual needs were covered by bible classes, temperance classes, and a Communicants Society, together with a special service every Sunday evening for lads who fought shy of attending church.

In 1872 there were 73 members, in 1912 over 7,000. Charles Baker was always there, never took a holiday, he had a wonderful influence over the lads, he always had time for them and knew a great deal about all his members. His life was one of total self-sacrifice, all his energies and scanty means were devoted to the Institute. He managed all the business arrangements, all the accounts and kept up an immense correspondence.

He died on 24th January, some of his lads carried him into church on the Sunday evening; many of his old friends attended a Communion Service early on Monday morning and his funeral took place later in the day. He lived wholly for God because he lived wholly for others, thousands throughout the world will thank God for him."

In 1923 a processional cope was given in memory of Mrs Charles Burney.

Also in 1923 an item from the September Magazine - "Our Patronal Festival was a bright and happy day, but we could wish that the revisers of the Prayer Book, who are busily at work and have many alterations and improvements to suggest, would transfer St Mary Magdalene's Day to the autumn or spring, when at least half of our congregation and choir would not be on holiday".

And, in the November magazine - "All Saints Day besides being a special Festival of the church is also the anniversary of the day on which our original church was dedicated." [All earlier references state 31st October!].

1924, Marble and mosaics installed in the chancel in memory of Canon Theodore Wood.

Very few alterations or additions were made to the church during the next 15 years, the pattern of services evolved and altered only a little and in January 1939 were listed as:

Sunday services:

Holy Communion: 1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays, 8 am, 12.15 pm
 2nd Sunday, 7 am, 8 am, 12.15 pm
 4th Sunday, 7 am, 8 am, 10 am
 Major festivals: 7 am, 8 am, 9.15 am, 10 am, 12.15 pm
 Matins and sermon: 11 am
 Children's services: 10.30 am, 3.30 pm
 Evensong and sermon: 6.30 pm

Weekday services:

Holy Communion: Tuesday & Thursday 7.15 am
 1st Thursday 9.30 am
 Friday 12 noon
 Matins: Monday, Wednesday, Saturday 10.15 am
 Tuesday, Thursday 7.45 am
 Litany: Wednesday, after Matins
 Evensong Daily except Saturday 5.30 pm

Holy Days:

Holy Communion: 7 am, 12 noon
 Matins: 7.30 am
 Evensong: 5.30 pm

Many other meetings took place - Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary, (after Evensong, once a month); King's Messengers, Mondays 6.30 pm October to June, [King's Messengers was a children and young people Missionary organisation]; Bible classes, Sundays 2.45 pm; Sunday School, Sundays 2.45 pm; Youth Study Group, Mondays 8 pm; Communicants Group, last Thursday in the month 8 pm.

Also weekly meetings of Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies, Mother's Union, Missionary Union, Girl's Friendly Society, Youth Fellowship, Women's Fellowship, Literary Society, Badminton Club.

1939 and the outbreak of the Second World War saw the start of many changes - a very stringent national 'black-out' was imposed; it would have been almost impossible and exceedingly expensive to fit 'black-outs' to the entire church, so in order to maintain some evening and early morning services it was organised that the Lady Chapel should be 'blacked-out' by the addition of plywood boarding between the Chapel and chancel, heavy curtains and only a very low level of lighting used; the choir and clergy vestries were also fitted with heavy curtains so they were 'blacked-out'.

The time of the evening services varied according to the time of year as no lighting could be used in the main church.

A number of the choirmen, servers and younger men of the congregation either volunteered or were 'called up' to join the fighting forces and, as the war progressed, a number of the younger women were also 'called up' to join them. Many of the children were evacuated out of London to places considered to be safer for them - some even going as far as Canada. Most of the organisations closed down at the outbreak of war, but by the mid-1940's had re-opened though in slightly changed circumstances and with reduced memberships.

Many monthly evening meetings moved to the time of the month when there was a full moon, so that people could find their way to and from the church. A knitting guild was formed to knit warm clothing for the fighting troops. Ladies joined the choir for the first time to make up for the almost total lack of boy soprano voices. The iron railings along the church frontage were removed (as were those from the majority of household and public buildings) to be melted down to provide metal for the war effort.

The parish was hit by a number bombs, flying bombs and V2's, the parish hall was requisitioned to store furniture etc for people whose homes had been bombed, the parish hall cellar became a public air raid shelter. The church itself suffered relatively little damage during the bombing - the stained glass windows near the main door were blown out and replaced post-war; the glass of the large west window became (and remains) 'bowed' as a result of bomb-blast; the roof was slightly damaged by shrapnel. Throughout the war years the magazines mention the names of people from the church who were either killed in action or by the bombing; they are remembered on a lettered memorial in the chancel, placed there on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

The years following the war were, for the people of St Mary Magdalene, years of recovery and consolidation.

In 1948 an electronic external sound system was installed which meant that peals of bells recorded in churches with 'a proper peal of six or more bells' could be broadcast from the large ventilator on the church roof; this system was a memorial to Canon Edward Crawford, a previous Vicar.

By 1949 there were reports in the parish magazines of many organisations and societies connected with the church, a number of whom had kept going throughout the war years - Scouts, Cubs, Guides, Brownies, Young Wives, Mother's Union, Church of England Men's Society, Anglican Young People's Association, Missionary Union, Women's Fellowship, Girls Friendly Society (Townsend Fellowship), Tennis Club, St Mary Magdalene Players, Literary Society, Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary, Sunday Schools.

In 1958 a 'Restoration Fund' was set up, the objects being to restore the church to its pre-war level of repair, to have a wall built outside with iron gates and to maintain the premises in good order.

1959 – Christmas: the first candlelight Carol and Midnight services.

1962: from the Parish Magazine:

"What kind of a Christian are you?

- Some are like wheelbarrows, no use unless pushed.
- Some are like kites, if you don't keep firm hold, they fly away.
- Some are like kittens, need to be cosseted.
- Some are like balloons, full of their own importance and ready to blow up.
- Some are like trailers, must be pulled.
- Some, fortunately, are like a good watch - open faced, pure gold.
quietly busy and full of good works.

What kind of a Christian are you?"

1963 - the death in St James Hospital of Revd Edward Pierce-Goulding, Vicar for almost 20 years and still in office at the time of his death.

Due to wartime and post-war clergy shortage he had stayed in office well beyond retirement age.

An item from the September 1963 parish magazine - The Christians Alphabet:

Always be present at the services
 Be punctual
 Come regularly
 Don't be selfish, bring a friend
 Everyone should take and read the parish magazine
 Find ways in which you can help
 Get to know the clergy and workers, they want to help you
 Hearty singing rests with you - do your share
 I should come last, let others be given first place
 Join the Bible Reading Fellowship or be sure to read the bible every day
 Keep smiling
 Look up any who are away
 Make a point of welcoming new members
 Never forget the financial needs of the church
 Original ideas are valuable - let's have them
 Pray regularly
 Questions will be welcomed - don't be afraid to ask
 Remember that membership involves Responsibility
 Shining is not merely something for Sunday
 Tact means Thinking before Talking
 Unity is strength, avoid cliques
 Valuable service only is costly
 Winning souls for Christ is the aim
 X - the unknown quantity, but you are not unknown to God
 Youth only comes once, make the most of it
 Zeal for mission is the mark of a true Christian.

1964: Following the appointment of a new Vicar, the Vicarage moved from Lyford Road, (which was very large, with many rooms including a large garden and building for a horse and carriage and no longer in a good state of repair) to take over what had been the Doctor's surgery and house in Burntwood Lane.

1965: Main morning service to be Parish Communion at 9.30 am, with Sunday School at 11 am. The Scout Group purchased the Romany Club from the church. The Parish Hall was decorated by a group of residents from Wandsworth Prison who were awaiting release.

Most of the Parish Magazines for 1965, 1966 and 1967 have extracts from letters from Julie Miller, a former member of the congregation, who worked in a Mission Hospital at Lulindi in Tanzania. Julie was much supported by the people of St Mary Magdalene with gifts of old linen, money and specialist equipment baby clothes, adult clothing and knitted blankets.

During the 1960's little material work was done on the church fabric, but much was done in the way of changing ideas - study groups were set up; the Parochial Church Council set up sub-committees rather than everyone discussing everything; the first Stewardship Campaign took place; parish coach outings were arranged; discussions took place on re-shaping the Liturgy; various Lent courses were organized which encouraged participants to look at their neighbourhood and their church.

Magazines from 1967 have excerpts from letters from Mary Bullough (nee Miller and a sister of Julie Miller) in Malawi. Mary was very involved in the life of the parish until she married and went overseas with her husband, a Doctor.

In 1967: the parish hall was re-wired, the Electoral Roll was 202 people

The first Parish Epiphany party was held in 1968 - which became the fore-runner of many parish parties. In the same year the first use of a Nave altar was agreed and a suitable table consecrated for that purpose. Also there was much discussion on the subject of Anglican Methodist unity.

In 1970 the practice of serving coffee and tea after Parish Communion was instituted; Synodical Government was introduced into the Church of England. The under pew heating in the church was installed.

1971, the first re-organisation for many years of the Sunday Schools took place: they would continue to meet at 11 am after Parish Communion, and each month would have a Communion Service as part of their worship.

1972 saw the first distribution of a Christmas Leaflet giving the details of the Christmastide services and a message from the Vicar. (Easter leaflets were distributed from 1982)

During the next few years various re-decorations and works took place: in 1973 the vestries were re-painted; in 1974 the west end of the church was re-pointed; in 1975 the Lady Chapel was re-decorated and the organ restored; in 1978 a major part of the church was re-decorated.

A new form of Parish Communion, the 'Series B' form was introduced in 1976 with some slight modifications later. 1976 also saw the election of the very first female Churchwarden at St Mary Magdalene. The United Churches "Good Friday Procession of Witness" through Balham and Tooting was started during the 70's - usually well supported by St Mary Magdalene folk; and in 1979, the 'Birthday Book' was instituted by which members of the congregation are prayed for on their birthday.

1980, the first Pantomime was produced - 'The Common Pantomime', written by a member of the cast and with a lot of local references. Regular discos for the young people were also being held.

1981 saw an important move - a referendum was held to determine the best time for the main Sunday service, Sunday school etc. As a result the service moved to 10 am to include Junior Church in various sections and a creche for the youngest members.

In 1982 the first Christingle Service was held, jointly with Holy Trinity; after three years of joint events the service was so popular each church decided to hold its own service, which is now a very popular event in the Christmas calendar. The following year the first Crib Service for children on Christmas Eve was held with just 8 children, the Crib Service now takes place in a packed church with extra chairs being brought in for the occasion.

The 1983 Quinquennial Survey stated the need for a considerable sum of money for work on the roof - in 1984 the East Nave gable was rebuilt and coping stones repaired and replaced on the west and south sides.

In 1985 the Kingston Episcopal area was inaugurated, St Mary Magdalene to be within that area.

1987 was a special year: plans were made for a 'proper' dais to enhance the worship and the Centenary of the church building was celebrated in many ways, notably a re-union service to which many ex-members came, some from quite a distance; a fun day on Wandsworth Common; a flower festival and a Dedication service; the launching of the Centenary Fund to produce finance for major works and a revue "Live from Her Majesty's Pleasure" performed by the Chaplaincy team from Wandsworth Prison.

In 1988 Wandsworth Association for Mental Health (now Mind) moved into the vestries at the back of the premises and plans were made for a major re-development of the premises. The old pipe organ had reached the end of its useful life and become unreliable by 1989, a major rebuild was financially out of the question so an Electronic Organ was purchased. Fund raising entered a new era with an 'All Fools Dinner', a concert and pancake races on the Common.

The re-ordering of the church started in 1990 by partitioning the north aisle from the church to make the Church hall and a Junior Church room; the public address system was installed. The newly formed Sewing Guild started work on refurbishing banners etc. The official opening of the Patricia Benians Centre, in the old vestries took place.

1991-2 saw the re-development of the church hall: new toilets in the basement; new kitchen; and toilet for disabled users installed. The Sewing Group started work on some new altar frontals. The Magdalene Players performed "Godspell" in church, to great acclaim. Volunteers from the parish helped to start a play scheme in the visits room at Wandsworth Prison.

In 1992 major re-decoration took place in the parish hall following the collapse of the ceiling due to storm damage. The Vestries and an office were placed in the south aisle and partitioned off from the church. Stewardship awareness talks took place to try to make the congregation aware of the needs.

1993 saw a big improvement with the installation of the new heating system in the church, this was installed in the space by the south door and was an instant (and welcome) success.

In 1994 the Church was completely re-wired and a new lighting system installed, the new 'uplighters' greatly enhanced the appearance of the brickwork arches. A purpose-built nave altar was carved by a local craftsman, dedicated and installed. The design was quite striking and seen with a different meaning by different people.

The much admired Parish Cope was completed by the Sewing Guild, this portrayed scenes from the parish and parish life. The cope has been since exhibited in various places including an International Exhibition in Japan.

During the latter part of the 1990's various other innovations came about, including many fund-raising events - 'A Century of British Music', Golf tournament, Tennis tournament, Bridge evenings, all with the intention of raising money for the Millennium Fund. Many of these events have become part of the St Mary Magdalene calendar of events.

Just before midnight on 31st December 1999, a number of the congregation met on Wandsworth Common, not far from the church, lit Millennium Candles and said the 'Millennium Resolution' together, a number of passers-by joined in. Then an added and unexpected bonus - as the Common is quite high ground, there was a grandstand view of the fireworks over London.

1999/2000 saw the re-ordering of the frontage and the installation of the Millennium gates, designed by Lindsey Whitelaw - a member of the congregation and produced by 'Iron-Awe'. The gates were dedicated by the Bishop of Kingston on Whit-Sunday 2000. A flag pole was installed on the roof as a Millennium 'gift' from Wandsworth Council and during 2001, with a grant from Wandsworth Council, flood-lighting of the church front was installed and is much admired.

In the year 2000 the Church of England instituted a revised book of services "Common Worship", at that time St Mary Magdalene was in an interregnum, decisions were delayed regarding which form of service to use until the installation of the new Vicar. After the decision had been made, service books were printed to cover every Season of the church year.

In 2002 the Lady Chapel was re-ordered, the pews were removed and chairs installed, this made it much more flexible for various uses. In 2004 it became apparent that the roof needed renewal and fund raising started. In December 2004 the news came that, after a lot of work, the Church had become a Grade 2 Listed Building.

The church of St Mary Magdalene Wandsworth Common has stood on Trinity Road for over 150 years, in that time there have been just 12 Incumbents. The church and area it serves have seen many, many changes over the years but St Mary Magdalene Church is still there and will continue to be well into the future.