



Lyneham

The History of St. Michaels and All Angels and Lyneham Village

The first mention of Lyneham Church was in documents of 1139 concerned with the founding of Bradenstoke Priory. The Priory was given the endowments of the Church, including the tithes, and supplied the priest for the church from their community. So from earliest times until the Reformation, Lyneham Church was served by the Canons of Bradenstoke Priory. Through this close connection, when the Priory was dissolved, the purchaser of the land became what is known as the lay rector, that is he held the church endowments and was responsible for appointing a priest to Lyneham whose position was known a perpetual curacy. Because of this system, and the breakup of the rectorial estate. Lyneham parish appears to have been badly served in the 18th century this is borne out by the list of incumbents. The lay rectors often failed to appoint anyone and so the rectors of Hilmarton or Tockenham appear from evidence of the registers to have taken services.

At the beginning of the 19th century Lyneham Church was given additional endowment by Queen Anne's Bounty and incumbents were appointed regularly by the lay rectors and the system regularised.

Later history of the parish seems no less complex in 1924 Lyneham, Bradenstoke cum Clack and Tockenham were united under one incumbent. In 1954 Tockenham was separated from the union and in the early 1960's an agreement was reached between the Bishop of Salisbury and the Chaplain in Chief of the Royal Air Force whereby the Royal Air Force Chaplains at R. A. F. Lyneham were to serve the parish of Lyneham with Bradenstoke and Lyneham church becoming also the R. A. F. Station Church. This system is still in place today.

The location of the church is somewhat strange. Until the Royal Air Force built married quarters the church was situated at the far end of the village and its address today is still referred to as Church End. Normally you would expect the church to be more centrally situated to the location of the other village buildings. However looking at the church history and the fact that over the years the church has been parish church to several outlying villages its location is rather more practical. Looking at a map the church position is almost central to the hamlets of Preston, Bradenstoke, Clack and West Tockenham all of which have been served by Lyneham as its parish church.

In 1866 the church of St. Mary was built at Bradenstoke and formed a stand-alone parish. However the two parishes combined again in 1924 and remain as a single parish to this day.

A village history would not be complete without further mention to the Royal Air Force base at Lyneham. In his memoirs the Reverend E. Walker recalls that there were plans in 1937 to build an aerodrome at Lyneham and work commenced in that year. By the time World War II started in 1939 Lyneham had begun to change in appearance. For some reason during World War to bogus hangars were erected on the village green, one was disguised as a church and the other as Brown's Garage. Much valuable farm land was commandeered by the Air Force and the character of Lyneham changed from primarily agricultural. Many of the farm labourers and other villagers joined up to fight for their country whilst others took up civilian posts at the aerodrome.