

STATEMENT OF NEED

St Mary Magdalene Church, Stockland Bristol



Parish of Stockland, Quantock Deanery, Archdeaconry of Taunton

Listed Grade 2, Somerset Council

Church of England Church Heritage record 601532

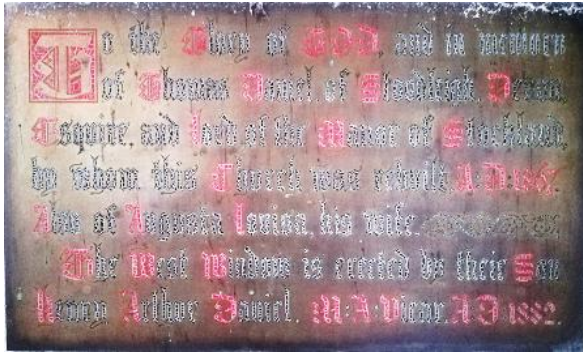
Heritage at Risk Register record 1059049

Grid reference ST 24013 43620

General information

The parish church of St Mary Magdalene, Stockland Bristol was built in 1865 (replacing a previous church on the same site). The total ecclesiastical parish population is 205 (84 households), 172 of whom live in Stockland village and most of the rest in the hamlet of Steart. The parish is part of the newly formed Quantock Gate Parishes (Cannington, Fiddington, Otterhampton with Combwich, Stockland, and Stogursey), served by the Rector and a part time, self-supporting Associate Priest.

The church (as with most major buildings in the village) was built by the Daniel family, whose considerable wealth was largely derived from their mercantile activities, particularly in the West Indies and heavily caught up with the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans [TTEA], both from the ownership of mortgages on sugar plantations in the Caribbean and the subsequent substantial reparation monies (equivalent of £11 million) received from the British Government following the abolishment of chattel slavery.



There is a brass plaque¹ in the church honouring Thomas Daniel Jr, who built the church, and windows dedicated to Revd Henry Daniel, his son, who was vicar from 1857 to 1883 and continued afterwards as effective squire. Henry Daniel and his family are buried in the churchyard. The Daniels sold up and left the village in 1956.

The current worshipping number is 9 (all over 60), with higher attendance for festivals and occasional offices. Sunday services are bi-monthly, alternating with St Peter's Church, Comwich (with which there is some sharing of congregation), and are augmented by bi-annual Benefice services. The churchyard is open and used for burials and interment of ashes. The church is much valued as a place of peace and contemplation by villagers and visitors, including those using the nearby South West Coast Path and those visiting the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust [VWT] reserve at Steart Marshes.

Use of the building

The church is left open (unattended) during daylight hours. The building has few uses outside of worship due to its condition and lack of facilities or effective heating. Being totally filled with pews, it is inflexible for community use although it is occasionally used for fundraising sales in conjunction with the private social club next door and there has been a recent (short) concert featuring the rare barrel organ. Bellringing, once eagerly pursued in Stockland, ceased in the 1990s due to the parlous state of the tower masonry. The clock is kept in good order (with financial support from the village precept) and valued by the locals. Both the unlocking of the building and the winding of the clock, as well as the maintenance of the churchyard, are undertaken by villagers who do not generally attend worship.



¹ Honorific text on plaque: To the glory of God and in memory of Thomas Daniel of Stoodleigh Devon Esq and late of the manor of Stockland by whom this church was rebuilt AD 1867...

Condition of the building

The church is on the Heritage at Risk register where the condition is described as poor and priority 'C'. The last Quinquennial report was in April 2024 (appended to the faculty application). In summary, it highlighted the poor condition of areas of the roof, and of the walls of the church particularly at high level. Dislodged coping stones and multiple issues with



pointing has caused swelling in the blue lias stone and consequent movement and cracking. The condition of the windows is also poor with some stonework misaligned. The tower masonry is locally very poor with cracking and the upper part of the vice turret in exceptionally bad order. The interior of the church is in fair condition, but light levels are poor. The walls include multiple cracks, and the tiled floor needs some repair. There is a suite of expert survey and condition reports appended to the faculty application.

Finances

The PCC has no reserves and no income outside of regular giving, plate collections, fee income, fundraising and the occasional donation. There are two churches within the parish - the parish church and St Andrew's Chapel of Ease at Steart, so upkeep costs, utilities and insurance are greater than for most parishes of this size. The PCC have not always met the full Parish Share in the last few years, although the interest in the church encouraged by the proposed works and its history has made fundraising more successful of late and the full Parish Share was paid in 2024 and is likely to be in 2025.

Given the poor state of the building, and the scale of the repair liabilities, the PCC embarked upon the National Lottery Heritage Fund [NLHF] process in 2018. Thanks to a Hinkley Point C [HPC] Community Fund grant, we were able to appoint architect Marcus Chantrey and write an NLHF Expression of Interest [EoI]. There was a delay for COVID but in 2022, working to new NLHF strategic objectives, the EoI was accepted. The PCC secured a second HPC grant and via a Project Team comprising PCC members, villagers and professional advisors, developed their planning for the next NLHF stage (Development) which was secured in 2023 (£210,000). We are in the midst of this Development stage at present, working closely with NLHF, and must submit our application for the



Delivery stage (approx. £2,500,000 with £2m coming from Heritage Fund investment), with Faculty, Planning and Environmental permissions in place, by August 2025. Regarding the necessary match-funding (originally £660k, of which £360k was to come from Listed Places of Worship VAT reclaim), we already have an in-principle agreement from from the HPC

Community Fund that they will contribute £300,000 and applications will also be made to the Landfill Communities Fund, National Churches Trust and other national and local charities. Most of these charities require Faculty permissions to be in place before they consider such applications.

The possibility of the removal/reduction of the Listed Places of Worship scheme was always on our risk analysis and the Project Team is working with NLHF to determine how best to offset the effects of the recent changes on the project finances going forward, hence the approximate figures stated above. NLHF is sympathetic and supportive in this regard.

Our needs

We need to preserve and repair the Grade 2 listed building for continued worship and for community use.

We need to enable continued and enhanced community engagement with the building, such as bell ringing and care of the churchyard. Not least, we need to build a business model to ensure its ongoing preservation and sustainability, move away from 100% gift income and help share the burden presently borne by the PCC alone.

We seek, as part of our mission to share and show the love of Christ to the local community, to make the building suitable for community use and for outreach. This necessitates making some of the building a warmer and hospitable space.

Currently only approachable via steps, access to the building needs to be improved particularly for those with mobility difficulties, including current and future congregation members.



We wish to acknowledge and educate regarding the history of both the church and the village, and particularly its relationship to TTEA.



The proposals

We propose to undertake extensive repairs to the building to preserve it and abate further deterioration, including:

- substantial repairs to the tower and turret;²
- partial retiling of the roof and replacement of lead flashing;³
- overhaul of rainwater goods;
- repairs to unstable, bulging and cracked exterior walls, and repointing;
- repair of window stonework and metal work;
- glazing repairs and releading
- rebuilding of the brick inner walls in the vestry;
- replastering where necessary and redecoration, using appropriate materials.

We propose to **sequester the north aisle with a timber and glass screen** to provide a heatable and hospitable space for community use.⁴



We propose to **remove all pews in the North Aisle.**⁵ In order to unify the floor area following their removal, and at the suggestion of the Church Buildings Advisor, Mark Lidster, we propose to **lift the existing tiles in the North Aisle, and reuse the tiles** in the west end of the North Aisle (the kitchenette area), the accessible WC and to replace broken tiles in the nave and porch. An **oak floor** would fill the rest of the space.⁶

We wish to **remove two pews** (front and back) on the north rank in the nave to improve flow and emergency access to the North Aisle.⁷ This will return the rear pew line to its original 1860s position (see Statement of Significance)

We propose to **install an accessible WC**⁸ in the vestry area with access knocked through from east end of North Aisle. This would necessitate the **relocation of the timber war memorials** which we propose be to the south wall, where they will be more readily seen.⁹

² Drawing 0281-016-2

³ 0281-016-1

⁴ 0281-026 & 0281-027

⁵ 0281-015-1

⁶ 0281-015-2

⁷ 0281-015-1

⁸ 0281-028

⁹ 0281-015-1

The WC and kitchenette would drain into a **Trench Arch system** along the north side of the churchyard.¹⁰

We propose to **build a kitchenette** at the west end of the North Aisle,¹¹ which will also allow for an Honesty Café for residents, visitors, particularly walkers, tourists and members of partner organisations.

We propose the **creation of step-free access from the road** to all public parts of the building.¹²

Surrounding the boiler house steps, we propose the **installation of iron railings and gate** to replace the failing existing timber barrier.¹³

We propose to **rehang the bells** following the remedial works to the tower and recreate the Stockland Peal.¹⁴

We propose to address the history of the church and village with a **permanent display, particularly considering its relationship to the TTEA**. The plaque commemorating Thomas Daniel will be re-enamelled to make it legible and placed alongside a plaque in memory of the many enslaved people who passed through the ownership of the Daniel family, especially the 4424 who were in their ‘possession’ at the time of the compensation payout.

Why now?

The church is on the heritage at risk register and needs significant repair work if it is not to deteriorate further. Successive quinquennial reports have identified urgent repairs required that, without major funding, are beyond the resources of the PCC and so a scheme of work for which funding applications can be made needed to be produced.

The building is not currently able to be used easily or comfortably by the community in Stockland, who have no other public buildings. It is filled with catalogue pews, the vast majority of which are unused apart from the odd large funeral/wedding (once every three years or so). It is poorly lit, difficult to access and there is no water, WC or any other facilities. Stockland is a tiny village, isolated by the Hinkley Point Road, lacking any facilities that cause or allow people to mix, build community cohesion or address isolation. The PCC and the Parish Meeting believe that the church is ideally placed to serve the local community through the provision of a building that not only provides a space for contemplation and prayer but also a gathering place that is appropriately scaled and fit for purpose.

¹⁰ 0281-023

¹¹ 0281-025

¹² Drawing 0281-014 and 0281-022

¹³ 0281-021

¹⁴ BELLS - BRIEF FOR TENDER APPLICATIONS 2024

There is a strong feeling of support in the local community for the preservation of the church and its wider use by villagers and beyond, as evidenced by consultation that began in 2018 and continues through regular engagement with the quarterly Parish Meeting and discussion with local groups, including the WWT, local primary and secondary schools, bellringers, mental health advocates, Village Agents etc.

The history of the village church and rural environment, especially regarding TTEA, is particularly pertinent given the national conversation on this subject, and places us in a locally unique position to lead and educate on this subject.

Evidence for need

The project originated in the need for Stockland to have a neutral space for people to gather, talk and off-set the isolation endemic in the rural environment. Community members used to meet in people's houses for craft and coffee mornings, but this was proving difficult even before the pandemic, when it just ceased and has not recovered. The search for a space quickly centred on the church building, but it quickly became apparent that much repair and some modest reordering would be required to make it fit for that purpose. The feeling at the Parish Meeting was that it would be ideal to use the embedded carbon and rescue our only public building (grade 2 listed) to save its fabric for the future and bring it again into the heart of village life. On approach, the PCC embraced the idea and has been entirely supportive throughout.



The project is in its third phase of development and each phase has been enabled by external grants. For both the Hinkley Point Community Fund and the NLHF, it is essential to demonstrate tangible and written support. We first tested the appetite in the community in 2018 and there is no evidence of that support waning. The average rate of involvement in community consultations is c10% and we have discussed the project individually with at least 60% of our residents. The community is kept up to date through a monthly article in our parish magazine (c30 pages, distributed to all households) and the project is discussed at each of our quarterly Parish Meetings. There is plenty of opportunity for people to raise questions or register dissent, but all feedback remains positive.

We are currently writing an Activity Plan to accompany our NLHF grant application; the plan needs to conform to very exacting NLHF guidance and protocols. The Activity Plan has built

on our relationships with agencies and individuals to ensure that support is tangible, audiences identified and targeted and all activities are both planned and budgeted; all our prospective partners will commit in writing for our next NLHF and HPC-CF applications. We attach a list of letters of support which accompanied our funding bids. As we will be asking them for (yet another) letter for our applications, we cannot justify getting them to do another (for some, the fifth) at this stage. We are working particularly closely with the African Caribbean communities in Somerset to ensure their inclusion around memorialising the 4424 people for whom Thomas Daniel received compensation.

Standard Market Analysis techniques can be misleading in a community of this size as changes within one household can materially distort the statistics. For instance, Stockland Bristol repeatedly comes out as having the oldest average age in Somerset; this is the result of having a residential care home for 27 residents in a village of 170 people. Along the same lines, we need to plan activities individually for the children in our village at any one time: with only 10 residents under 18, generic thoughts and plans simply do not work.

Project and operational business plans are also in preparation. We attach our Outline Business Plan which was prepared in 2023 for our NLHF Development Grant application. Having received that grant, we have been able to commission the (appended to this faculty supplication) surveys and plans for the project which, once we have faculty, will be re-reviewed by our Quantity Surveyor in preparation for the final NLHF application and for the tender documentation.

In this phase of project development, we have installed a temporary touch-screen to give an overview of the project, keep people updated and offer a flavour of our heritage – including the connections with TTEA. 50 people have completed the survey so far, of whom 50% are local. We have also asked what might cause people to use the church and get-togethers, coffee mornings and self-help gatherings are all resoundingly popular. The data will be fully analysed to inform both the activity and operational business planning.

Sustainability and mitigation for low up-take

Sustainability (alongside protecting the dignity & heritage significance of the building) has been at the foundation of all our capital planning, especially around the reordering and hospitality proposals. All adaptations and proposed changes have been subjected to options appraisals, which are included in our faculty application papers. The north aisle was selected as it is of little worship value, is easily sequestered to accommodate facilities and is heatable. Vitally too, it is an appropriate size for the scale of the parish and the activities proposed. By putting the accessible w.c. in the vestry, the chancel, nave and base of the tower will retain their 1860s form, the clock can still be wound and the bells will always be able to be lowered.

The cost/sustainability of future operation has been omnipresent in the decision-making process. Alongside the heritage and aesthetic concerns, the issue of keeping glass clean was a key element in the process of deciding that the screen is to be timber to dado height. The fittings in the kitchenette and w.c. have been chosen to be easy to clean and of high durability. Significantly, the infra-red heating will be attached to a direct-payment card reader; this will

preclude anyone having to turn on heating some hours before the church is to be used as well as eradicating the risk of the heating being left on in an empty building. We have simplified M&E proposals such that there are no service/license contracts, that anyone can operate the system and that repairs can be simply undertaken by a local electrician.

We are budgeting for 8,000 visitors to the church each year, building on our current 4,000. We consider this to be modest, but are also aware that it's better to exceed expectations than build our business plan on overambitious numbers. The Old Vicarage Care Home has been working with us from the start and is keen to see its residents bringing their visitors to the church and mixing in the community. The proposed alterations to the imminent WWT reserve include re-routing the SW Coast path, which will put our café ½ a mile from the path as opposed to our current mile. We have worked throughout with the S W Coast Path Business Group to be placed on the walking and local tourism maps. Our monthly 'Talking Café' sessions with the Village Agent will increase the value of the facility for Stockland and help alert neighbouring communities to our facilities.

Mitigation/contingencies

Our mitigation against lower-than-projected numbers is to keep standing costs to the bare minimum so that we don't need to consume energy or resources for an empty building. Similarly, we are minimising all plant and equipment purchases to avoid building in replacement and servicing costs. The heating is for occupants (not the building fabric) and is to be switched and paid for by those occupants; there is to be no stored hot water. In a similar vein, we decided against installing an outer door for the kitchenette as, with the church's 'resting' position being for the honesty café, the doors will always be open, yet the mechanisms are often heavy to operate and can be fragile. Having simplified the electrical installations, the only new standing costs will be for broadband and a connection for the payment reader. We are planning to share a website with the Parish Meeting and private Social Club to share costs and widen the pool of resources for its maintenance and updating.

The management and maintenance plan, which will be prepared for the NLHF application, will give the PCC a clear ideal of what will need attention, when and how much things will cost. Vitally too, with the building repaired and a mixed business model established that is not wholly reliant on giving, the PCC will be able to plan its finances alongside its responsibilities.

Included in our capital funding is a part-time Activities Coordinator post for the first three years. This post holder will work to garner custom and reach out to the most isolated members of our community as well as deliver the NLHF activity plan. We have also included some core funding to enable the enterprise to establish and for us to re-work our operational projections as we gain experience.



Environmental sustainability

Presently the church has a very low carbon footprint by virtue of its lack of facilities. The current heating system is so ineffective as to be redundant and rarely used. The proposed reordering with attendant heating and kitchen facilities and consequent increased occupation of the building will inevitably increase its energy usage.

We have sought to limit this by heating costs for the North Aisle being met by users on a pay as you use basis (ensuring we are not heating an empty building).

The Benefice is working towards all its churches having Eco-Church status and this includes exploration of alternative energy sources. We have explored the possibility of solar panels and these have been ruled out by virtue of their prominence and limited benefit providing we are on a green tariff. There is not sufficient space to install a wind turbine.

The proposed Trench Arch drainage system is eminently sustainable, dealing with waste water and effluent. We further propose where possible to reuse timber from the removed pews and to relay the concrete paving slabs to the paths.

The impact on the flora and fauna of the churchyard will be minimal, and protective works undertaken where necessary to protect particularly adjacent trees. The proposed scheme includes provision for roosting and hibernating bats in the existing (unused) boiler room, and the researching of bat species and usage of the building has already proved to be a valuable and well supported community endeavour. Recent DNA testing has shown that we have the incredibly rare grey long-eared bat on the site. On completion of the works, the boiler room will be adapted as the ideal habitat for the (already present) Greater Horseshoe bat and the truncated vestry chimney will be accessible as an additional bat roost.

Other options

Were the sole need in consideration that of the small congregation and a place for warm and comfortable fortnightly services then this could certainly be met by locking the doors of Stockland Church and decamping as worshippers to St Andrew's Chapel of Ease in Steart, even with its remote location and uneven grass path. However, to do so would be self-regarding and defeatist. It would still leave the PCC with financial responsibility for a crumbling building that would rapidly become an eyesore and a hazard, and would deny the community of Stockland village access to their one public facility.

With the opportunity of achieving substantial grant funding, we can, instead, look and reach outwards to the parish and beyond, undertaking the desperately needed repairs and further providing a valuable meeting space for a deeply underserved and isolated community.

With regard to the repairs, we are reliant on the architect and structural engineers for determining the necessary works, informed by extensive surveys (included with faculty application).¹⁵

As to the reordering of the North Aisle, WC (including drainage), kitchenette, re-siting of war memorials and improved external access, we have considered the following options, and our 'workings' in the form of Options Studies are included within this application.

In all choices, the PCC has placed high priority on simplicity of use and form.

Reordering of North Aisle

After general discussions with the architect regarding needs and concerns, and consideration of examples of similar reordering schemes locally, the Project Team settled on three¹⁶ options for the screen to the North Aisle¹⁷ for further discussion by the PCC. Siting the screen beyond the arcade arches was considered a waste of space as well as aesthetically less attractive. Following DAC comments we have revisited the matter with the architect who has reassured the PCC regarding fitting the screen within the arcades. The PCC further rejected a frameless glass screen and doors, which felt not in keeping, redundant for those areas behind pews, and impractical to keep clean. The PCC chose an option with timber framing which split each arcade in three, with the lower screen and doors half timber. The timberwork is designed to reference the rhythm of the chancel screen. Consideration was given to the (infrequent) use of the North Aisle as overspill seating for worship in the Nave, such as large funerals, and doors were chosen that could open back fully but without complex runner mechanisms that might fail or require greater maintenance. Further changes such as having the windows in the central arcade openable, again for large services, and providing storage along the central section of the screen at pew level, were incorporated in the final choice.¹⁸



The PCC considered the furniture for the North Aisle.¹⁹ The chosen default furniture arrangement with chairs and round tables reflects the proposed community use of the North Aisle area (meeting space, crafting space, honesty café), and the relatively infrequent use for worship. We are currently trialling chairs from Alpha Furniture and all are from their churches and cathedrals options.

¹⁵ cf REPORT REGISTER

¹⁶ nb error on previous request for DAC advice stated five options

¹⁷ CCA SK09-14 Screen Design Options, 0281-026 and 0281-027

¹⁸ 0281-026 and 0281-027

¹⁹ CCA SK17-22 North Aisle Furniture Options

In line with the concept of heating the person not the space, and wanting to operate heating on a “pay as you use” basis, the PCC selected halo heaters for the North Aisle, which will be operated with a card reader. The works proposed provide for the future provision of halo heaters to the nave and underfloor heating to the north aisle. At present, the strictures placed by the funding providers prevent spending wholly on areas to improve worshipping conditions as opposed to wider community use and heritage preservation. However, if other funds were able to be secured that would support extending the heating from the North Aisle (subject to faculty permissions) the electrical infrastructure would already be in place.

Kitchenette

The kitchenette will be a bespoke build.²⁰ Again, simplicity was key: appliances kept to a minimum (no need for an oven could be envisaged) and floor space maximised. Given the position of the kitchenette at the west end in the screened off area, it was not felt necessary or desirable to enclose the kitchenette within a cupboard, which would be counterproductive to encouraging use especially as we intend to set up an honesty cafe. A movable standalone counter with undertop cupboards, built possibly from removed pew timber, would provide service space when larger scale hospitality undertaken (such as after Christmas/Benefice services) but which would sit along the north wall when not in use.

Accessible WC

The siting of the toilet within the vestry made sense to the PCC who liked that it was within the distinct area of the North Aisle development and therefore of more utility to users. Siting the WC underneath the tower, the only other early option, would have prevented the removal of bells and seemed to unnecessarily extend the area of reordering. The contents of the toilet area were discussed within the limits of building regulations considering user groups and maximizing storage and ease of cleaning.²¹

The PCC researched options for drainage, considering eight early possibilities.²² Usage will be low so expensive schemes or those involving substantial excavation were deemed unnecessary and undesirable. Discussions with neighbours discounted some options involving connecting to existing cesspits and, in any event, the PCC wanted to minimize any future difficulties over ownership and maintenance of systems. Having settled in the Trench Arch system, the PCC undertook their own research contacting other parish churches with the same system and were reassured regarding effectiveness and odour.

Re-siting of War Memorials

The timber War Memorials would need to be moved to allow knocking through to the vestry and making of the WC. Even without the WC in this site, the PCC felt that it was inappropriate for the war memorials to remain in the North Aisle when it was a screened off area. Initially it had been hoped that the memorials might be moved to the south side of the west wall, where the list of past clergy is hung but they would not fit. Instead, it was agreed

²⁰ CCA SK23-24 Kitchenette design options and 0281-025

²¹ 0281-028

²² B2 - Drainage Options Appraisal - Aug 2023

to seek permission to move them to the south wall, between the windows. This will allow improved access.



External Access

Initially, four options for the access improvements were considered and after discussion within the PCC, a further two options involving a ramp in the verge and in the spinney were added.²³ There was concern that any solution was not overengineered, did not have too negative an impact on the flora and fauna of the churchyard and spinney, and could be easily kept clear of leaves etc. We were also determined that the same path be for all users with no sense of a separate “disability” entranceway. The relaying of the existing concrete slabs was desirable from an ecological and financial perspective and the PCC felt that options requiring a rail along some or all of the path were undesirable. The grass banks of the chosen scheme were considered the most aesthetically pleasing,



²³ CCA SK01-07 Access Options RevA